



Sent by God: His People on His Mission

LESSON 5: Sent Forth to Connect

What does God send us forth to do?

Five concepts guide our mission.

Worship. We exalt God, to declare his majesty, excellence, and splendor.

Grow. We seek to become mature disciples.

Connect. Genuine fellowship demands meaningful connections that bind us together.

Proclaim. We live in the story of God; we want to share the story—in our lives and in our words.

Serve. We seek serve as we reach out to our world.

Building Connections in the Faith Community

“The Lord our God is one God,” yet He reveals Himself in Scripture in three ways: as Father (Creator, Sustainer), as Son (Redeemer), and as indwelling Spirit (Comforter, Guide). This suggests the doctrine of the Trinity, a word which combines “oneness” (unity) and “three” (tri-). God is tri-une. God by nature is relational. In essence, He is a community. God created humanity because He wants to extend His loving, holy community. We reject his plan by opting for selfish, sinful individualism. Yet God is relentless in His pursuit of us. His vision for a holy, loving, community is so perfect that it was worth dying for—which is exactly what He did. Christ’s death on the cross is the definitive proof that relationships matter to God. The cross, as its shape implies, has both vertical and horizontal implications. Christ’s death brings believers into a holy, loving relationship with God, but this relationship is expressed in His holy, loving community, the church.

Christian Community Gone Awry

The modern American large church has become a fragmented, complex institution. She has lost a lot of her simplicity and purpose. Church, for many, is an event to attend rather than a life in which to participate. A consumer mindset dominates our society. We go out to eat on Sundays and critique the worship service as if we had just come from a movie or a ballgame. Consumerism is an affront to Biblical community. Explore this play on words. I have a relationship with a Christian, but we do not necessarily have a Christian relationship. If our

conversations never get beyond weather and sports, chances are we do not have a Christian relationship. Likewise, one can be a part of a community where Christians meet—but it may not be a Christian community. Is there mutual edification? Are struggles shared? Is hospitality practiced? Is the Word taught and received? Are needs met? Are hearts yielded to the Spirit? Are sins confessed? Is God honored in worship?

The “Ediface Complex”

When we think of church, we usually think of a building. It is difficult for us to think about the Main and Oklahoma church without a building. The Lord’s church does not depend upon buildings. Strictly speaking, there is no biblical example or basis for church buildings. Buildings set aside for church use can be traced back no earlier than Constantine. He made Christianity the state religion (313 A.D.) and also built the first basilica in Rome. In the first century, two places were used consistently for Christian assemblies—the Jerusalem temple and private homes. Paul refers to the church meeting in homes (Rom 16:5; I Cor 16:19; Philm 2). For the next 200 years, the home was the dominant context of Christian congregations, making Christianity a home-based movement. Perhaps it’s time to restore Biblical community as well as Biblical doctrine!

Becoming Intentional

The corporate assembly and our Bible classes are wonderful blessings from God. However, when we read Acts, it seems that some of the elements of Christian community are missing if these are all we offer in the way of community. Our mission demands that we be intentional about providing meaningful Christian community in homes (“home-size” groups).

These groups should be small enough for you to: be missed if you didn’t come, dialog about Scripture, pray with others, share your struggles, confess sins, emerge as a leader, invite a neighbor, have a dessert, and share the story of Jesus.

Discussion Questions

Read John 17: 20-21

What does the doctrine of the Trinity have to do with Christian community?

"I am a Christian; I just don't go to church." How would you respond to help a person who says this? Evaluate the statement and its assumptions.

Read I Corinthians 3; John 14:15-21

According to John 14:17 and 1 Cor. 3:16,, does the Spirit indwell the individual or the church?

What role does the Holy Spirit play in the community of faith?

What role does the community of faith play in the work of the Holy Spirit?

Read Acts 2:42-47

List the activities of this newly formed movement. Which elements of this Christian community challenge you most? Why?

What subtle differences do you detect, if any, between the phrases: "a community of Christians" and a "Christian community?"

What are some obstacles to genuine Christian community?

Read Acts 5:42

Why do you think the believers met in both the "temple courts" and from "house to house?"

What aspects of Christian community can be cultivated in a "temple court?"

What aspects of Christian community can be cultivated in a home?

Read I Corinthians 12:12-13

Is this church a living organism or an organization? Support your answer.

If this building burned to the ground, would the congregation survive?

Why or why not? How?

If our Sunday morning mass gathering was outlawed, would the church survive? Why or why not? How?

What facilitates genuine Christian community?

What do you think should be done when a small group grows and becomes a large group?

One of our goals during this series is to identify "mission words" to remind us of God's purpose as we go forth into our community and world.

Which of the following words are most memorable or best communicate our commitment and desire to develop community and connections in Christ?

_____ CONNECT/CONNECTIONS

_____ TOUCH

_____ FELLOWSHIP

_____ ENCOURAGE

_____ FAMILY

_____ LOVE

_____ CARE

_____ SHARE

_____ BELONG

Notes

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