

HEALTHY CHURCH 4: ENCOURAGING AND SERVING ONE ANOTHER

INTRODUCTION & RECAP

Acts 2:42-47, “And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

1. CHURCH MEMBERS: DEVOTED TO BEING TOGETHER

Acts 2:42, 46 “devoted” (Gk. *proskarterountes*): “to diligently occupy yourself with... pay persistent attention to... hold fast to... cling to... persevere in... spend much time in... continually dwell in.”

At Immanuel we have 4 regular “gatherings” in the life of the church:

- church on Sunday morning
- Sunday School, monthly Church Prayer Meeting, and fellowship groups.

Are we devoted to being with God’s people? (see also Hebrews 10:24-25)

2. CHURCH MEMBERS: DEVOTED TO ONE ANOTHER'S CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Acts 2:42, "the fellowship..." = loving, purposeful, committed, energetic, and sacrificial working together – for the cause of the Gospel.

(a) Meeting needs – practical and relational:

- Acts 2:42,45, "the breaking of bread" ... "distributing... as any had need"
- Mark 10:29-30, "Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life."
- The church provides what is lost in following Christ
Reaching out to those who are different to us (James 2, Romans 12:16).
"Hospitality" = a concrete expression of love. E.g. *philoxenia* – "love of strangers"
[Rom 12:13, 1 Tim 3:2, Tit 1:8, Heb 13:2, 1 Pet 4:9].
It requires sacrifice (1 John 4:10-11, Galatians 6:2).

(b) Encouraging others

- What is Christian encouragement?

Hebrews 10:24-25, "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

Colossians 1:28, "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ."

= "caring for someone else – usually speaking Bible truth with them – with the goal of their growth in godliness."

Two indispensable ingredients:

A willingness to reveal your own struggles.

A willingness to listen and to help your brothers and sisters in Christ.

- And how ought we encourage one another?
 By speaking God's truth (perhaps something we've been learning or that you think would be good for them)...
 By helping a brother/sister to recall the Gospel (nb. It IS true that Jesus is always the answer!) ...
 And by looking for signs of God's grace at work in their life.

1 Thessalonians 5:4, "And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all."

"Idle" = a soldier who won't obey their commander's orders. Confront sin... patiently.

"Fainthearted" = you feel your resources are too small. Come alongside to strengthen... patiently.

"Weak" = all weakness (physical, mental, spiritual). Offer help... patiently.

(c) Dealing with sin Christianly: when it goes wrong...

- Wrong response to sin → grumbling (Philippians 2:14-15), discord (Galatians 5:20) and distraction.
- Better way → leads to patience and contentment.
 1. Pray for God's help and mercy
 2. Examine own desires, confess any sin
 3. See other believers how God sees them (and pray for them)
 4. Watch your words:
 - Don't complain / grumble / gossip... or seek affirmation of discontent.
 - *Confess* own sin or *collaborate* in someone else's spiritual growth... or don't speak!
 - Address someone directly
 5. Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you.
 6. See what blessings God HAS given you.

(d) Grow in commitment to the whole church

- gather regularly with God's people at church;
- praying for church members by name;
- give financially to the church.

CONCLUSION

*** start to invest in intentional, spiritual relationships ***

God has people for you to love, and work for you to do!

“There is but one God, and they that serve him should be one. There is nothing that would render the true religion more lovely, or make more proselytes to it, than to see the professors of it tied together with the heart strings of love.” (Thomas Watson)