

Relational Revolution

Communitas & Ekklesia

ICE BREAKER: Besides Jesus and your spouse, what is the greatest act of love others have done for you?

LIVING IN AUTHENTIC BIBLICAL COMMUNITY

1 John 3:16 *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.*

1 John 4:7-8 *“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love, does not know God, because God is love.”*

If we say that we love God but do not love one another we are a walking contradiction- Pastor Brian.

1. Where does love come from?

2. What does this tell us about how we love one another?

3. What does it teach about those who do not love?

4. What are some characteristics of love? (1 John 3:16)

Meaning of Community: intense life shaping bond, mutual service, shared mission

5. What makes a Christian community? What makes community authentic as opposed to artificial? (John 13, 34-35, Acts 2:44-47)

John 13:34-35 *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

Acts 2:44-47 *And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the*

temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

6. What do you think is the biggest attraction to draw people together in community?

7. What are the characteristics in life that build community? (Philippians 2:1-4, Hebrew 10:24,25) How does suffering together foster community?

Pastor Brian told the story of the Vietnam veteran who suffered danger, discomfort, disease and death in the war, but was now living a normal life of comfort. The former soldier longed to go back to the life of danger discomfort and death, because of the community the soldiers shared with each other.

Philippians 2:1-4 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Hebrews 10:24,25. *24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

8. How can the Church promote healthy community by sharing the realities of life together? Can you think of other ways to stimulate community among members?

Pastor Brian spoke of the hinderances to Christians having community in church:

- Cultural view of church as a service we go to once a week
- Feeling that church is just fulfilling our religious duty
- Not developing relationships with anyone in the church

9. What is missing from the cultural view of the church? (John 15:5-8)

John 15:5-8 *5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

10. Pastor Brian also spoke of the obstacles to community- busyness, fears, my flaws, your flaws, past hurts, etc. What obstacles do you identify in developing community?

Pastor Brian pointed out that, in Jesus' day, there were two religious institutions around which Jewish life centered: The Temple and the Synagogue. These were places people would come to, to celebrate major religious holidays. There was no church!

In Jesus' day, the Ekklesia (the word we translate as church) was not a religious institution like the Temple or the Synagogue. Ekklesia was a term used to describe a gathering or a group of people that would meet in the marketplace or the public square. Ekklesia wasn't a religious term at all!

When Jesus told Peter, *"On this rock, I will build my Ekklesia, (a gathering, or assembly).* Jesus did not say, "I will build my Temple or Synagogue." Pastor Brian pointed out that the emphasis was not on the building, but on the people. The assembly was to be a mobile, people movement designed to operate 24/7 for the purpose of having an impact on everybody and everything.

11. How does this explanation compare to the church we have in the world today?

12. What can we do to make church more like what Jesus told Peter that He was building?

Pastor Brian said that our relationships should be characterized by three things:

- Authenticity- Being real, letting people know who you really are.
- Accountability- People know what you're working on and asking about it.
- Accessibility- Being available to some people in church (not necessarily everyone).

13. How authentic, accountable and accessible are we to those in our circle group and to each other?

14. What are the hesitations or obstacles that keep you from developing close loving relationships with other people in the church?

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” - Jesus (John 13:35)