



Cultivate

A Christ-Centered Way of Life

... as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted, and built up in him and established in the faith... Colossians 2:6-7

AUTHENTIC GOSPEL-CENTRED KINGDOM COMMUNITY

By Marius Gradwell

Let us read Acts 2:42-47.

It provides a beautiful and compelling picture of what a gospel-centred, kingdom community looks like.

(42) 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.

This snapshot of the early church offers a template for authentic community that our church should seek to follow. If we would build these traits into our relationships, not only would we inspire passion amongst ourselves, but also become a manifestation of God's kingdom and family on earth. Let us have a look at six traits of an authentic gospel-centred, kingdom community as described in these verses.

1. Full Devotion to Jesus Christ

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (v. 42)

Half-hearted, semi-devoted people rarely accomplish anything of value. Part of the character of a God-honouring community is full devotion and passion toward the things that matter most. We are inspired by a worthy cause giving our best to achieve our God-given mission. We should be a place that reflects full devotion to Christ, to each other and to the mission of Jesus.

Question: Why did Jesus come to earth? What did He leave His disciples to do until He returns?

2. Anticipation of God's Supernatural Work

And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. (v. 43)

We want to be a part of something God-sized. In truth, God stands ready to work in and through a willing community who follows Him with faith and courage. Here in Acts 2, people prayed and expected God to answer. We should cultivate a community that believes and prays to achieve that which can only be accomplished through God's supernatural power-trusting Him to do it.

Question: What are you trusting God for - something we can only do through God's power working in and through us?

3. A Strong Commitment to One Another

And all who believed were together and had all things in common. (v. 44)

A Christ-honouring community displays loyalty, dependability, mutual support, respect, and grace to one another. We are not just unified. We have a strong sense of the priority of unity in our diversity. We make unity work. We know it takes effort. It means letting go of petty differences and self-centred agendas. What we are to one another is as important as what we are doing together.

Question: We celebrate a diversity and unity in Christ - what do you enjoy about it? What needs our attention?

4. Generosity in Meeting Needs

And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. (v. 45)

While achieving mission together, needs arise within individuals. People become disheartened. We experience distress. We incur personal hardships. We all have struggles. In a gospel-centred, kingdom community, people are not blind to the needs of others, and they respond by seeking to assist, encourage, and generously meet needs. Sincere care and concern take place between members. And, when meeting needs demands generosity and sacrifice, the Christ-filled community steps up.

Question: The lockdown has presented us with an opportunity to help meet the many needs daily - are you a willing participant? Share a testimony of how you supported someone and how you have been supported.

5. Joyful Fellowship

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, (v. 46)

We know we must give effort and hard work, but we also spend a measure of time in fellowship and relaxation. We eat together, laugh together, and pursue common interests outside of work or “ministry.” This allows us to get to know each other and make friends with unbelievers. This reaps the benefit of even greater unity and commitment.

Question: 1) In what ways can we stay in touch and fellowship with one another even though we are in a lockdown situation? 2) We have not met on Sundays for many months, and we have come to realise that it is important for us to cultivate community life in our church. How committed are you to help cultivate and participate in an authentic and biblical community?

6. A Sense of Shared Destiny

...praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. (v. 47)

We are connected to a power beyond ourselves. It transcends our efforts and connects us to God’s eternal purpose. God is transforming the lives of people through divine salvation and adds them into His church. As we witness life after life, person after person coming to faith, a sense of shared destiny is created—a sense that we are being swept along by the current of God’s Holy Spirit for God’s sovereign purpose and we are joined by God himself to his eternal plan.

Question: 1) What can we do to make sure that the Gospel (Good News) of Jesus and His kingdom is shared with all those we meet and encounter? 2) Are you willing to walk with a new believer, teaching and demonstrating a kingdom lifestyle to him/her?

Conclusion

This final trait of community is one that cannot be manufactured by people. It is in fact a divine result of purpose, love, and unity—in other words, a gift of grace. But be sure that, while we cannot produce this sense of shared destiny, we can certainly undermine it or even prevent it from arising. We do this partly by failing to seek to build the kind of authentic community God desires between his children. In truth, Christian community is the receptacle for God’s sovereign and supernatural work. God loves to fill His people with His presence and power when they are one in heart and purpose.