**Intentional Community**

**We are a people who love Him and one another**

1. I heard this story: A Mom goes into her son’s bedroom who was laying in bed on a Sunday morning and it was getting quite late. She said, “It is time for church, you need to get up and get going!”
2. He whined, “I don’t want to! Give me a good reason why I should!”
3. She said, “I’ll give you two: you are 62 years old, and you are the speaker!”
4. **A. Introduction**
5. Intentional Community is the fourth of our four “Core Values” (along with Prayer & Worship, Biblical Foundation, Hope of the Gospel).
6. I feel like it is helpful to point out that this is not revolutionary or edgy. I would suspect that most of our other fellowships in Pagosa Springs hold a similar value.
7. I would also like to point out that probably every single one of us, in every single fellowship, finds this a difficult value to work out in real life.
8. I pointed out not long ago that this idea of loving one another or “love your neighbor as you love yourself” is only accomplished by being led by the Holy Spirit and crucifying the flesh.
9. Oh joy…
10. **B. Living in Community**
11. When I read the Bible, I like to think about what I am reading in light of the “narrative arc”.
12. In literary thinking, “narrative arc” means the big picture of the plot and theme.
13. Narrative arc, also known as a "story arc" or "dramatic arc," is the framework that gives structure to a story, including exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. It guides the flow of events, creates compelling conflict, and provides a clear and engaging path for a story.
14. In simple terms, there is a beginning, a middle, and an end.
15. The idea of community was introduced in Genesis 1:28, “Be fruitful and increase in number” and Genesis 2:18, “It is not good to be alone”, and is carried through until the grand finale in Revelation.
16. As a side note, this is the book in the Bible where the people in the story are actually going to be us, one way or another.
17. What is one of the main themes of the narrative arc of scripture? Relationship.
18. As an example, look at all of the ways the redemptive relationship of God and man is described: Father-Son, Friends, Creator-Created, Sheep-Shepherd, Tribe-Guide, Bridegroom-Bride, Husband-Wife, Body-Head.
19. So is the idea of community carried throughout the scripture. It is one of God’s core values.
20. A scripture that Justin was in when he was talking about our Mission (Gather, Equip, and Commission Disciples): Hebrews 10: 19-25
21. There is a lot to unpack in those 7 verses but I’m giving you the Readers Digest version (Wait, do I have to explain “Readers Digest” to you young people? It was a monthly long-form periodical but they also published “Readers Digest Condensed Novels” where they would condense popular novels and put 3-5 of them in one book.).
22. In any case, the short version: 5 verses of the miracle that we are in real open and free community with the Creator of the Heavens and Earth, and in light of that, be in community with each other.
23. Read Hebrews 10:19-25
24. **C. Managing the “Realm Without Rules”**
25. This is from a Bob Mumford teaching. Generally, it is easier to deal with rules that can be checked off and other people could check off for us.
26. Do not commit murder. Do not commit adultery. Give a tithe of your income.
27. I think the Pharisees tended to like following rules. It is easier to know you are holy because of the checklist, looking at behavior alone.
28. When you get into the arenas of motive and attitude, you are in a realm without rules.
29. It’s easy to say that you should give a percent of your income. What do you do with 2 Corinthians 9:7, “Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”
30. Who knows if you are giving reluctantly?
31. Community thinking has some of both. If you don’t attend church or fellowship in some sort of smaller settings, you are not living in community (this is the checklist). The trickier part is the inner attitude of how you are doing with others in those community settings.
32. Romans 12:9-10 in the New Living, “Don’t just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. Love each other with genuine affection and take delight in honoring each other.”
33. There are a couple of phrases in there where God is getting in our business. It is not all that difficult to smile and hug someone or shake their hand on a Sunday morning. It is much more complicated to exhibit genuine affection.
34. In Luke 10:25-37, we have the story of what is famously, “the parable of the good Samaritan”.
35. This parable is given as an answer to a question. The question is, “who is my neighbor?”
36. This expert in the law was anxious to hear this answer because it originated from quoting the law, “love your neighbor as yourself”.
37. THAT discussion came from this question, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”
38. Do you see the stakes? The guy is wondering what he has to do to live forever. Jesus asked him his opinion. The answer was Love God and Love your Neighbor. This leads to “who is my neighbor?”
39. These are very high stakes.
40. We know the story. A man was traveling, attacked and robbed and left for dead. A priest and a Levite passed him by but a Samaritan saw him and took pity on him.
41. He binds up his wounds, puts him on his own donkey (I assume now the Samaritan has to walk), took him to an Inn and didn’t just deposit him but “took care of him”, and then gave financially.
42. This Samaritan gave up time, emotions, skills, convenience, and money.
43. This is all to illustrate, “Who do I have to love like I love myself.”
44. The Realm Without Rules. This is what God messes with when He calls us to community.
45. By the way, the origin of this “loving your neighbor” rule is pretty interesting. There is a list of rules in Leviticus and most of them are things you can check off:
46. Do not give your children to be sacrificed to Molech, do not steal, do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight, do not curse the deaf or but a stumbling block in front of the blind.
47. Then Lev. 19:17-18. Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart?
48. It is the realm without rules.
49. So it is God’s idea that we should be in community, love one another without pretense, and take care of one another, and only He and I know if it is happening…in my heart.
50. These are the **ideals** of being in community.
51. **D. Tempering the Ideal: 5 Misconceptions about Community**
52. This is from some kind of hipster Christian publication, Relevant. In spite of that, I liked them and thought they were…well…relevant.
53. One: It’s Easy. It is not comfortable for our flesh.
54. Two: It’s Natural. I like using the phrase about ministry and our place in the body developing “organically”, but the truth is, living in community takes deliberate intention. It is rarely natural and certainly not usually spontaneous. In fact, for the spontaneous to occur you have to be looking for it!
55. Three: It Will Come to You. There are times in your life when ministries chased you down to take you to coffee or out for frozen yogurt. This was called youth group! As an adult, if you are waiting for a ministry leader or elder to knock on your door, you might be waiting a long time. You have to take agency! You have to step up and show up.
56. Four: It’s Convenient. It is super-annoying you have to rearrange your life for people, whether it’s committing to weekly meetings or showing up when someone needs help.
57. Five: It’s Optional. We simply aren’t meant to be alone. It’s the way we are wired and it is a big part of the story arc of scripture. God intends us to be in community.
58. **E. Our Reasonable Expectation**
59. We raised our kids in such a way that they had certain expectations. They were not surprised that the house was warm in the winter, or that there was food in the fridge, or clothes in their closet, or peace in the home.
60. Also, I am not disappointed that they didn’t come up to Becky and me and say, “Thank you, my clothes are clean!” “Look, toilet paper in the bathroom!’, “Wow, cereal!”
61. They were raised to expect certain privileges from being part of our family.
62. This was clear from the story of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15. After the younger brother returns and Dad sacrifices a calf and throws a party, the older son gets angry.
63. Here is Dad’s reply in Luke 15:31: “My son”, the father said, “You are always with me and everything I have is yours.”
64. He implies that all the older son had to do was ask, or maybe not even ask; maybe just partake…
65. Part of the good stuff that God has for us is community. It is part of the package, part of the deal, part of the reasonable expectations for being a child of God.
66. It is how God created us and what He wants for us
67. It is what the devil imitates. Have you ever seen a beer commercial?
68. **F. Conclusion**
69. God loves community. He created us to live in community.
70. It is difficult, tiring, draining, exhilarating, and fulfilling. (not unlike marriage: a very good example of community.)
71. I love the word, agency. In this area, we have to take agency.
72. We have to deliberately choose to follow Him in this.
73. This is how we begin to fulfill God’s law, love your neighbor as yourself.
74. It is also how we fulfill Christ’s law from Galatians 6:2: “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”