

OUR COMMUNITY IMAGE

WILLIS 6/20/10

Mt18:19-20

We are continuing our focus today on this cornerstone truth of the Kingdom Community. If we were to go all the way back to the beginning of God's interaction with man, we would see that community was the context in which man was created.

- **All the Trinity did in their creation of man they did in the context of community and for the context of community.** Community was the supreme act of God in creation. Being it was supreme, it deserved to be expanded.

Mt18:19-20

Have you ever asked yourself why the requirement of 2 or 3? We are all Priests and Kings before God, so why does He require at least 2 or 3 to reveal His presence? It has to do with His image. **It takes 2 or 3 for there to be the image of God.**

- The omnipresence of God is everywhere but the omnipresence of God becomes the revealed presence of God whenever "Community" gathers together in His name.
- When we gather alone we come as an incomplete image. **Alone together is the consequential fruit of radical individualism.** Individualism produces a together in proximity but alone in connectivity.

The complete image of God is found in us not me. "Let us make man in our image." When 2 or 3 gather they come as an accurate representation of the image of God...2 or 3 qualifies us for community.

- For sure God responds to the individual but there is an even deeper more generous response when He is able to respond to His own image.

Gen1:26 "Then God said; let us make man in our image, according to our likeness..."

Please notice the words "image and likeness." Gen1:26 tell us a lot about the image and likeness of God. The word "us and our" tell us there was more than one. They are the 3 in 1. "Let us make man in our image," tell us the image of God is plural but Adam was made singular.

- To remain singular meant Adam would bear an incomplete image. To bear an accurate image of God Adam was in need of a helpmeet. Created by God in the image of God yet God said, "it is not good..."

- **The issue wasn't the imperfection of Adam's creation but the incompleteness of man being alone.**

Gen2:20b-22

To achieve human community God caused Adam to fall asleep and a suitable helper was created. Suitable helper does not mean subordinate worker as if Adam was overwhelmed in his work and needed a helper.

- The reason given for the creation of Eve was it was not good for Adam to be alone. The woman was the completion of man's image bearing thus the phrase "you complete me."
- The reason we call it "The curse of individualism" is individualism is an affront to the image of God.

"Suitable helper: A rescuer from his state of affairs." Alone, Adam was not a community and God was. Eve was created to rescue Adam from his singularity (not from being single as in not married, but singularity...you can be single and joined in community or married and remain in singularity)

- Eve rescued Adam from singularity and brought him into the plurality of community.
- **The "oneness of the many" is the image of God. Oneness is able to happen only when there are at least 2 or 3.**

2 or 3 is the basic building block of community. The requirement Jesus gave however were not 2 or 3 in proximity but 2 or 3 gathered together in His name. I want to close this message out sharing 4 Cornerstone of Community development.

1. **Trust: Acts4:34** Though Community is the original intent of God it is not an automatic fruit of God. **Community is developed over time and only develops in an atmosphere of trust.**

- Trust does not mean the absence of mistakes, trust is the climate in which mistakes are covenantally processed so relationships are sustained.
- Trust is the quality of climate that fosters a willingness to open up, share and hold values in common.
- **Trust is nurtured in a climate of integrity, respect, vulnerability, acceptance, and risk. Trust is destroyed in a climate of pride, fear, invulnerability and dishonesty.**
- Where there is no trust people hide behind fear. (Aunt Barb story about losing \$ Many people hiding their investments because of fear, fear of knowing and being known)

2. **Forgiveness: Mt6:12** In a fallen world where trust is often broken, community is sustained by forgiveness. Forgiveness is a choice before it is an emotion. Forgiveness is first a choice you make then it is an emotion you feel. (choice based in command)
- The choice to forgive may very well be the healthiest, most lucrative, wisest decisions you will ever make. To refuse forgiveness is to imprison yourself to a life of stagnation, sickness, negativity and death.
 - **Offenses are certain in the life of a Community.** In Luke 17:1 Jesus said, “It is inevitable that offenses will come but woe to them through whom they come.”
 - Woe because offenses are the evidence of withheld forgiveness and Jesus commanded us to forgive then made our forgiveness predicated on our willingness to forgive.
 - Mk11:25 “When you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone forgive them so that your Father in heaven may forgive you.”
3. **Love: 1Jn3:16** Community is all about loving and being loved. **Favor is the life of Community; Humility is the glue of Community and love is the heart of Community.**
- Community is the context where we face and overcome cultural fears. Perfect love casts out the fear of rejection. Perfect love casts out the fear of authority, the fear of vulnerability, the fear of abandonment...
 - The Kingdom Community is that safe place where the broken hearted are mended.
 - Paul said it best in 1Cor13 “Love never fails...” **The more we choose love the deeper we go in Community. The deeper we go in Community the more we become like Christ.**
4. **Service: Mt20:26** Jesus said it this way, “The greatest must become the servants of all.” Community is the context for serving and being served. Dennis P. said, “If the fastest way to learn is to teach; the fastest way to grow is to serve.
- **The function of Community is found in the pull of 2 tensions: 1. The need to belong 2. The need to be generative.** Belonging and significance is the inward pull. Reproduction and regeneration is the outward.
 - **Community must be both Communion and Mission.** We exist for Him, serve others and celebrate the life found in each other.

As we are in this focus of remembering what we are doing while in the midst of doing it lets remember that Community Image. Jesus rescued us from our singularity and birthed us again in the wonder of the Kingdom Community.