Community, Week 7

Small Group Discussion Guide, week of Nov. 2nd

NOV 2ND SERMON SUMMARY

Community Sunday (Sorry! We missed the first few minutes of the message on the recording.)

Jon Tawa challenged us to live life in community. God gives us each the gift of life, and we can make the choice to engage or not, to enjoy it or waste it. The best way to live life is to take a chance, and do it in community.

- Community can be tough and painful, but God works through conflict and difficulty, and out of his grace brings love, redemption, growth and strength.
- The worst thing to do when you feel bad is to isolate yourself and let your mind take over and make you feel worse. The best way to deal with pain is to be with people you trust, who encourage you and pray for you.
- We are strong together (Eccl. 4:9-12) and the entire body is growing and healthy when there is unity in the body (Eph. 4:11-16).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

I. INTRODUCTION: Share briefly (1-2 min) one thing that made you happy and one thing that made you sad recently.

IL THINK AND REFLECT.

1**.** Jon compared the gift of life and community to receiving a car from his grandfather, and the waste it would be if he kept it in the garage all the time to keep it from getting scratched.

a. Share a time (if any) that you received a gift that you wanted to keep clean and unused.

b . What are the risks of community and getting involved with people, instead of staying "accident-free "in the garage"?

2. Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (below). Ecclesiastes was written by a man who had immense wealth and wisdom. It is a search for meaning, and explores the emptiness of seeking happiness in temporary, human, worldly things – but has this to say about community:

9 Two are better than one,
because they have a good return for their labor:
10 If either of them falls down,
one can help the other up.
But pity anyone who falls
and has no one to help them up.
11 Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.
But how can one keep warm alone?
12 Though one may be overpowered,
two can defend themselves.
A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

2a. Discuss why Jon Tawa and the writer of Ecclesiastes say it's important to be with people, and give examples if you can. How are two better than one when:

- You are working?
- You fall (need help)?
- You are lonely (need warmth)?
- You need strength?

b. What are some ways that the church (CBC or church in general) exemplifies the truth of Ecclesiastes, and gives grace in any of those ways (in 2a)?

c. What are some ways you think the church needs to improve in this? AND (here's the hard part), how can you contribute and be a part of that improvement?

3. As we conclude this Community sermon series, I want to challenge you to think about giving grace in one particular way: how you welcome visitors and receive new people into our community. Read the following article excerpt:

What do you think is the most pressing issue for a first time visitor to your church? The doctrine? The music style? The sermon? No. First-time visitors care most about not embarrassing themselves.

There are all sorts of things that can embarrass a church visitor. They might have dressed inappropriately. Their children might not know how to act "appropriately" in a church. They might be put on the spot as an offering plate is passed. They might stand up at the wrong time. They might sing out during the wrong part of a song.

The worst embarrassing situation can happen when there is a bad welcome, destroying an otherwise great first impression. There's a paradox when it comes to welcoming a visitor: on one hand, they want to anonymously investigate the church without pressure; on the other hand they don't want to be ignored. Some churches have resolved the paradox between embarrassing their visitors and making them feel welcome. They've done this by empowering the church members to welcome guests on an individual level.

For example, one time my wife and I attended a mega-church. From the beginning we were lost in their maze of a parking lot. We decided just to follow the crowd until they led us somewhere. When we finally made it to the main building I rhetorically asked my wife, "Where do we go now?" An astute regular (passing us in the hallway) excused herself and asked us if we needed any help and then simply pointed us in the right direction. She didn't have a nametag and wasn't serving in any official capacity that we could see–she was just paying attention and being a welcoming host. Not only were we saved the embarrassment of wandering aimlessly, but we were grateful and immediately felt welcome.

If people know they can take it upon themselves to make visitors feel welcome, even a very large church can make someone feel right at home.

— DAVID ZIMMERMAN, adapted excerpt from "Church from a Visitor's Perspective"

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3a. If you have visited a church recently (ours or another), what were your most pressing issues? Talk about the need - and difficulty – to not ignore and not embarrass people.

b. Talk about the article. Do you agree that making visitors and newcomers feel welcome is something every individual can do? What makes it hard for you?

c. If you were at the Community Lunch on Sunday, did you talk with and/or sit with people outside your usual group?

- If not, what prevents you?
- If you did, share your experience. Was it hard to do? Was it good?

III. PERSONAL APPLICATION (Choose 1 of the following if time is limited)

4. How can you help CBC grow in being a community where everyone can receive grace?

5. How will you take a chance, and live life in community? Any next steps?