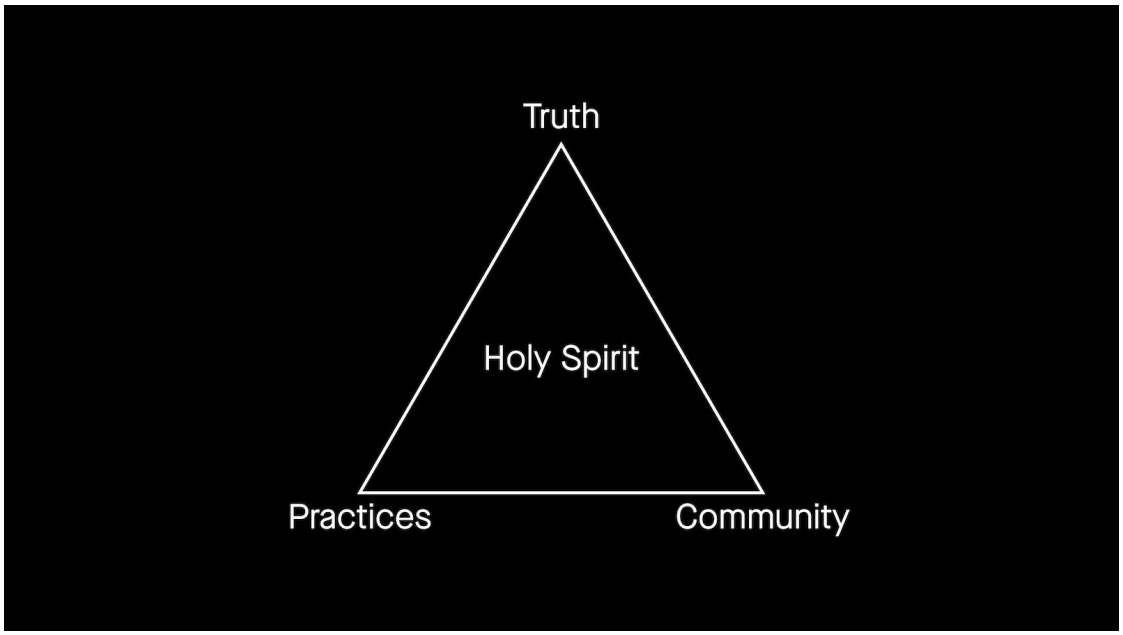


Community in COVID

Romans 12:3-21

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Romans 12:3-21

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Risk is exposure to the chance of injury or loss.

“To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket—safe, dark, motionless, airless—it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.”

- C.S. Lewis

How do we navigate community in COVID as followers of Jesus?

“Spiritual formation occurs primarily in the context of community. People who remain connected with their brothers and sisters in the local church almost invariably grow in self-understanding, and they mature in their ability to relate in healthy ways to God and to their fellow human beings. This is especially the case for those courageous Christians who stick it out through the often messy process of interpersonal discord and conflict resolution. Long-term interpersonal relationships are the crucible of genuine progress in the Christian life. People who stay also grow. People who leave do not grow.”

- Joseph Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family*

Inside the limitations of our current crisis, there is the possibility to build and recover for the kind of community we have always wanted.

Humility before Rightness
Service over Shelter
Joy verses Substitutes

1. Humility before Rightness

Romans 12:3,10,13
Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you…Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves…Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

"Paul is especially concerned that believers not take too individualistic an approach to transformation. Thus he wants us to recognize that the transformation of character is seen especially in our relationships with one another."

- Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*

Rightness

Romans 12:9
Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

Romans 12:9
Love must be sincere.

Romans 12:9
Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

2. Service over Shelter

Romans 12:4-8
For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though

many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

3. Joy verses Substitutes

Romans 12:11-12,15
Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer…Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

“Neurobiologists have shown that while most brain development stops sometime in childhood, the brain’s ‘joy center’ — located and observable in the right orbital prefrontal cortex — is the only part of the brain that never loses its capacity to grow. As Dr. James Friesen and his colleagues explain: ‘When the joy center has been sufficiently developed, it regulates emotions, pain control, and immunity centers; it guides us to act like ourselves; it releases neurotransmitters like dopamine and serotonin; and it is the only part of the brain that overrides the main drive centers —food and sexual impulses, terror and rage. Without sufficient joy strength we spend the rest of our lives trying to fill the deficit.’”

- Jonathan Grant

“Joy is defined relationally as ‘someone who is glad to be with me’ and ‘being the sparkle in someone’s eye.’”

- Dr. Allan Schore

God, who designed the brain, made us in such a way that we seek joy through the eyes and facial expressions of other people who are glad to be with us.

Numbers 6:24-26
The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace.

Psalm 16:11
In your presence there is fullness of joy.

“When we are the sparkle in someone’s eyes, their face lights up with a smile when they see us. We feel joy. From the moment we are born, joy shapes the chemistry, structure and growth of our brain. Joy lays the foundation for how well we will handle relationships, emotions, pain and pleasure throughout our lifetime. Joy creates an identity that is stable and consistent over time. Joy gives us the freedom to share our hearts with God and others. Expressing our joyful identity creates space for others to belong. Joy gives us the freedom to live without masks because, in spite of our weaknesses, we know we are loved. We are not afraid of our vulnerabilities or exposure. Joy gives us the freedom from fear to live from the heart Jesus gave us. We discover increasing delight in becoming the people God knew we could be.”

- Jim Wilder, *The Other Half of Church*

2 Corinthians 4:6
For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.