

THE PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE
Or, The Forty Weeks of Purpose
A Sermon Series Based on the Book by Rick Warren
Message Twenty (Week Twenty): Cultivating Community
Dr. Greg Tyree, BBC, AM, September 5, 2004

INTRODUCTION:

A preacher stood up in front of his congregation and asked, "Have any of you here, at any time in your life-even in childhood-ever told an untruth? And white lies count, by the way." Of course, everyone raised their hand. Then he asked, "And has anyone here ever taken something that didn't belong to you-like a piece of bubble-gum from a candy store, or a paper clip from work, or never returned something that you borrowed?" Everyone raised their hands. "That's good," the minister said. "I just needed to know who my audience is. I see that I'm surrounded by liars and thieves."

Community requires commitment.

Only the Holy Spirit can create real fellowship between believers, but He cultivates it with the choices and commitments we make.

Key Text: James 3:18

Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

PROPOSITION: People experience four things when there is *real* fellowship.

I. CULTIVATING COMMUNITY TAKES CANDOR.

Tell the story about the boy who pushed the outhouse into the creek...

A. Note the **Command** of Honesty. Eph. 4:15; Prov. 24:26; Gal. 6:1, 2.

1. Eph. 4:15:

...but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.

2. Prov. 24:26:

He who gives a right answer kisses the lips.

3. Gal. 6:1, 2:

¹Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. ²Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

B. Note the **Conflict** of Honesty. Eph. 4:25.

Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.

C. Note the **Confrontation** of Honesty. Prov. 28:23.

He who rebukes a man will find more favor afterward than he who flatters with the tongue.

D. Note the **Compassion** of Honesty. 1 Tim. 5:1, 2.

¹Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, ²older women as mothers, younger as sisters, with all purity.

II. CULTIVATING COMMUNITY TAKES CONDESCENSION.

Carl Jung told of a man who asked a rabbi, "How come in the olden days God would show Himself to people, but today nobody ever sees God?" The rabbi said, "Because nowadays nobody can bow low enough."

A. Note the **Requirement** of Humility. 1 Peter 5:5.

Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

B. Note the **Results** of Humility. 1 Peter 5:5.

Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."

C. Note the **Routine** of Humility. Rom. 12:16; Phil. 2:3, 4.

1. Rom. 12:16:

Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

2. Phil. 2:3, 4:

³Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

III. CULTIVATING COMMUNITY TAKES CONCERN.

A. Show **Courtesy** to Each Other. Titus 3:2.

...to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.

B. Show **Commitment** to Each Other. Rom. 12:10.

Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another...

C. Show **Compassion** to Each Other.

A banker had just turned a man down for a loan, then made an unusual offer. He said to the man, "I have one good eye and one glass eye. If you can tell me which is which, I'll approve your loan." The man looked for a moment, then said, "Your left eye is your good eye." The banker was surprised. "That's right," he said. "How could you tell?" The man said, "I detected a hint of compassion in the other eye."

IV. CULTIVATING COMMUNITY TAKES CONFIDENTIALITY.

A judge in Oklahoma was preparing to hear a case and announced to the courtroom audience, "Ladies and Gentlemen, in the interests of keeping all matters pertaining to this trial aboveboard, I would like to report that in my

possession are two envelopes, one from the defendant containing fifteen thousand dollars, and one from the plaintiff containing ten thousand-which some might call bribes. Since I am sworn to judge each case fairly and according to its merits, I feel obligated to return to the defendant the extra five thousand dollars."

A. Consider the **Environment** of Confidentiality.

B. Consider the **Essentiality** of Confidentiality. Prov. 16:28.

A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends.

V. CULTIVATING COMMUNITY TAKES CONSISTENCY.

A. Relationships Take **Time**. Heb. 10:25.

...not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

B. Relationships Take **Tenacity**. Acts 2:46, 47.

⁴⁶*So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,*
⁴⁷*praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*

Seventy-three-year-old Iowa resident Aldin Straight needed to visit his ailing brother, who lived on the other side of the state. There was no one who could drive Mr. Straight to his brother's house. He himself didn't feel capable of driving there; he can't read road signs when he drives faster than twenty miles per hour. So, Mr. Straight did what he could. He rode his lawn mower 240 miles across the state of Iowa to be with his brother.

APPLICATION:

In summary, we need to practice the following nine characteristics of biblical fellowship:

- **CHARACTER**
- **COMMONALITY**
- **CONSIDERATION**

- **COMPASSION**
- **CANDOR**
- **CONDESCENSION**
- **CONCERN**
- **CONFIDENTIALITY**
- **CONSISTENCY**

Point to Ponder: Community requires commitment. .

Question to Consider: How can I help cultivate today the characteristics of real community in my small group and my church?