

“Authentic Community”

Becoming the People God Wants Us to Be #6

INTRODUCTION

Pastor Ron defines Authentic Community, the final quality of a disciple in our series, as “Understanding that Christ’s command to ‘love one another’ (John 13:34) is more than just a suggestion, we will actively involve ourselves in relationships that seek authentic community. These relationships will be marked by unity, commitment, compassion, acceptance, encouragement, and accountability. These are the qualities we seek to develop in ourselves, and, in all the members of New Life Community Church.” The key to creating an authentic community is developing acceptance amongst its members. Without acceptance, none of the other qualities (unity, commitment, compassion, encouragement, and accountability) are possible. This study considers what it takes for us to develop acceptance that leads to authentic community.

Ice Breaker (Optional):

How long have you lived in this community?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

A New PERSPECTIVE

Q1. Read 2 Corinthians 5:16; Colossians 3:11; James 2:1-9

As believers, we are called, not to evaluate others on their outward or natural appearance, which Paul refers to as a “worldly point to view” (2 Corinthians 5:16), but to take on a new perspective, God’s perspective. How is that perspective expressed in Colossians 3:11? We may not have to deal with barbarians and Scythians, but what are some of the things you see dividing the body of Christ today? James 2:1-9 describes how people are treated based on their wealth. According to God’s perspective, how should we be treating the poor? What is one action you might take to extend acceptance, respect and love to your less fortunate neighbors?

A New TRANSFORMATION

Q2. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-18a, Colossians 3: 7-10

To enter into the community of God’s family, we must first be transformed. 2 Corinthians 5:18 refers to our “reconciliation” which is what God accomplishes, exercising His grace towards sinful man on the grounds of the death of Christ. What characterized our “pre-salvation” practices (Colossians 3: 7-10) and must be done away with? What is the connection between those sinful behaviors and our relationship to others? What can we do keep the “new self” renewed so that we don’t slip back into our old ways?

A New PURPOSE

Q3. Read 2 Corinthians 5:18b-20, Acts 26:16-18

Once we are transformed, God gives us a new purpose. What does 2 Corinthians 5:20 call the new role God has given us? This word refers to one who acts as a senior representative. What was it that Jesus told Paul he was being commissioned to do in Acts 26:18? What good news are we charged to bring to the world? When unbelievers turn to God, where will they find “a place” (Acts 26:18)?

A New HOPE

Q4. Read 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:8-9

What hope do we have for those who respond to God’s offer of reconciliation? The answer is found at the end of 2 Corinthians 5:21. This great hope came at what great price? Paul understood its value. Paul had much to lose in following Jesus – as a Pharisee he held a place of prominence among the Jews. But how did he compare the value of his own righteousness to the value of knowing Jesus as Lord? If we grasp the significance of what we have been given, how can we convey that to the unsaved?

WRAP-UP

Christ commands us to love one another, and welcome everyone to be reconciled to God and members of his household. If we are going to be part of an authentic community of believers, we must exchange our views of others for God’s perspective. We must allow ourselves to be transformed into a totally new creation, putting aside our selfish and divisive ways, and living in the image of our creator. Our purpose in Him is to be Christ’s ambassadors offering others the priceless hope that we ourselves have been given. Together in Christ we can live as an authentic community in unity, commitment, compassion, acceptance, encouragement, and accountability.

Memory Verse

From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.
2 Corinthians 5:16ESV

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members’ needs:

Challenge: Ask God to change your perspective toward others this week, and find a way to extend acceptance to someone in need.

