



BODY – ONE ANOTHER

By La Ron Powell
Christian Centre Abbotsford

14 August 2022

Introduction

We are on our journey in our new series Church Alive. **We're trusting that each one of us will be awakened in our God-given gifts and callings in a fresh way and begin to serve one another and make a difference in our city.**

We have examined the topic of Identity and are now turning our focus to the church as a Body.

One Another – Living Life in Community

I'm very excited to be speaking to you today on probably one of my favourite topics and that's community, living life together, unity within the church. **The message is titled "One Another"** because I want to talk to you guys about the importance of one another. I think in today's culture we tend to focus on the man in the mirror, how can I be benefited, how can I be encouraged, how can I be blessed, how can I get this or that? But it's not about you. God has called us to love not just Him but one another. **We've reduced the church to a Sunday meeting and we've made it about our programs and cool planned services, but God has created this church for more.** What was God's idea when he started the church?

We were created for community. We were created to be together, to love one another, serve one another and live life together. If we open our Bibles and see how the early church did it, what do we find? What was their focus? What was Jesus' focus?

If our identity is in Christ and we are called to live like Him and be Christ-like, then we must ask ourselves the question, "How did He model his life?" JESUS PRIORITISED PEOPLE. Jesus spent time with people; He ate with people, served people, loved people; He died for people.

Matthew 22:36-39 NIV "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself'"

The greatest command is to love God with all your heart, because we are His children, our Identity is in Him. The second greatest command is to love his people. It's the second greatest command because JESUS PRIORITISED PEOPLE. We were never called to live our lives in isolation but in community because community is God's idea. Now when I talk about community I'm not talking about groups, I'm talking about a culture, a value system where we make loving people a priority in our lives, because Jesus did. When we make God and people a priority, suddenly our Sunday services become family-like, our groups become closer, our gatherings start to grow in Jesus and with one another.

John 13:33-34 NIV "My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Jesus is saying here that the world will know that we are his disciples by the way we love one another, not how well we preach, or how well we sing during worship, or how many times we

come to church every week, or how many Bible studies we've done. All those things are very important but are we known for how we love our neighbour. We are known for how we love people, not just in words but in action.

My question for us today is this, **"What** will Christian Centre be known for? The worship? The word? The big building? Or will we be known for how we love God and love others – how we love one another?

Living in Community

One of the very best examples of people living in community occurred in the early church as described in Acts 2:42. This is where the church exploded and started growing at a rapid pace.

Acts 2:42 NIV **"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."**

According to this verse, it's obvious that the early believers devoted themselves to four simple practices: teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers. I think we would all agree that there isn't anything fancy about these four practices. They are all actually extremely simple and doable!

The four simple practices:

1. Biblical Teaching

This is so important as we form community and relationships with one another. Many churches focus a lot on the gathering and not the word of God, and then we become this happy club, having fun, meeting a lot, but not being rooted in the word of God. Reading His word gets us closer to Him and it also matures us and connects us.

Romans 15:4-5 NIV **"For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope. May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."**

We see here that as we read the Word together, it gives us hope; that as we read the Word, we start to have one mind and one voice who glorifies the Father. **That's why** it's important to be rooted in His Word, so that we may be unified in Him.

Let's not just read the Word on our own, let's gather together as a community and read his word.

2. Fellowship

This simply means "having things in common, or participation, society, friendship." When you surround yourself with like-minded people, it builds you up, encourages you and equips you to go out and share the love of Christ with those who **don't know Him**. We were never created to be on our own, we were created for fellowship.

Jesus has to be bigger than our Sunday. If being a part of Christian Centre only means you come to church on a Sunday then I want to encourage you to do more than that - meet someone, build a relationship, connect with each other, join a group.

Hebrews 10:24 ESV **"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another - all the more as you see the Day approaching"**

The only way we can consider spurring one another on is by knowing one another. **When we're** in community we live life together, we celebrate together, we cry together, we carry each others burdens, we confide in one another, we read the Word together and we pray together - we are involved in **each other's lives**. **It's not a program**, it's life. We love each other, not just in words but in deed.

Hebrews encourages us not to neglect the gathering or meeting together. One of the devil's tactics is to isolate us so that we don't have people to lean on in times of trouble. Life can be cruel and tough, it can be a very lonely place, and so the devil will try and isolate you so he can take you down, but when you have others around you to love you, encourage you and pray for you, it helps and strengthens us. Live life with people that can uplift you.

3. Breaking of Bread

This refers to having communion or the Lord's Supper or it could be sharing a meal together. **Regardless, it's been my experience that when you gather around a table together to share a meal or the Lord's Supper, something powerful happens. It's intimate and makes people feel safe and welcome.** Guards come down, people open up and healing happens. One of the final things Jesus did before He died was have supper with his disciples.

Jesus used the table to connect with people. He went into people's homes to share life with them and the disciples followed His example. They didn't just gather in big buildings but in homes because it was personal and they shared resources with one another.

Romans 12:9 NIV "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves.

Let's be sincere in the way we love people, and let's be devoted to each other, putting others above ourselves.

4. Prayer

All prayer is powerful, but praying with others allows the Holy Spirit to knit hearts together as only He can.

There's something that happens when we pray together - we become unified in the Spirit.

John 17:20 NIV "**My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.**"

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

"And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles." Acts 2:43 NIV

I love SO much the result of the fellowship of believers stated plainly in verse 43: "Awe came upon every soul!" If this isn't encouragement and motivation to be gathering on a regular basis with a committed group of Christians, I don't know what is!

But that's not all -

"And all who believed were together and had all things in common." Acts 2:44 NIV

It's rare in today's world to have ALL things in common with others, but that's what regular fellowship does to believers who are pursuing the heart of Christ. We begin to die to ourselves and to live for the good of others and the glory of the Lord. Because the more we give of ourselves, the more we start to think about others.

“And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts,” Acts 2:46 NIV

This verse points out the two ways that the early believers spent time together, both in “church” and in homes. Such is a reminder of the importance of corporate worship and being in a smaller group of believers. Both public and private; bigger gatherings and smaller ones.

And finally the end result of this fellowship of believers is found in v47:

“And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” Acts 2:47 NIV

How awesome it is that the Lord blessed their obedience by adding to their number daily those who were being saved! It wasn't the work of men that added to their number, but rather the Lord. What pressure that takes off our shoulders. It's not our job to change people, but to love people. All we have to do is plant the seeds and trust God to make them grow! BUT THIS IS DONE IN COMMUNITY, IN FELLOWSHIP. THIS WAS THE WAY OF THE EARLY CHURCH AND WE NEED TO FOLLOW THAT SAME PATTERN.

Do we now see the importance of gathering together, living life together, loving one another and being devoted to one another? This is how God designed the church.

It's been my experience that when we step outside of our comfort zone to be in community with others, we tend to get nervous or scared, but here's my encouragement: if you can't speak to a big group of strangers, then start with one, and allow God to give you the confidence you need.

Conclusion

My Christian walk has been heavily impacted from being in a community. I actually got saved in a community group or cell group, which is what we called it back then. And what I've learned is that we need each other, we really do. It's clear when we read Scripture that God desires community and unity among believers.

This year has been an overwhelming year for me, just the pressure of work and life has been difficult and God gave me a word about two weeks ago. He said “La Ron ‘You've been a soldier for so long you forgot how to be a son.’” Sometimes we need to tell someone we know that we need help.

I'd like to end with this, something God told me:

If we learn to LOVE, we learn to serve;

if we learn to LOVE, we learn to give;

if we learn to LOVE, we learn to forgive.

It stops becoming about me and it starts becoming about Him and others. Our lives must reflect Him and if His life reflected community, then so must ours. It's time that we wake up **and we become a church that's alive, a church that's known** for how we love God and how we love one another. It's time we start to think of our neighbour, not in just thoughts or words but in deed, in action, so that we can become a community that thrives.

Don't be a Christian that just sits and does nothing, allow Christ to change your heart so that you can be Christ-like.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Consider Jesus' manner of life with his disciples and that of the early church. How does ours compare with theirs?
 2. In what ways can we love one another practically? Are we living like this and if not, what is hindering us?
 3. How can we encourage others to get connected relationally at Christian Centre? Consider the importance of "the **table**" – having meals together. What will you do?
-