

## We Live in Gospel Community

- **Intro**
  - Definition—A community is an organized group of individuals united by a common trait.
  - We live in the most connected society in the history of earth and yet we are more alone than we've ever been!
    - 27.2 million people live alone; 25% say they have no one as a confidant; 54% say that no one knows them well; 43% felt their relationships are not meaningful; 20% rarely feel close to others
    - 100 million new Instagram users per year (800 million total); \$595 million in ad revenue on Insta; 9 million new Twitter users per year (350 million total); over 400 million snapchats created per day; avg person spends 35 minutes per day on Snapchat; 1.5 billion on Facebook; \$17 billion revenue on Facebook;
    - Tech has made communication more convenient than ever; it is easier than ever to gain information/access to people and MORE DIFFICULT than ever to actually build genuine relationships.
  - We increasingly spend more and more of our time in pseudo-relationships with people FAR from us on social media while experiencing more and more decay and isolation from the people CLOSE to us in real life!
  - Rampant individualism has birthed the fruit of massive loneliness!
- **We are Created for Community (Gen. 1:26-27, 31; 2:18)**
  - 1:26-27, 31—Then God said, “Let us make man in OUR image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them...And God saw everything he had made, and behold, it was very good.
  - God exists in loving community
    - This is the first community we were made to enjoy! God creates man as an act of love, that mankind might enjoy all that exists in the community of Father, Son and Spirit (Jn 17)
  - 2:18—Then the Lord God said, “it is not good that the man should be alone; i will make a helper fit for him”
    - The only thing WRONG at creation was mankind's aloneness! God created us to live in community. It wasn't LONELINESS that was the problem...it was ISOLATION. Mankind could not accurately image its creator ALONE...there had to be community!
  - If we don't start here we end up creating idols of relationships everywhere—friends, dating, spouses, children! We were created for God FIRST...our relationships with others only work and make sense in light of our relationships with God...those relationships flow OUT OF our relationship with God.
- **We are Saved into Community (1 Peter 2:9)**
  - v.9—“but you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession”
    - All of those nouns are COLLECTIVE—Never, ever, in the history of the Bible and God's people has salvation been primarily understood as a personal/individual experience! Adam gets Eve. Abraham's promise is to be the father of a numerous people; 12 sons of Israel; 12 disciples; CHURCH!
    - God's children and followers of Jesus have ALWAYS been a PEOPLE! These same descriptions were given to Israel by Moses—yet now, in Christ, they are more fully and gloriously completed! A new race—in Christ. Royalty—family relationship to the risen King. Priesthood—worshipping God in light of the once for all sacrifice of Christ. Holy nation—made holy by the perfect righteousness of Christ!
  - If you want to seriously STUNT your spiritual growth and STIFLE your joy in God, SEPARATE yourself from the community of faith!

- **The Gospel Must Shape Our Community (1 Peter 2:9b-10)**
  - v.9b-10—“proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you are not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy”
  - **THAT**—there is a way that we PROCLAIM the gospel in COMMUNITY that we are unable to as INDIVIDUALS. Our community, with its diversity and uniqueness, declares the comprehensively reconciling gospel message in a way that one individual alone never can!
  - Jesus loves ME and came to save ME is certainly part of the gospel but let’s not forget that a MASSIVE piece of Jesus loving ME is him graciously placing ME inside of WE!
  - God saves us into community in order to give us an environment to ADORN and DEMONSTRATE the gospel!
  - Community...for us, THE CHURCH, is our PRIMARY PLACE for walking out and growing in gospel life rhythms—love one another, serve one another, forgive one another, spur one another on, bear one another’s burdens, pray for one another, sing with one another, encourage one another, rebuke one another, rejoice with one another, weep with one another.
- **The World Must See Our Community (1 Peter 2:11-12)**
  - v.11-12a—READ
    - We display God’s transforming grace as we stand in clear distinction FROM the world
      - The gospel community stands in distinction from the world b/c it is marked by holiness
      - The gospel community stands in distinction from the world b/c it’s unity is in the gospel, not demographics, affinities, class, race, S.E.S., sex, status
      - The gospel community stands in distinction from the world because it operates according to covenant love not conditional loopholes—we love one another when we know we will offend, hurt and betray one another; we don’t quit when it gets hard; we don’t leave when we don’t get our way. There is a COVENANT, GOSPEL stickiness to our community that the world needs!
  - v.12—“that they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation”
    - Our COLLECTIVE light together is far brighter than our individual light ALONE could ever be
    - We declare God’s transforming grace as we engage intentionally WITH the world
      - Meet Up—there are hundreds of pockets of community all around RDU that, sadly, are missing the mark altogether of authentic community or are only experiencing a tiny glimmer of true community because they are missing the gospel and gospel carriers!
        - Let’s enter these places as displayers and declarers of the gospel!!
- **Closing**
  - Gospel community that our Triune God lives in births a gospel community among people saved by His grace and THAT community puts culture’s attempts at community to shame
  - Gospel community flows from and is defined by God’s covenant character not culture’s contractual conditions.
  - Gospel community exists as an attractive and radically counter-cultural family where we belong not because of shallow similarities or “what have you done for me lately” but because of the unfading, all-powerful, blood of Jesus!