

# COMMUNITY: What the Gospel Alone Makes Possible Session 1 | Brian Chesemore September 6, 2015

*"Through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known..."  
(Ephesians 3.10)*

## I. Introduction

### A. Our Recommended Test

*The Compelling Community: Where God's Power Makes a Church Attractive* by Mark Dever and Jamie Dunlop (Crossway)

### B. Introduction and Overview

- **Week One: A Biblical Vision of Community**
- Week Two: How to Foster Community
- Week Three: How to Protect Community
- Week Four: Moving out into the Community

### C. Additional Recommended Reading:

- Side by Side by Ed Welch (Crossway Books)
- The Trellis and the Vine by Marshall/Payne (Matthias Media)
- Community by Brad House (Crossway)
- One-To-One Bible Reading by David Helm (Matthias Media)
- Why We Love the Church by DeYoung and Kluk (Moody)

## II. The Origins of Community

### A. Community in the Trinity

1. Before Creation: The Son and the Father shared in perfect unity and fellowship in the glory of the Godhead.

"And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed." (John 17.5)

Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me, before the foundation of the world." (John 17.24)

2. In Creation:

“Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.”  
(Gen. 1.26; cf. Col. 1.16)

**B. Community in the Garden:** God spoke directly to Adam. He was lavish in his care, specific in his warnings, and clear that man was made dependent, designed for fellowship with others.

1. God spoke to Adam (Gen 1.28)
2. God was generous to Adam (Gen. 1.29-ff)
3. God warned Adam (Gen. 2.17)
4. God provided human companionship/marriage for Adam (Gen. 2.18-25). This act flowed from God’s conviction that it is not good for the man to be alone.

**C. Community Broken:** Through Satanic lies about the character of God, and sinful choices to rebel, communion with God was shattered and sin entered the world, distorting every human relationship. (Gen. 3)

1. Satan calls God a liar: “You will not surely die” (3.4)
2. Satan describes God as insecure and in danger of being dethroned. (3.5)
3. Their disobedience produces immediate shame, human efforts to cover themselves physically and spiritually (3.7-8)
4. God drives out Adam and Eve and prevents them from ever re-entering the place of worship, intimacy and fellowship known as Eden. (Gen. 3.23-24)
5. The rest of the OT tells the story of God’s work to redeem a people for his own glory. Called by his name, ransomed from slavery, they are brought into the Promised Land. God even prescribes a system of sacrifice, and the building of a Temple so that God’s people, sinful and unable to cleanse themselves, could be able to experience forgiveness, faith, and the call to worship him.

**D. Community Restored:** In Ephesians, ch. 1-3 display the powerful and gracious initiative of God to break into our sin ridden and hopeless lives to reconcile us to himself though the shed blood of Jesus. As a result of Christ’s sacrifice:

1. Those spiritually dead are made alive in Christ (Eph. 2.1-10)
2. Those spiritually separated are made into “one new man” in Christ (Eph. 2.11-22)
  - Separated from Christ
  - Alienated from Israel (the covenant people of God)
  - Strangers to the covenants of promise
  - Having no hope and without God in the world

Notice the difference that union with Christ makes. (v.13)

- Gentiles once far off have been brought near
- Israel and non-Israel are made one
- There is no dividing wall of hostility
- Laws and practices that privileged Israel are abolished
- He created one new man in place of the two
- Strangers and Aliens have become fellow citizens

“The New Testament assumes that all Christians will share in the life of a local congregation, worshiping in the body, accepting its nurture and discipline (Matt. 18.15-20; Gal. 6.1) and sharing its ministry and witness. Christians who refuse to join other believers disobey God and spiritually impoverish themselves (Heb. 10.25).”<sup>1</sup>

“Consider a group of Jews and Gentiles who share nothing in common except for a centuries-old loathing for one another. For a less extreme, modern-day parallel, think of liberal Democrats and libertarian Republicans in my own neighborhood. Or the disdain the Prada-shod fashionista feels for the Schlitz-swilling NASCAR crowd (multiplied many times over, of course). Bring them together into the local church where they rub shoulders on a regular basis and things explode, right? No! Because of the one thing they do have in common—the bond of Christ—they live together in astonishing love and unity. Unity that is so unexpected, so contrary to how our world operates, that even the “rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms” sit up and take notice. God’s plans are amazing, aren’t they!”<sup>2</sup>

### **III. Two Ways Christians Conceive of Community**

#### **A. The gospel-plus community:**

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<sup>1</sup> *The Reformation Study Bible*. General Editor R.C. Sproul (Lake Mary, Florida: Ligonier Ministries, 2005). Pg. 1709

<sup>2</sup> Dever, Mark and Dunlop, Jamie. *The Compelling Community* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015) pg. 24-25.

“In the gospel-plus community, nearly every relationship is founded on the gospel plus something else. Sam and Joe are both Christians, but the real reason they’re friends is that they’re both singles in their 40’s, or share a passion to combat illiteracy, or work as doctors. In gospel-plus community, church leaders enthusiastically use similarity to build community. But as a whole, this community says little about the power of the gospel...When Christians unite around something other than the gospel, they create community that would likely exist even if God didn’t. As a modern-day tower of Babel, that community glorifies their strength instead of God’s.”<sup>3</sup>

#### **B. The gospel-revealing community:**

In gospel-revealing community, most relationships would never exist but for the truth and power of the gospel...

“Our identity no longer stems from our families of origin, our professions, or our interests and ambitions, but the fact that we are in Christ. We are Christians. And so as an urban American of the professional class, I have more in common with my working class, rural, Sudanese brother in Christ than with my own non-Christian blood brother.”<sup>4</sup>

### **IV. The Result of Gospel-Revealing Community**

#### **A. Community whose love points to the gospel (Eph. 4.1-3)**

1. The Church’s love is grounded In Christ’s Self-Sacrificial Love
2. The church’s love must be focused on the church.
3. Love amongst disciples is to shine brightly

#### **B. Community whose teaching produces maturity discipleship (4.11-16)**

1. He builds His Church Through Word-Saturated Leaders (v.11)
2. He builds His Church Through Word-Equipped Christians (v.12)
3. He builds His Church towards the Goal of Maturity (v.13)

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pgs. 22-23

<sup>4</sup> Dever, Mark and Dunlop, Jamie. *The Compelling Community* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015) pg. 30.