

# COMMUNITY: What the Gospel Alone Makes Possible Session 4 | Brian Chesemore September 27, 2015

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

## I. Introduction

Week One: A Biblical Vision of Community

*Week Two: The Aim of Gospel-Community*

Week Three: How to Foster Gospel-Community

**Week Four: How to Protect Gospel-Community**

Recommended Text: *The Compelling Community*<sup>1</sup>

## II. Tracing the Bible’s Teaching on Community

- Community’s Origin: The eternal fellowship of our Triune God
- Community in Creation: Adam’s relationship w/ God and Eve
- Community Broken: Adam and Eve’s Rebellion against God
- Community Restored: God’s Reconciling Work in Christ

## III. Community Protected & Pursued

### A. Understand the Basis of our Fellowship (I John 1.1-4)

“Christian fellowship is two dimensional; it is first vertical and then horizontal. The horizontal plane of fellowship, which is our immediate concern, presupposes the vertical for its very existence. The *vertical* dimension of fellowship was described by John when he wrote: ‘our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ’ (I John 1:3). This fellowship is what makes a Christian; indeed John’s words afford a precision definition of a Christian. The man who is not in fellowship with the Father and the Son, however upright and pious he may be, is no Christian at all...

The horizontal dimension of fellowship is the habitual sharing, the constant giving to and receiving from each other, which is true and authentic pattern of life for the people of God... Fellowship with God, then, is the source from which fellowship among Christians springs; and the fellowship with God is the end to which Christian fellowship is a means...

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<sup>1</sup> Dever, Mark and Dunlop, Jamie. *The Compelling Community: Where God’s Power Makes a Church Attractive* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway; 2015)

We should not, therefore, think of our fellowship with other Christians as a spiritual luxury, an optional addition to the exercises of private devotion. We should recognize rather that such fellowship is spiritual necessity; for God has made us in such a way that our fellowship with himself is fed by our fellowship with fellow-Christians, and requires to be so fed constantly for its own deepening and enrichment.”<sup>2</sup>

#### B. Understand the Seriousness of Sin (1 John 1.4-2.6)

As Christians, we need to think rightly about God’s holiness and our sin.

- God is holy and pure (1.5)
- We are not to be characterized by the darkness of sin (1.6)
- Our walk before God is marked by purity and fellowship with the church (1.7)
- We do sin (1.8)
- Confession of sin is necessary both for salvation and the Christian life (1.9, 2.1)
- Sin is to be taken seriously, avoided, hated (2.1)
- We continue to sin and everyday we need our perfect advocate and propitiation (2.1-2)

**Key Question:** Having been “made alive” and “brought near” and added to “the church”, how am I to protect and pursue what the gospel creates and makes possible? Recognize what threatens and hinders our cultivation of community

### IV. Community Threatened...Three Hindrances

#### A. Sin:<sup>3</sup>

What are some sins that the NT holds out as threats to our fellowship?

##### 1. Unbelief:

“Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we share in Christ...” (Heb. 3.12-14)

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<sup>2</sup> Packer, J.I. *God’s Words*. (Madison, WI: Inter-Varsity Press 1981) pg. 193.

<sup>3</sup> Much of this section was taken from or informed by Gary Ricucci’s teaching to the Pastors College: *The Gospel, Grace, and the Gift of Fellowship*, 2015.

## 2. Pride and Self-righteousness:

- Unaware of Sin
- Unaware of need for others' help or unwilling to involve others.

“God is light...If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. I we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” (I Jn. 1.6, 8)

“It is evident that man never attains to a true self-knowledge until he has previously contemplated the face of God, and come down after such contemplation to look unto himself.”<sup>4</sup>

“Humility is honestly assessing ourselves in light of God’s holiness and our sinfulness.”<sup>5</sup>

“Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.” (Prv. 18.1)

## 3. Fear of Man:

“The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe.” (Prv. 29.25)

- Fear of rejection and craving for approval
- Laboring to protect an inaccurate image of myself

## 4. Selfishness:

“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 2.3-5)

- An agenda of ease.
- Laziness to not act on another’s behalf.
- Self-centeredness to not enter into another’s situation/need

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<sup>4</sup> John Calvin as quoted in Mahaney, CJ. Humility: True Greatness. (Multnomah)

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*

5. *Sinful Speech and Impurity:*

*“You must no longer walk as the Gentiles do...having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another...Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths...sexual immorality and covetousness must not even be named among you.” (Eph. 4.17-5.21)*

**What should we do?**

“The choicest believers, who are assuredly freed from the condemning power of sin, ought yet to make it their business all their days to mortify the indwelling power of sin.”<sup>6</sup>

“The vigor, and power, and comfort of our spiritual life depends on the mortification of the deeds of the flesh.”<sup>7</sup>

- **Look to Jesus.** Apply the gospel’s power in our fight against sin. I could give you hundreds of verses to support this priority.

“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” (I Jn 2.1)

“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” (Eph. 5.1-2)

“Let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, let us run with endurance...looking to Jesus.” (Heb. 12.1-2)

- **Look to others.** Involve others in our fight against sin. (Heb. 3)

**B. Schedule:**

“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.” (Eph. 5:15-16)

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<sup>6</sup> Owen, John. *Temptation and Sin* from *The Works of John Owen* vol. VI, written in 1656 (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1995) Pg. 7

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*, pg. 9.

Christians are going to be busy. But its good to evaluate our busyness.

- **Spiritual Activity:** “Church activity may especially attract the least spiritual. If there are any in your congregation who, like the Galatians, began “with the Spirit” but now seek to be “perfected by the flesh” (Gal. 3.3), they will likely be consumed with activity. What better shows that we are worthy of God’s affection than throwing ourselves into activity at church.”<sup>8</sup>
- **Recreation:** “Decisions to join a sports team, to buy a boat, and to spend summers away can all curtail investment in relationships at church.”<sup>9</sup> That quote isn’t directed to college or seminary students headed home to see family!
- **Family:** “For many families, it’s their children’s extracurricular commitments more than their own that regulate their capacity for church involvement. Beyond that, every Christian must weigh carefully their responsibilities to care for children, spouse, and extended family (Eph. 5.33; 6.4; Matt. 15.4-9) with the biblical priority of the ‘household of faith’ (Gal. 6.10).”<sup>10</sup>

### **What should we do?**

**Get wisdom through prayer, study and from others in the church.** Are you overcommitted? Every considered why? Sometimes just slowing down to pray, and evaluate before God, “What really are my priorities in this season?” the issue will become clear.

“In an abundance of counselors there is safety...” (Prov. 11.14)

### **C. Skill:**

“Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.” (Ro. 12.9-10)

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<sup>8</sup> Dever, Mark and Dunlop, Jamie. *The Compelling Community: Where God’s Power Makes a Church Attractive.* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015) 118.

<sup>9</sup> Dever, Mark and Dunlop, Jamie. *The Compelling Community: Where God’s Power Makes a Church Attractive.* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015) 124.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

“Above all keep loving one another earnestly...show hospitality to one another without grumbling.” (1 Pet. 4.8-9)

“Let brotherly love continue.” (Heb. 13.1; cf. Eph.4.29-21; 1 Cor. 13)

### **What should we do?**

1. Consider (and Act!!)
  - How can I obey and enjoy the biblical command to show hospitality?
  - How can I pursue the biblical model of discipling relationships? Who can I learn from?
  - How can I go deeper with those in my community group?
2. Pray for those in the church, in your community group.
3. Read Side by Side by Ed Welch (Crossway).