

Vital Signs: An Eyes Wide Open Love for the Pain and Promise of Gospel Community

January 12, 2020

Hebrews 10:25, John 15:12, Ephesians 4:1

*To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus,
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.
– CG Mission Statement*

Icebreaker: What do you love about your community group and why?

Worship: Read the “one another” verses of this week’s sermon:

Be at peace with one another (Mk 9:50)
Don’t grumble among one another (Jn 6:43)
Don’t bite, devour, and consume one another (Ga 5:15)
Gently, patiently tolerate one another (Ep 4:2)
Don’t grumble against one another (Jas 5:9)
Confess your sins to one another (Jas 5:16)
Don’t lie to each other (Col 3:9)
With all patience, bear with one another in love (Ep 4:2)
Bear one another’s burdens (Ga 6:2)
Honor one another above yourselves (Ro 12:10)
Serve one another (Ga 5:13)
Wash one another’s feet (Jn 13:14)
Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Ep 5:21)
Speak to one another with psalms and hymns (Ep 5:19)

Teach and admonish one another (Col 3:16; Rom 15:14)
Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another (1 Pe 5:5)
Don’t slander one another (Jas 4:11)
Stop passing judgment on one another (Ro 14:13)
Love one another (Jn 13:34, 15:12, 17; Ro 13:8; 1 Thes 4:9)
Love one another deeply, from the heart (1 Pet 3:8)
Above all keep loving one another earnestly (1 Pet 4:8)
Serve one another in love (Ga 5:13, 1 Pet 4:10)
Encourage and build up one another (1 Th 4:18, 1 Th 5:11)
Encourage one another daily (Heb 3:13)
Stimulate one another to love and good deeds (He 10:24)
Be hospitable to one another without grumbling (1 Pe 4:9)
Pray for one another (Jas 5:16)
Live in harmony with one another (Rom 12:16)

Consider one another more important than yourselves (Php 2:3)
Bear with and forgive one another as the Lord has forgiven you (Co 3:13)
Don’t become conceited, provoking and envying one another (Ga 5:26)
Be kind, compassionate, and forgiving toward one another (Ep 4:32)
Seek good for one another, and don’t repay evil for evil (1 Th 5:15)
Welcome one another just as Christ has welcomed you (Ro 15:7)
When you come together to eat, wait for one another (1 Co 11:33)
Make your love increase and overflow for each other (1 Thes 3:12)
Be devoted to one another in love and brotherly affection (Ro 12:10)
Greet one another with a kiss (Ro 16:16; 1 Co 16:20; 2 Co 13:12, 1 Pet 5:14)

Bible Passage & Guiding Question (*The following question is intended to help frame your discussion. Keep it in mind as you read the bible passage and review the sermon summary together.*)

Bible Passage: Hebrews 10:25, John 15:12, Ephesians 4:1

Guiding Question: What is the posture of your community group?

Sermon Summary

A healthy church aspires to and holds one another accountable to God’s communal commands... and is patient and kind along the way. Why is this so rare? Much has to do with our posture toward the church and these “One Another” statements. We must become aware of such postures as well as which to avoid and which to aspire to.

Postures to Avoid

Complacency – The life of Jesus is not a work of art to be admired for its moral beauty. Christ is clear what He requires of His followers (John 15:12). We are called to action, not to admire. So why do we fall short? Because instead of looking to Jesus, we look to one another. We collectively lower the bar, comparing our standing as “good Christians.” And when lukewarmness is the norm, it’s easy to see ourselves as better than average. We accept complacency, overlooking just how often the Bible focuses on how we relate to one another rather than our solitary actions. But as Paul warns, to grow complacent about our Christian community is to grow complacent about the health of our very souls (Gal 5:19-21).

Cynicism – When we compare past experiences of Christian community with how the New Testament describes it, it’s almost a given that we’ll become bitter and angry. We must beware of such cynicism. It feels right, but to be cynical is to drink poison, hoping the other person will die. Behind it lurks self-righteousness and a belief that we are somehow more deserving of God’s love than those who’ve upset us (Rom 2:1). We cannot forget that we are in need of God’s grace just as much as those we’re passing judgment on.

Naïve Idealism – People who love community often destroy it. We love our ideal of what it should be but not the broken people who would comprise it. In truth, we cannot live up to the very standards we seek to adopt. And if that’s true, why do we hold others hostage to them? Christian community is not an ideal to be realized; it’s a reality to live into. Each of us is broken and in need of healing. Which is why PCC ought to be the safest place in Los Angeles – the one place we have the freedom to be a human being.

Postures to Aspire to

Brokenness & Humility – God designed His church to function as a family... yet it has been reduced to an optional weekly meeting many of us would rather avoid. We shy away from its required brokenness. It’s terrifying to open up about this, but such honesty and humility will unite us. We are not our wounds; we are not our sin. We are people whom God loves and Christ redeemed with His own blood. Broken, but beloved and embraced.

Battle-Ready – The foundational battle of our lives is within – the battle over our soul. And so we must keep a “permanent and permanently horrified perception of our natural corruption”. Our natural inclination is toward worldliness; no one drifts into holiness (Rom 8:13). We must therefore fight for the life God calls us toward.

Christian community is community in Christ; He is always within and between us. Jesus opened the way to God and to each other, enabling us to live Gospel-centered lives and to see the true image of others which they have received from Him (2 Cor 5:16). This is the world and the reality which Christ died to make real.

Discussion Questions *(It’s better to wrestle deeply with a few good questions than to gloss over many.)*

- What was your first impression as you read the ‘one another’ communal commands?
 - Why do you think we don’t see more of this in churches (or in our church) today?
 - Pick a few of the “one another” commands to discuss and apply to your life personally.
- Rankin mentioned several postures to avoid i.e. complacency, cynicism, naive idealism. Which do you tend to adopt in your faith journey? Towards your community group? Towards your church?
 - What do these postures say about our opinion of God’s “one another” commands to the church?
 - Are there any other barriers to a healthy community?
- What are some of the things we ought NOT to do to “one another”?
 - Describe how disastrous these things can be to the unity of community.
- Why must a healthy spiritual community adopt a posture of brokenness? What does that look like?
 - Discuss the role of courage and being “battle ready” as part of a healthy spiritual community.
- How is the church more like waiting to see a doctor rather than waiting for a job interview?
 - Would you say your church is producing “givers and attenders” or “servants who see every person in the fullness of Christ’s love”?
 - How would you describe yourself at this time in your faith walk?

What Can We Be Praying For?

Use the “one another” commands as a prayer list when you pray for one another this week.

Engage & Experience

When was the last time you went up to someone and encouraged them, or cared for them, or gave them a shoulder to cry on, or prayed for them, or thanked them for something? What are some specific ways we can encourage one another to love and good deeds? Make a commitment to see the face of Christ in everyone you interact with this week.