

The Power of Community: How Unity Produces Fruitfulness

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My prayer is that the Lord adds to our number daily those who are being saved –increasing believers in Christ’s church, in the congregations we have been placed, and in our families. This is why **Equipping to Share** workshops are taking place all over the country, training God’s people to be better equipped in evangelism for the bearing of fruit.

As the Coordinator, one question I’m constantly asked is this: How can we be more effective and fruit-bearing as Christ’s church? In Acts 2, there are answers to this question. First, let me share the story. It can be summarized as follows:

On the day of Pentecost, the twelve disciples were all together in one place in Jerusalem. There, in Jerusalem, were God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. Peter stood up with the eleven and addressed the crowd. He warned them and pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Three thousand people accepted his message and were baptized that day!

This group formed a church community, which is called “the fellowship of believers” in Acts 2. By their obedience to the Lord, He did just what we are praying for: He added to their number daily those who were being saved. What is it that they did that the Lord blessed and, as a result, added to their number daily? Acts 2:42 tells us:

They devoted themselves...

- To the apostles' teaching
- To fellowship
- To the breaking of bread, and
- To prayer

As a result, “everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles... And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:43 & 47b).

The God of the fellowship of believers is the same today as He was yesterday. As His chosen people, which the Bible says we are in 1 Peter 2:9, we are members of the fellowship of believers and should also devote ourselves diligently. As a result, we can trust the Lord for the same results: numbers upon numbers of people brought into a relationship with Christ. What we need to do is devote ourselves as a *community* as the fellowship of believers did in Jerusalem.

Tips:

Together...Let us devote ourselves to...

The apostle’s teaching.

There is power in community: “Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:12). There is accountability in community. When one person falls, the other picks her back up again. Though one may grow weary in doing good, adherence and devotion to Christ’s teaching, will provide encouragement and support to continue on.

Fellowship.

As one community, when living life together no one falls behind. It is when there is isolation and one gets away from the community the devil tries to attack. When one abandons or neglects fellowship with other believers, it quite often ends in depression –one of the tools the devil uses on us spiritually to form a wedge between us from God.

“Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). In the animal kingdom, it is when a sheep strays from the flock that a lion attacks. When it is off by itself, it is vulnerable to attack. The Bible compares the devil to a lion. If believers forsake fellowship and community, they are vulnerable to spiritual attack. There is *power* in community.

Have fun with one another. Christ came to give us life and give us life abundantly. That doesn’t mean sulking around in depression or off by ourselves. It means living life fully and to the hilt, not in the deficit as though you had no joy. How can we joyfully live together in community? Make time for fun and fellowship. Laugh with one another. Share your lives together as a family.

The breaking of bread.

The breaking of bread is most commonly known as *communion* in the church. A synonym for the word communion is unity. Breaking bread together symbolizes we are all unified as one in Christ Jesus.

We eat the bread and drink of the cup and together as one recognize that Jesus’ blood was poured out for us all for the forgiveness of sins so that, together, we may give thanks to the Father.

“Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf” (1 Corinthians 10:16-17).

Prayer.

In James 5:16 it says: “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

There is power for healing and miracles by gathering together in prayer. It is no wonder that, as a result of their devotion to prayer, the fellowship of believers were “filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles” (Acts 2:43).

Jesus said: “I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:19-20).

You may be praying for the seemingly hopeless, earnestly hoping one of your children or parents find a relationship with the Lord. Their life may have been filled with darkness and desperation until now.

You may have received a belligerent response to your witnessing efforts in the past. But, Jesus promises that if two or more of us gather together for anything –for your mother, your son’s salvation –that it will be done for you by our heavenly Father.

Conclusion:

If you have a hard time envisioning such a community or you are wondering why there is a lack of fruitfulness in your congregation, take a moment and ask yourself: Is there quarreling among us? Is there unforgiveness between me and someone else in my fellowship of believers? If there is division between members of your community, there will be a lack of fruitfulness. Think about the time wasted by arguments and pride. Often, we’re so focused on being right we allow the devil a foothold into our church and, as a result, become barren.

“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God” (James 4:1-2).

Being a member of the fellowship of believers is a high calling. It is a real responsibility not to be taken lightly. Out of obedience, we are to forgive one another. “And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins” (Mark 11:25). Do not allow unforgiveness to hinder you any longer from doing what the Lord is calling you to do. The devil wants us to be idle so the Word of God is hindered from reaching the ears of the lost. Do not allow him this foothold. There are people who are impacted by your obedience.

“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3).

The most crucial part of being a fruitful fellowship of believers is *unity*. If this all sounded really good to you up until now, you are probably in turmoil with someone in your congregation. We are the Lord’s servants: “And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful” (2 Timothy 2:24). Instead, find power through the Holy Spirit who is in you and with you and “over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity” (Colossians 3:14). When there is unity within the fellowship of believers, there will be fruitfulness for the kingdom of heaven!

“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:5-6).

About the Author:

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