



Touch Point

COMMUNITY

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“Let him who cannot be alone beware of community. He will only do harm to himself and to the community. Alone you stood before God when he called you; alone you had to answer that call; alone you had to struggle and pray; and alone you will die and give an account to God. You cannot escape from yourself; for God has singled you out. If you refuse to be alone you are rejecting Christ’s call to you, and you can have no part in the community of those who are called...

But the reverse is also true: Let him who is not in community beware of being alone. Into the community you were called, the call was not meant for you alone; in the community of the called you bear your cross, you struggle, you pray. You are not alone, even in death, and on the Last Day you will be only one member of the great congregation of Jesus Christ. If you scorn the fellowship of the brethren, you reject the call of Jesus Christ, and thus your solitude can only be hurtful to you...

We recognize, then, that only as we are within the fellowship can we be alone, and only he that is alone can live in the fellowship. Only in the fellowship do we learn to be rightly alone and only in aloneness do we learn to live rightly in the fellowship. It is not as though the one preceded the other; both begin at the same time, namely, with the call of Jesus Christ.

Each by itself has profound pitfalls and perils. One who wants fellowship without solitude plunges into the void of words and feelings, and one who seeks solitude without fellowship perishes in the abyss of vanity, self-infatuation, and despair.

Let him who cannot be alone beware of community. Let him who is not in community beware of being alone.”

- **Dietrich Bonhoeffer**

“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.”

Romans 12:9-16

“What is community? The process of growth to Christlike maturity is one through which we need to patiently walk in the context of community because it is impossible to experience any kind of significant growth on our own. If we are going to experience the richness of learning and growing in community, then we need to be in a covenant group with people we trust and with whom we can share our lives through thick and thin.

When we enter into a covenantal relationship, we make an unusual commitment to one another. We say in essence, ‘I want to grow up in Christ with you. I want to play with you, laugh with you, cry with you, pray with you, share with you, study with you, and grow with you, and I hope you want the same.’ We are committing to each other with the willingness to live out all the ‘one anothers’ of the Scriptures, such as:

- Love one another (John 13: 34-35; Rom. 13:8; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11-12)
- Confess your sins and pray for one another (James 5:16)
- Care for one another (1 Cor. 12: 24-25)
- Greet one another (1 Peter 5:14)
- Bear one another’s burdens (Gal. 6:2)
- Encourage and build up one another (1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 3:13; 10:25)

- Submit to one another (Eph. 5:21)
- Bear with one another and forgive one another (Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:13)
- Admonish one another (Col. 3:16)
- Serve one another in love (Gal. 5:13)
- Spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24)

When we are in covenantal fellowship with a group of like-minded and like-hearted believers, we will discover that when the hard times come our way, we are not left to stand alone. In crisis moments when it feels as though our world is spinning out of control or the bottom is dropping out, we can cling to one another and find hope and joy for the journey. That is what the Christian community is supposed to look like. Is that your experience in the context of your local church?"

- **Stephen A. Macchia**

WORKS CITED

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"What is community?..."

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