

**“Living the Resurrection”, 1 Thessalonians**  
**Community: Better Together**  
**6.23.19**  
**1 Thessalonians 5:12-24**



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**Reflection Questions for Personal Use or in a Group Context...** (please consider the teaching notes prior to consideration of the reflection questions)

Today's teaching serves to both offer some concluding thoughts from Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, as well as provide opportunity to share some current testimonies and direction for the coming year together.

*“‘Church’: an evocative word. It calls out certain feelings and emotions in us. If you were formed in some sort of faith community, what feelings do the word evoke?”*

*“Did you have a leader in your life who has been influential? What were some of the qualities/characteristics which made his presence so memorable?”*

*“What were your responses to the quote offered by Larry Crabb?”*

*“Who is leading you? How are you honoring them? Who are you leading?” [exhorting; challenging; encouraging]*

*“Who is your community? Who do you know? Who knows you?”*

*“With whom are you struggling? Whose weakness are you entering, patiently?”*

*“Where are you making time in your life, right now, to invest in other people?”*

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**Teaching Notes...**

**We cannot allow ourselves to become convinced that Christianity is anything other than establishing the ‘shalom’ of God in every facet of our lives and demonstrating to people what it looks like to live “collaboratively” under the reign of God.**

I calculated that I have been alive for over **(3,000) Sundays**. If you count (4) services a week, special events, “revivals”, etc., you can expand that, exponentially. I have consumed mounds of communion wafers (a.k.a. packing peanuts), gallons of Welch’s grape juice (some fermented... forbidden in our tradition), participated in thousands of toxin-laden “pot lucks” (certain has left me immune to botulism) and have experienced any number of “*Come to Jesus*” moments, but it was all within the context of a bunch of people that I knew as “*brother*” or “*sister*” \_\_\_\_\_.

Church, for me, was never primarily about structures and programs and marketing strategies. It wasn’t some organizational-strategy to be marketed. It was people with whom we shared life. It was complicated. It was messy. It was beautiful.

Paul’s final encouragement involves the role of leaders, the importance of inter-dependent relationships, and the wholeness that is engendered as they remain committed to such community.

Anytime that you have a group of people, moving together in symbiotic relationship, someone(s) must find themselves ‘leading’. Some of those folks will be take charge, Type A, personalities who write books and do podcasts and are Linked-In.

A great many of those people will be more reluctant. They will attempt to find any number of reasons why God has obviously mistaken them for someone else.

Leaders have varying levels of responsibility, but they all have influence. Paul is saying, *“Find ways to make it easier for your leaders to lead you!”*

**Paul identifies leaders as those who are “*doing the Lord’s work*”, who are “*providing spiritual care/guidance*” (watch over you), and who are doing it, not from a particular wing in the church, or always “up front”, but “*among you*”.**

Leaders are to “admonish” (correct error). It is a word used in the NT for the role of a parent. We are not only attempting to simply develop another’s skills, but actually provide nurture and confidence and sense of their own significance and value, apart from their competencies.

Leaders step into the difficult conversations and call people to a response which better reflects the nature of our identification with Christ.

*“... overwhelm them with appreciation and love” (The Message)*

These are people, not primarily with the right *Strength-Finders* score or *DISC* assessment result, but who are learning to be good followers because good followers make great leaders!

These folks are simultaneously, “shepherds” and “sheep”. People entrusted with authority and under authority. These are people of whom I am pleased to say that their selection has not produced a sense of entitlement or arrogance, but deeper humility for greater spheres of influence and service.

As a church, we have chosen to declare an image of a preferred-future which we believe will allow us to best understand how to function as the church in this particular time and space: in this community at this particular season in history:

*Woodinville Alliance Church... a community where every person discovers who they really are in Christ, experiences his goodness, and shares this life-changing encounter with their world so that others might value and choose Jesus for themselves.*

- That vision supported by a set of **values** which allows us to increasingly experience it as our reality:

**Discovery:** We are a people who are being informed and formed by the biblical narrative and who are developing both a strong sense of identity (*who* we are), and a deep sense of purpose (*why* we are) within the Story of a loving and faithful God.

**Encounter:** We are a people who intentionally make ourselves “*present to*” and “*present for*” God in order that we might know him and respond in obedience to his loving initiatives.

**Surrender:** We are a people who are learning to trust in God’s goodness and his good intentions for us and who are courageously and voluntarily living into his will for us.

**Integration:** We are a people who are committed to seeing, honoring, and welcoming the “stranger” in ways which encourage healthy inter-dependence and compel others to participate in transformative community.

**Restoration:** We are a people who share in God’s work of healing, renewing, and restoring the world so that it increasingly becomes a better reflection of the wholeness (“shalom”) for which it was created.

**Engagement:** We are a people who are authentically loving God and compassionately loving our ‘near ones’ in ways which validate our claims of faith in Jesus and compel others to find life in and through him.

*“The future of the church depends on whether it develops true community. We can get by for a while on size, skilled communication, and programs to meet every need, but unless we sense that we belong to each other, with masks off, the vibrant church of today will become the powerless church of tomorrow... a place of pretense where sufferers suffer alone, where pressure generates conformity rather than the Spirit creating life--- that’s where the church is headed unless it focuses on community.”*

Larry Crabb (The Connecting Church)

**God, himself, IS community--- Father, Son, and Spirit--- and out of that mutual-interdependence comes the desire for humans to live in relationship with one another.**

Individually, we are incapable of fully displaying the glory of God. It takes a group of people functioning willingly and intentionally, to express the glorious nature of who God is and what he is up to in the world. The “church’.

We know we are called to “community”, but most often, isolation seems to be our default response. We live with the tension of knowing that simply “*being together*” has not resulted in “*togetherness*”, but isolating ourselves has not proven effective in satisfying our needs either.

In many aspects, we have no other reason to be together “except” the gospel (e.g. different musical tastes, movies, dinner preferences--- you eat at 9:00 p.m. I eat at 5:30 p.m.) Little wonder that Jesus’ dying prayer was for unity!

**Transformation** (“the welcome back to who you were always meant to be”) **is a communal process. At some point, you must let God love you through someone else. We call it community.**

“**Encounter**” and “**Equip**” will serve as the theme for coming year emphasis and teaching. We will continue to consider the presence of the church in the prevailing culture as well as spend time reflecting of the gifts of the Spirit and the ways we have been empowered to live Christianly in the world.

**“Renew Ministry”** [in service personal testimonies]

A discipleship/leadership track which takes a holistic approach to life and faith. It is a biblically-centered pursuit which focuses on personal restoration and ministry (identity and mission).

**Renew 1:** introduction into listening prayer, awareness of and responsiveness to the Spirit, with an emphasis on practicing it in a smaller-group context.

**Renew 2:** currently with our “R & D” Dept 😊

Builds upon the principles of R1, helping people find wholeness by forging an identity in Jesus, finding healing/restoration in their own places of brokenness and being equipped to serve as “*ministers of reconciliation*” to others (2 Corinthians 5).

One of the primary measuring tool of community is stories-shared. I find that healthy community is best “described” and not “defined”: responses which describe the community they are experiencing.

The, “*work of the ministry*”, as Paul offers it, is not the domain of the exceptionally-gifted few. Paul lays the responsibility for the community on the community, itself.

**Restoration...** a people who share in God’s work of healing, renewing, and restoring the world...

**Engagement...** a people who are authentically loving God and compassionately loving our ‘near ones’...

Ours is not to develop a streamlined and sophisticated menu of God-options from which you can choose, but to help encourage, empower, and equip you to find yourself in gospel-centered relationships with a few others with whom you are journeying toward wholly-ness and creating space for others to travel alongside.

**Wherever you look in the story, the emphasis is the same: not the rescue and isolation of the individual, but the formation of a community in which the values of the kingdom are the order of the day, and people are able to make healing connections with God and one another for the good of the world.**

### **Wholeness/Health/Call**

**Young Adult House:** We are presently beginning the prayerful process of developing a team to engage a larger “*City-2-World*” movement.

It would be a ministry that would be designed to help young people solidify their identity in Jesus by living in committed community, learning practices and rhythms which help them learn life from Jesus and live life like Jesus.

They would be invited into discipleship and leadership development tracks, such as “Renew 1 & 2”, which would be designed to help them become those who could help replicate the experience with another--- “so that others might choose Jesus for themselves.”

Paul roots his confidence, not in the faithfulness of the church to consistently live into her identity and mission, but in the faithfulness of God. The most important thing about us is that we are a gathering of people who are identified by the Presence and who are held together by the faithfulness of God. “*The one who calls is faithful. He will do it.*”