



MERGE

the community we are meant to be

June 12th, 2016

The Encouraging Community

Embracing The Deeper & Truer Christ Story – The Community Exists to Shape and Guide My Soul.

Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. ²⁴Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. ²⁵And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. – Hebrews 10:23-25 NLT

Becoming a Church that Both Comforts and Challenges

1. REMINDING EACH OTHER WHO WE ARE

Verse 23- Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise.

- We are a Hole-y People.

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. – Romans 3:23

- We are a Holy People.

Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. – Romans 3:24

James Bryan Smith: “Holy yet broken. Broken yet holy. Broken yet able to carry the presence and the power of Christ.”

2. SHOWING EACH OTHER WHAT WE CAN BE

Verse 24- Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.

Growth-Producing Activities

- GROWTH TRACK
- GROWTH GROUPS
- DREAM TEAM

3. HAVING THE COURAGE TO HOLD EACH OTHER ACCOUNTABLE

Verse 25- And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

- The Art of Encouragement

**Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.
– 1 Thessalonians 5:11 ESV**

- The Art of Admonishment

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom... – Colossians 3:16 ESV

I Will Merge by...

- Memorizing **Hebrews 10:24-25**
- Encouraging others with the truth of God’s love and grace.
- Admonishing others with the truth of God’s rightness and holiness.
- Giving my life to Jesus as Savior and Lord, for the first time.

WALK THE TALK

A Growth Group Guide

1. What's the nicest thing that anyone has ever said about you? How did it make you feel?
2. Have you ever felt like someone is encouraging you too much? Buttering you up, or flattering you? Do you respond well to encouragement, or does it make you suspect of the person's intentions?
3. Is it easy or difficult for you to give encouragement to other people? Why?
4. Some people have a tendency to "overshare" or give "TMI." On the other hand, some people feel like sharing too much information is giving a "negative confession." Discuss what you feel like is a healthy balance between being honest about our "holes" while affirming our holiness.
5. Define "admonish" in your own words. Have you ever had someone admonish you in a way that was helpful? How about in a way that was hurtful? Describe what makes the difference.
6. The sermon discussed the idea that the church is partially responsible for our personal Christian growth. What is your reaction to that idea? What is the church's job, and what is your own job in that process?
7. Go around the room and share something you really appreciate about the person to your left.

SOUL TRAINING – FINDING AN ACCOUNTABILITY FRIEND

A Personal Transformation Exercise

The Principle:

In James 5:16 it says that we are to confess our sins one to another so that we may be healed. This can often be an overlooked part of our discipleship process. We pray to God and ask for forgiveness, but it's through interaction with God's people that we find healing. This is why programs such as A.A. are so powerful. Having a friend or group of friends that can hold one another accountable is a great way to keep your soul in check and free from sin. Together, these individuals grow in brotherly/sisterly love towards one another and in their relationship with God.

The Plan:

This week, find a person who can encourage you and watch over you in love. I recommend you find someone within your small group or church (if you are involved in one). If not, seek out a trusted friend. It may be your spouse, though this is not recommended. It is probably better to ask a good friend, someone who would not be terribly surprised at being asked to do the following exercise with you. The key here is finding someone you feel safe with. You will discuss the state of your soul with this person, so it is imperative that you feel comfortable with this person. If you sense that this person might judge you or react to what you say in an unloving way, then choose someone else. Do this exercise with someone of the same gender!

Once you have chosen this person, be sure to make clear what you want from him or her. It is not necessary for the person to reciprocate; you are not asking your friend to bare his or her soul with you, but to ask you some questions and to listen, and to offer some encouragement or admonishment if necessary. When you meet, use the following questions. Be sure that your partner asks them of you, and if they're comfortable, you ask the same questions of your friend:

1. How is your soul?
2. In what ways do you need to be encouraged right now?
3. What, if anything, is holding you back from living more fully for God?