Reflecting on Church Membership – Part 1 Questions Study and Discussion | July 10, 2022

Over the next several weeks, we hope to take our entire church through a series on Church Membership. In our first study, we consider the idea of community. Specifically, we aim to demonstrate that:

- We all crave community
- We all need gospel community

Use the questions below to prepare for this upcoming series.

1. Are you convinced that you need a gospel-centered community? Discuss your answer with your group.

- 2. Before his death, the famous Walt Disney had hoped to build an Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow (EPCOT) where people would live and thrive. Thinking from a particularly relational perspective, what are the necessary "building blocks" to form a successful community of the future?
- 3. In his book, "The Compelling Community," author Jamie Dunlop shares his concern for the evangelical church: "Despite good intentions, we're building communities that can thrive without the gospel." He adds, "In fact, most of the 'tools' we use to build community center on something other than the gospel."

Consider the following contexts or "tools" that churches often utilize to build community:

- Similar life experiences (e.g., young parents, retirees, teenagers)
- **Similar identity** (e.g., cowboy churches, motorcycle churches, or hipster churches)
- **Similar cause** (e.g., ministry teams for feeding the hungry, helping an elementary school, etc.)
- **Similar needs** (i.e., program-based churches build community by assembling people into programs based on the similarity of their felt needs)

• **Similar social position** (e.g., ministries that target people of similar, and often significant, means)

While there is nothing inherently wrong with finding and enjoying relationships with people similar to us, explain why the above contexts are insufficient foundations for growing a community of believers.

4. **Read Ephesians 2:1-22.** Based on these verses, what makes the gospel a superior foundation for building community? How does the gospel unite a group of people who are very dissimilar from each other?

- 5. **Read Ephesians 2:18-19.** Based on these verses, Dunlop claims that a *gospel-revealing community* is "notable" for its breadth and depth. In other words, he claims that the gospel uniquely breeds deep relationships across all demographics. Have you found this to be true in your life and relationships?
 - If yes, explain how the gospel sets you up for these types of relationships?
 - *If no*, what do you think is preventing you from deeper fellowship with various types of people? How might meditating on gospel truth motivate you to seek out these kinds of relationships?

6. **Read Philippians 2:5-11.** Discuss the importance of humility when it comes to building community.