

REASONS



**EVERYONE HAS THEM
WHAT ARE THEY?**



**REASONS for Community
Transformation within Community
Thanksgiving
11/27/22**

Happy Thanksgiving weekend and first Day of Advent!

Any Black Friday Shoppers out there?

STORY & PHOTO of Black Friday Shopping

This is my tribe. Black Friday tradition for the Noble women. Started by my daughters – I never had the desire before to go out at O’Dark 30 and begin the torture of wading through the crowds for a deal. But I found myself disappointed this year that the stores didn’t open until 7am!

Today I am continuing our mini series on “Reasons” which begs the question WHY... Last week Pastor Pete focused on the Reasons for Worship and this week I am focusing on the Reasons for Community.

You can access the message notes on our Mesa Church App and follow along if you choose.

**Summary of Pete’s Main Concepts
Reasons for Worship**

The Worship of God is at the CENTER of who we are individually and as a community of Christ followers.

Before the men would go into battle they would sing songs of thanksgiving (as a community) to God. They were remembering WHO was at the core of who they were as a Community. (Jehosophat)

In Biblical times, the individual wasn't really recognized – it was all about the community. In fact, when we read Scripture we need to be careful that we don't read it from a western perspective and see it as always being prescribed for the individual- everything must be interpreted through the lens of the ancients who viewed everything from the perspective of Community.

“In the West, it may help if the church started thinking more in terms of we than me.” Misreading Scripture through Western Eyes by Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien

Pastor Pete showed us a drawing of the Tabernacle which was a portable church that God instructed the Israelites to set up in the CENTER of their camp as they wandered in the wilderness for 40 years.

SHOW DRAWING ON WALL

God instructed the tribes to set up camp around the tabernacle. The center of their camp would be the Tabernacle – the place where God's presence dwelt (Point to the cloud over the Holy of Holies) Imagine the sight from a distance! It was a visual reminder to the Israelites that God was at their core. Everything about their lives, actions, relationships and choices would flow out of their relationship with God.

We have just gotten out of our own wilderness of sorts – the floods, worshipping on the lawn during Covid, the Move, the Hotel...almost 40 years in one place but the reality is that we are a community whose CORE is the same as the Israelites. GOD is our CORE. That has never changed AND never will!

Let's talk more about COMMUNITY....

What kind of a place gathers people of all shapes, sizes, backgrounds, socioeconomic and educational levels, ages, interests, gifts, and stages of life?

I know some of you want to shout out DMV! Haha – what OTHER place besides the DMV? The Church!

What brings us together is not our need for a driver's license, housing association, favorite team, kids the same age, similar jobs, worship style or love of HHC coffee! Nothing wrong with any of those things but – what brings us together is our LOVE of Jesus!

That is also what sets a part our Community from any community around.

Why is Community Important TODAY?

Thanksgiving Video (4 mins) “How big is your Table?” A Thanksgiving Story by the skitguys.com

“With all due respect sir, you are not the only person spending Thanksgiving alone.”

Fill in the word “Thanksgiving” with any word...

Are you experiencing something that is challenging today and as a result – you feel alone?

- A child who is suicidal
- A divorce or unfaithful spouse
- Stuck in a difficult marriage
- Not able to conceive a child and feel forgotten by God
- Maybe you aren't married and feel unloved
- Struggling with an addiction
- You or someone you love is very sick or diagnosed with a terrible disease
- Can't make ends meet – always short money and you are the provider for your family
- FILL IN THE BLANK

It is possible to be in a group and feel alone. It is possible to be in a seat inside this Auditorium and feel alone. Feel like no one else can relate or wants to hear what is going on in your life?

Did you spend Thanksgiving alone this year? Let's make a promise to one another today that you will never spend another Thanksgiving alone while you are here at Mesa Church! We are family, we are brothers and sisters, we are a Tribe and our blood is thicker than water – we look out for each other! Can you make that promise with me today?

God has invited you to the table! You are not alone!

As the Pastor of Community Life - My desire for this body of believers is that amidst our diversity we would be unified - we would look out for each other – I've got your back! When Pastor Pete tells me that – I believe him. Why? Because Pete and I have been through a lot of tough stuff together. We know each other pretty well and I have learned that I can count on him.

Here is another story of some friends who have each others' backs.

SCRIPTURE: Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man Luke 5:17-26 (NLT)

SHOW PAINTING of MAN being lowered

¹⁷ One day while Jesus was teaching, some Pharisees and teachers of religious law were sitting nearby. (It seemed that these men showed up from every village in all Galilee and Judea, as well as from Jerusalem.) And the Lord's healing power was strongly with Jesus.

¹⁸ Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a sleeping mat. They tried to take him inside to Jesus, ¹⁹ but they couldn't reach him because of the crowd. So they went up to the roof and took off some tiles. Then they lowered the sick man on his mat down into the crowd, right in front of Jesus. ²⁰ Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the man, "Young man, your sins are forgiven."

²¹ But the Pharisees and teachers of religious law said to themselves, "Who does he think he is? That's blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!"

²² Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he asked them, "Why do you question this in your hearts? ²³ Is it easier to say 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Stand up and walk'? ²⁴ So I will prove to you that the Son of Man^[a] has the authority on earth to forgive sins." Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, "Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!"

²⁵ And immediately, as everyone watched, the man jumped up, picked up his mat, and went home praising God. ²⁶ Everyone was gripped with great wonder and awe, and they praised God, exclaiming, “We have seen amazing things today!”

This man couldn't get to Jesus by himself – he needed a community of friends to come alongside him and help. He had palsy that probably had worsened over time and now he was completely paralyzed. My guess is that these men were friends BEFORE he had the problem – he had invested in them and then when he had a need they invested in him.

There is POWER in community!

STORY – Natasha saying “Pastor Sharon, Pastor Sharon” and Matt and my kids saying, MOM, don't you hear this child?!

There is power in the Community! My family was able to get my attention because she was driving them nuts!

Just like in the story of the man with palsy, we stand up for each other – we get the attention of those who need to make decisions – we carry one another's burdens – we truly love one another!

Galatians 6:2 – Carry one another's burdens and fulfill the law of Christ.

The Law of Christ is LOVE. He gave his life for us that we might have eternal life. We need to demonstrate that same kind of love for one another – another characteristic that makes our community stand out!

John 13:35 – Your LOVE for one another will PROVE to the world that you are my disciples.

If we want to be a witness to the world, of our savior, we simply need to LOVE one another.

Back to the man with the palsy - His friends must of rejoiced when Jesus healed their friend! Can you imagine the response of the crowd to the LOVE these friends showed for their friend? When we stand with each other, take care of each other, sacrifice our own time and needs for one another – there is tremendous joy! it is a POWERFUL witness of who Jesus is!

Community is a part of God's Solution to our Challenges

How many times were people a part of God's Solution?

- When God told Moses to “Let my people go”, he was speaking to the Pharaoh on behalf of a nation – a giant community of people. People were a part of God’s plan!
- Jesus takes 12 disciples and sends them out into the world to preach the gospel and baptize in the name of the Father, Son, Holy Spirit
- Priscilla and Aquilla come in and mentor Apollos in the meaning of the Holy Spirit so that he can preach more effectively
- Paul writes letter after letter, instead of physically visiting the churches, because he is sitting in prison, which means that today those letters make up the New Testament

Some people are more challenging

- Irritable – High IQ (Irritation Quotient)
- Cranky or Needy
- They have a past that is concerning
- Bad experiences in church and don’t trust easily
- Difficult to communicate with
- Self-centered – let everyone else do the work

Love each other despite the challenges.

What if those friends decided not to show up for their friend? I am sure they had busy schedules, wives, kids, jobs that had to be rearranged for their friend.

STORY & PHOTO – Lennon on pumpkin

When a child is first born into a community (family), they are easy to love – crying, poopy diapers are no match to tougher challenges that lie ahead. There is time to bond and develop a relationship that helps to weather the storms of life.

When we come into relationship later in life, we bring a lot of stuff with us, don’t we? The process of “becoming more like Christ” is a process that we all go through together and honestly – that can be very difficult. Things can catch us by surprise and easily upset us. But God has called us to something higher.

STORY – Dolly Parton wrote a song in 1973 for her manager Porter Wagoner as a thank you gift. It became a country hit at the time but soon faded into the songs of the past. Then in 1992, it was re-recorded by a young artist named, Whitney Houston, and soon promoted Whitney into a generational phenomenon. As Dolly was driving home one day, with the

radio on, she heard the song come on the radio. She said that it sounded familiar but then soon realized that “I will always Love You” was being sung by Whitney on the radio! She almost wrecked her car but not because of anger, jealousy, or disappointment that she didn’t know they were using her song but rather because she was overwhelmed with joy at how her song could be sung so beautifully! Needless to say, most people don’t realize that the song, “I Will Always Love You” was written and recorded by Dolly Parton – it is associated with Whitney Houston’s success.

What happens to a community when our focus switches from our own personal problems, baggage or even past successes and focuses on the successes of others – even when THEIR successes come because of our past achievements? What happens when we demonstrate that we truly want the BEST for the other person?

We experience a Deep seeded JOY and CONTENTMENT.

STORY – My daughter’s want to host Christmas this year. I have loved hosting Christmas in the past and setting the environment to welcome our family BUT this year I get to enjoy watching my daughters take that on, grow, flourish and thrive AND that brings me even greater joy!

Philippians 4:4-5 “Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon”.

This is from the letter to the Philippians by the apostle Paul. This statement comes after two women in the church are in a disagreement. It must have been a doozy of a conflict because Paul is hearing of it and he is in prison! His encouragement to these women, and all of us, is to always be full of joy! Let’s not waste our precious time on petty arguments and conflicts. Rejoice in all that you see accomplished in the name of Jesus. Our time on this Earth is short – the Lord is coming soon!

The Holy Spirit uses Community to Transform Us

Intentional relationships centered around the person of Jesus are transformational!

Peter had an issue with anger and impetuous choices but because of his relationship to the community – Jesus dealt with those and Peter changed.

James and John whined and complained about who is going to sit on Jesus right side in Heaven while in the midst of the other disciples and Jesus speaks to that issue within the context of their community.

You know those were character traits that were always there, in these men's lives, - but it came out in community and Jesus was able to deal with it.

John Mark Comer says...

Community EXPOSES our Blind Spots AND ENCOURAGES us to Grow

We all have blind spots until we step into community – exposes what is inside you. It is the damaged but mostly hidden version of who we are.

Those areas are exposed once we step into community. If you are in one of the Mesa Small Groups, then you have probably experienced this reality.

STORY – One of you recently shared, that you had not spoken with your son for over a year, and your small group prayed with you, encouraged you and you reached out to your son and now you are talking!

This doesn't happen unless you are in community. Today many of us just leave – unfriend – not a healthy way of dealing with community.

Our deepest wounds come from relationships (examples: Mom, Dad, Bad break up, Divorce, Family of Origin, etc.)

The healing comes from relationships that have Jesus as our focus. Sometimes people want to wall off relationships because of our pain. But we need to FIX the broken part in relationship.

That is why Mesa Church's second promise is "Find Freedom" in Small Groups – we believe that freedom is found in relationships within the context of community.

If you want to grow in your relationship with Jesus, community is non-optional. It is a part of God's Plan for our spiritual transformation.

“Spiritual formation occurs primarily in the context of community, Long-term interpersonal relationships are the crucible of genuine progress in the Christian life. People who stay grow. People who leave do not grow...It is a simple but profound biblical reality that we both grow and thrive together or we do not grow much at all.”

Christopher Smith and John Pattison in Slow Church

What is your Next Step?

Make a move!

Do you know Jesus? That is the first step. One of our prayer team would love to pray with you after the service!

Are you at a place today where you barely made it here because of the weight you are carrying? Then maybe your next step is to find someone to share your burden with and pray for you. Take a tiny step towards community. You don't need to make it by leaps and bounds today.

Another step is to find a SMALL GROUP of people that you can live life with – they can pray with you, study the Word together, laugh together, hang out together

Another step is to find a DREAM TEAM to join. We are a family – everyone is needed! But the benefits to us are so amazing! You make friends, laugh, use your gifts, and there is almost nothing more fulfilling then serving others. Getting the focus off yourself.

NEXT STEPS – go to the Next Steps Center and ask about Small Groups and Dream Teams today!

CLOSE

SHOW PHOTO OF MIKE/ABBY/LENNON and PHOTO OF MY SISTER

STORY - Seven months ago, Lennon Jade was born and within days, her Dad, our son-in-law was hospitalized and diagnosed with Non-Hodgkins

Lymphoma. It threw our family and his family into a whirlwind as we ran to support Abby and plead before the Lord to save Mike. He ended up with a tumor in his lung and located beside his heart – inoperable. Chemo was the best option but the chemo has progressively been harder and harder for him to bear. He ended up in the hospital three times just because his blood counts were so low that he was developing a fever, pneumonia and dealing with extreme fatigue. Then to add another layer of pain to our family, my sister, Susan, was diagnosed with breast cancer soon after and then a week following her first chemo she developed a perforated colon and was rushed to the hospital to undergo immediate surgery. Right after surgery she developed Sepsis and was intubated and placed in a medically induced sleep to allow her body to recover but her organs began to shut down and the nurses and doctors kept saying, “She is very, very sick”. We realized later that they were preparing us in case she didn’t make it.

As Matt and I ran between our daughter’s home and the hospital with Susan, so many of you called, sent messages, prayed for us, hugged us, encouraged us and let us know that we were not ALONE. We began to feel like God was sifting us and at times we found ourselves in some pretty intense pain. One day, Matt and I were driving home from our daughter’s home and we couldn’t really speak. We began to listen to worship music and just wept. After leaving our daughter, with her newborn, and a very sick husband – we had become keenly aware that we were not in control, we could lose Mike and the only one who could save this situation was God, himself. But every time we were present with our Mesa Family, you encouraged us to continue on – many times, you cried with us and always continued to care for us and our kids. Gifts, meals, cards, flowers, and even help with their mortgage were there to cheer all of us up and remind us that when we are surrounded by a community – Jesus is present!

Mike is in remission and Susan is doing so much better! We still don’t know what the long term holds but we do know that whatever we go through – we are not ALONE!

Let’s pray!

Bibliography

Misreading Scripture through Western Eyes by Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien

"How Big is Your Table? A Thanksgiving Story" by skitguys.com

Dolly Parton "I Will Always Love You" Story <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/1/#label/Leadership+Resources/FMfcgzGqRZkmRrgStlMfZLrcNPkFxWJD>

John Mark Comer "Community is Where we are Transformed" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymWprz_GMHU

Slow Church by Christopher Smith and John Pattison