

Cultivating Community!

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Cooper City Church of God

“You can develop a healthy, robust community that lives right with God and enjoy its results only if you do the hard work of getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and honor.” —James 3:18 MSG

Our ministry emphasis this month is: Connections/Building Relationships.

Biblical fellowship includes unselfish loving, honest sharing, practical serving, sacrificial giving, sympathetic comforting and all the other things the Bible describes as doing for “one another.”

1. In Real Community People Experience Authenticity.

Authentic fellowship is not superficial, surface-level chit-chat. It's genuine, heart-to-heart, sometimes gut-level sharing.

“If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another...If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves...” —1 John 1:7-8

“Make this your common practice: Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you can live together whole and healed.” —James 5:16 MSG

2. In Real Community People Experience Mutuality.

Mutuality is the heart of fellowship: giving and receiving, building reciprocal relationships, sharing responsibilities, and helping each other.

“...every part depends on every other part.” —1 Corinthians 12:25

“Make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.”
—Romans 14:19

3. In Real Community, People Experience Sympathy.

Sympathy is not giving advice or offering quick, cosmetic help; sympathy is entering in and sharing others' pain.

“As holy people...be sympathetic, kind, humble, gentle and patient.”
—Colossians 3:12

Self-pity dries up sympathy for others.

- The fellowship of sharing.
- The fellowship of studying God's Word.
- The fellowship of servicing.
- The fellowship of suffering.

“A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends, even though he forsakes the fear of the Almighty.” —Job 6:14

4. In Real Community People Experience Mercy.

Fellowship is a place of grace, where mistakes aren't rubbed in, but rubbed out. Fellowship happens when mercy wins over justice.

“When people sin, you should forgive and comfort them, so they won't give up in despair.” —2 Corinthians 2:7

“You must make allowance for each other's faults and forgive the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.”
—Colossians 3:13

You can use your energy and emotions for retaliation or resolution.

COMMUNITY REQUIRES COMMITMENT!

"I am writing these things to you...[so] you will know how to live in the family of God. That family is the church." —1 Timothy 3:14-15

A. Cultivating Community Takes Honesty.

You will have to care enough to lovingly speak the truth, even when you would rather gloss over a problem or ignore an issue.

"An honest answer is a sign of true friendship." —Proverbs 24:26

*"Brothers and sisters, if someone in your group does something wrong, you who are spiritual should go to that person and gently help make him right again."
—Galatians 6:1*

"No more lies, no more pretenses. Tell your neighbor the truth. In Christ's body we're all connected to each other, after all. When you lie to others, you end up lying to yourself." —Ephesians 4:25

The tunnel of conflict is the passageway to intimacy in any relationship.

1 CORINTHIANS 5:3-12

B. Cultivating Community Takes Humility.

Pride builds walls between people; humility builds bridges.

"Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another because God gives grace to the humble." —1 Peter 5:5

1. Admit your own weaknesses.
2. Be patient with others' weaknesses.
3. Be open to correction.
4. Point the spotlight on others.

“Live in harmony with each other. Don't try to act important, but enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!” —Romans 12:16

Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less.

C. Cultivating Community Takes Courtesy.

Respecting others' differences, being considerate of each other's feelings, and being patient with people who irritate us.

“God's people should be bighearted and courteous.” —Titus 3:2

“Be devoted to each other like a loving family. Excel in showing respect for each other.” —Romans 12:10

Real community happens when people know it is safe enough to share their doubts and fears without being judged.

D. Cultivating Community Takes Confidentiality.

Church, only when in a safe environment of warm acceptance and trusted confidentiality will people open up and share their deepest hurts, needs, and mistakes.

“Gossip is spread by wicked people; they stir up trouble and break up friendships.” —Proverbs 16:28

E. Cultivating Community Takes Frequency.

We must have frequent, regular contact with a small group of people to build genuine community. Relationships take time.

“Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead, let us encourage one another.” —Hebrews 10:25

That means meeting together when we don't feel like it, when it's not convenient, and even when it's intrusive, because we believe it is important.

We will share our feelings....AUTHENTICITY.
We will encourage each other...MUTUALITY.
We will support each other...SYMPATHY.
We will forgive each other...MERCY.
We will speak the truth in love...HONESTY.
We will admit our weaknesses...HUMILITY.
We will respect our differences...COURTESY.
We will not gossip...CONFIDENTIALITY.
We will make group a priority...FREQUENCY.