

The Art of Inclusivity – Part 5 – Leave a little space.

July 23, 2023

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BIG IDEA – Leave just a little space for the Holy Spirit.

scripture focus - When you harvest the crops of your land, do not harvest the grain along the edges of your fields, and do not pick up what the harvesters drop. It is the same with your grape crop—do not strip every last bunch of grapes from the vines, and do not pick up the grapes that fall to the ground. Leave them for the poor and the foreigners living among you. I am the Lord your God. **Leviticus 19:9-10 NLT**

My life is already full! I can only handle so many relationships on top of my responsibilities! When we talk about the idea of inclusivity, that's fine. But asking for me to add MORE to my plate, take on another relationship? If practicing inclusivity means giving more time, I just can't do it! My life is too full as it is.

I get it. Let's talk about that.

It feels like everyone has demands on my time! What happened to the abundant life Jesus promised? (John 10:10)

There are temporal things, although necessary, that will never satisfy our soul, they simply weren't designed to be life giving! God's design, His Kingdom economy is different, it runs counterintuitive to how we think life should be.

It's not that God is against the "never-done" lists or what it takes to pay for the one more thing that went sideways. **It's just that the way God wants us to live, gives back. Even in godly suffering, there is a supernatural peace.**

Eternal things pay dividends into our soul, our spirit. And those returns bring joy, purpose and deep satisfaction.

In talking about Inclusivity or making room to welcome those who are not like us at all, there is a bonus – we learn to receive love and encouragement back!

But we definitely have our limits on how many relationships, or friendships we can manage and maintain.

Social theorists claim we can only maintain 150 relationships?

[Dunbar's Number](#)

Dunbar's number is a suggested cognitive limit to the number of people with whom one can maintain stable social relationships—relationships in which an individual knows who each person is and how each person relates to every other person.

[Why we can only maintain 150 relationships?](#)

According to the theory, the tightest circle has just five people – loved ones. That's followed by successive layers of 15 (good friends), 50 (friends), 150 (meaningful contacts), 500 (acquaintances) and 1500 (people you can recognize). People migrate in and out of these layers, but the idea is that space has to be carved out for any new entrants.

Of course, all these numbers really represent range. Extroverts tend to have a larger network and spread themselves more thinly across their friends, while introverts concentrate on a smaller pool of “thick” contacts. And women generally have slightly more contacts within the closest layers.



But it's not just relationships that bog us down and crowd out what little time we have.

We are pushing our lives to the very limit, the edge of what we handle! How can I have healthy community and fulfill God's purpose in my life?

Jesus led a full, busy, often exhausting life.

Jesus spoke to thousands, was open and fairly close to seventy, lived with about twenty (12 of which were his apprentices), often pulled aside three, and spoke his early request before dying, to just one.

However, where did all the gospel miracle stories come from? The meals, the confrontations, the deep piercing conversations with the outliers and leaders? How did Jesus allow for the supernatural interruptions?

Jesus had time he set aside for the soul purpose of His mission to seek and save the lost – but he did not focus **all** his time on the crowds. **How did he manage God initiated and ordained moments?**

I believe Jesus left room at the edges of His mission field for the extraordinary.

If life is looked at through the lenses of time availability and mission, what would we see?

Frustration? Anger? Shame? Lethargy?

What should we see? God at work... always.

Don't reap right to the edge

Leviticus 19:9-10 NLT

When you harvest the crops of your land, do not harvest the grain along the edges of your fields, and do not pick up what the harvesters drop. It is the same with your grape crop—do not strip every last bunch of grapes from the vines, and do not pick up the grapes that fall to the ground. Leave them for the poor and the foreigners living among you. I am the Lord your God.

[From Michael Kelly](#), communicator and blogger.

To use the language of Leviticus, we tend to reap to the edge of our fields. We use all of everything we have – all our money. All our time. All our energy. All our everything – and sometimes more.

As a result, we don't have anything left "just in case."

We don't have time for a conversation in the middle of the day because our schedule is already too packed. We don't have time to get to know our neighbors because our evenings are swarming with activities. We don't have any money to contribute to the mission trip because every dollar is accounted for.

We live in a margin-less world. **Everything from our time to our money is pretty much spoken for. We are reaping to the end of the fields. In fact, we are going back over the fields of our lives a second and third time, looking for any spare cent or second that has not been accounted for.**

This isn't how we were meant to live. It's certainly not how we live if **we expect the Lord to bring gospel-oriented opportunities into our lives. And living in a margin-less way is, at the root, a lack of faith in God's character.**

Think about it from the perspective of the farmer. What might cause a farmer to reap everything, even the edges, instead of obeying this command of margin?

The farmer must believe that he cannot afford to leave anything behind!

But God works miracles in the margins, the small edges, sometimes even the leftovers.

Leviticus 19:9-10 breadcrumbs down to the famous line quoted by Jesus in the gospels...but love your neighbor as yourself. Lev 19:18

In the book of Ruth, it is clear that Ruth knew about this provision!

Ruth 2:2-3 NLT

"One day Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go out into the harvest fields to **pick up the stalks of grain left behind by anyone who is kind enough to let me do it.**" Naomi replied, "All right, my daughter, go ahead." So Ruth went out to **gather grain behind the harvesters.** And as it happened, she found herself working in a field that belonged to Boaz, the relative of her father-in-law, Elimelech."

Field owners' generosity was known by how much "leftovers" we're "dropped."

Ruth 2:15-16 NLT

"When Ruth went back to work again, **Boaz ordered his young men, "Let her gather grain right among the sheaves without stopping her. And pull out some heads of barley from the bundles and drop them on purpose for her.** Let her pick them up, and don't give her a hard time!"

Now, of course we know this was far more than just generosity – he liked Ruth and wanted to help her. **Because Boaz obeyed this very odd, yet specific command from God, a young foreigner, a widow named Ruth was able to glean** the leftover barley in order to provide food for her and her mother-in-law, Naomi. **And in grand love story fashion Boaz, doesn't just save them from starving, he rescues Naomi & Elimelech's legacy.**

This simple act of leaving the edge, living a margined-life, a generous life eventually comes to yield a great grandson and warrior king – David. Then many generations later Mary gives birth to the Savior, Jesus, who gives us the redemption of the entire world.

I started this message knowing that time and availability are scarce in our lives. I know it's tough to raise children, manage dual incomes plus side gigs. Not to mention some slice of a social life or hobby.

I can absolutely promise you that God pays well, he cares for us well and can bring a new sense of excitement and purpose even in the most stressful of schedules!

[Leave room for the Holy Spirit](#) Professor and speaker, Ed Stetzer writes about leaving room for the Holy Spirit in an article linked in my notes.



Apparently a frequently used phrase in the Catholic faith, most often referring to a “physical separation between guys and gals.” In the Assemblies of God circles, it was just referred to as the 18” rule.

But it is true, leaving margin in our life-fields and not reaping to the edge means that we can leave room for the Holy Spirit!

Here’s how Jesus pulled off leaving room or not reaping to the edge of His mission field.

John 5:16-20 NLT

“So the Jewish leaders began harassing Jesus for breaking the Sabbath rules. But Jesus replied, “My Father is always working, and so am I.” So the Jewish leaders tried all the harder to find a way to kill him. For he not only broke the Sabbath, he called God his Father, thereby making himself equal with God. So Jesus explained, “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing. Whatever the Father does, the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything he is doing. In fact, the Father will show him how to do even greater works than healing this man. Then you will truly be astonished.”

When the religious leaders tried to hold Jesus to His own laws about the Sabbath, Jesus explained to them two truths: One, God is always working. Hint, even on the Sabbath. Remember, the “rest” law was for us, and didn’t exist to serve the Sabbath, but that the Sabbath served us for a pause, a reset, a restoration. Two, Jesus only did what he saw the Father doing.

Jesus modeled Father God’s character and behavior towards humans. **And by those examples and explanations, we too should understand that God is still always working. And, if want to participate with God, joining him in the work of redemption, we too can do what we see God doing.**

But how? By listening and being led by the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus was.

This is how we leave room at the edges of our lives. Whether it's in our heart, home, or hood, **we leave a little space for the miraculous – the work of God.**

Update on Christine and meeting our cool, but reclusive neighbors – Dean & Kat.

NOTES

Scriptures

Leviticus 19:9-10 NLT

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Father will show him how to do even greater works than healing this man. Then you will truly be astonished.”

Questions

- Q: Do you feel your life is **too** full, and you're spent? Talk about it.
- Q: What causes us to reap everything, even the edges?
- Q: Why would it be important to see ALL of us as sinners?"
- Q: Any thoughts on why the Pharisees believed themselves to be better?
- Q: Why would the religious leaders discredit Jesus' credentials by who he associated with?
- Q: How does our view of others effect our ability to connect with them?

Larry Osborn – [Sticky Church](#)

Unity in Christ means loving one another with an agape love that overcomes our differences. It's not uniformity; it's not finding the lowest common denominator. It's love despite our diversity.

In fact, our unity in Christ shines brightest when we disagree most. It's Simon the Zealot rooming with Matthew the tax collector. It's Gentile Christians in Corinth collecting money to help the destitute Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. It's James and the Jerusalem council writing a letter of recommendation for Paul and his ministry to Gentiles.

Deep friendships are different. They're built on strong commonality. While it's true that close friends often have significant differences, they always have a stronger set of shared interests, values, or experiences that binds them together.

Jesus himself had differing layers of friendship. Out of all his disciples, he handpicked twelve apostles. Out of the apostles, he was particularly close to three (John, James, and Peter). And at least according to John, he had one he was closer to than all the rest. The one John's gospel cryptically calls "the disciple whom Jesus loved." None other than John himself!

Internet Links

[Professor Ryan Burge's Article on denominational decline:](#)

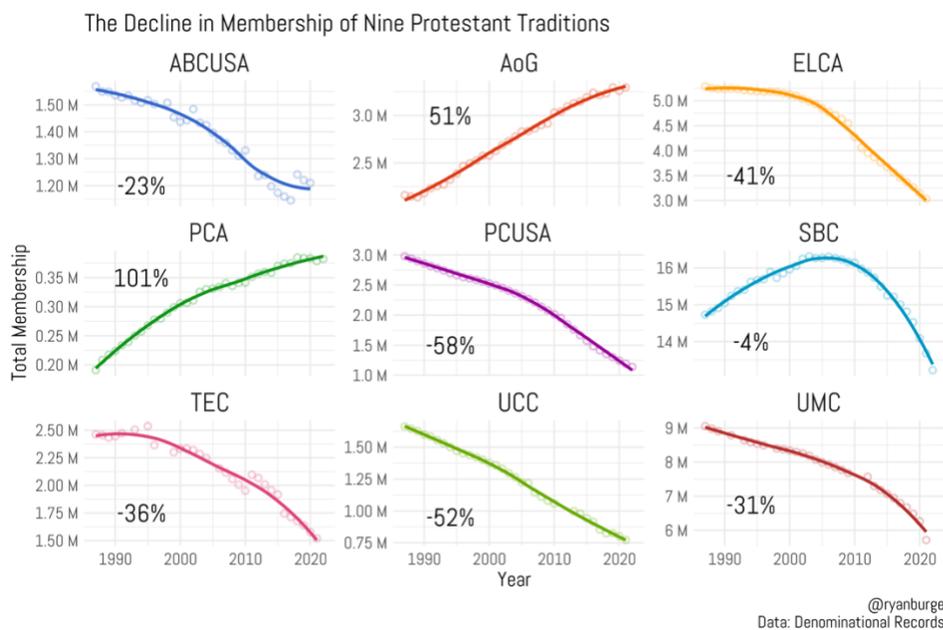
"Most denominations are in free fall, but Assemblies of God and Presbyterian Church in America aren't. They're growing significantly.

The biggest blind spot here is non-denominational Protestant Christianity. There is absolutely no way to gather data on that tradition, but it's clear that it's growing incredibly fast. **One advantage** of nondenominational churches is that they don't have institutional baggage. **But the disadvantage** of nondenominational churches is that they don't carry the same influence as

churches that are banded together. They don't have the same ability to do missions, influence culture, or care for humanitarian needs as a denomination, nor are they accountable to any outside authority.

He also tracks an interesting trend, a decline in membership! "One thing I like to do is look at year over year change in membership. That can give us a better sense if the growth rate of a denomination is slowing down. Or if the rate of decline is speeding up."

Ryan also writes about the [serious decline in SBC](#) (Southern Baptist Convention). He sites: 1. Decline in institutional trust, 2. Aging demographics and 3. Rise of the Nones and Nons.



Presbyterian's "evangelism" grid.

Presbyterians are aggressively responding to the shift in culture by planting new churches with two primary means of spreading the Gospel.



Only 31 percent of congregations make frequent use of relational evangelism, compared to 77 percent of new worshiping communities. “There is also a large gap between new worshiping communities and congregations in the use of testimonial evangelism,” said Deb Coe, coordinator for Research Services. “This is particularly interesting, given that **sharing the Good News and telling your ‘God story’ is a more traditional style of evangelism, but is used by over half of the more nontraditional new worshiping communities.**”

In addition to attracting more “nones” and “dones,” **the people in new worshiping communities are younger than the typical Presbyterian, have more language diversity and are more racially diverse. Whereas 46 percent of worshiping community participants are people of color, only 9 percent of the membership of the PC(USA) are people of color.**

[How CRU shares Jesus with Campus Students around the world.](#)

[CRU's position on - Oneness in Ethnic and Cultural Diversity](#)

I like how CRU identifies the issues of racial inequities.

The Bible’s witness to the fracturing of human relationships (see point #3 above) provides the immediate context for navigating historical and contemporary challenges surrounding ethnicity, culture, and race. As we consider the impact of the Fall on human relationships, it is important to recognize three interrelated expressions of sin:

Individual sin: One person sinning against another (Matt 18:15). James condemns the sin of “partiality,” calling those who engage in it “judges with evil thoughts” (James 2:1–4). The intentional or unintentional mistreatment of

individuals based on their physical appearance, ethnic and/or cultural identity is one expression of the sin of partiality.⁶

Communal sin: A group of people sinning against an individual or group. For example, following his sermon, Stephen was stoned by an irate mob (Acts 7:54–60).⁷

Institutional sin: The unjust use of authority, through customs or laws, to sin against individuals or groups. The psalmist laments those “who frame injustice by statute” (Ps 94:20). Ancient Israelites, as a nation, were enslaved, oppressed and exploited by the Egyptian government (Exod 1:11–14). Jesus’ parable of the persistent widow bears witness to the experience of injustice by the vulnerable (Luke 18:1–8). Paul condemns the practice of slave-trade (1 Tim 1:10). James and Peter bear witness to oppression and injustice experienced by God’s people, including abuse of the poor in courts (Jas 2:6), oppression of slaves (1 Pet 2:18–20), and exploitation of the poor by the wealthy (Jas 5:1–6). Biblical teaching about institutional sin helps us understand the mistreatment or marginalization of groups through laws and customs based on physical appearance, socio-economic status or ethnic and/or cultural identity.⁸