

## We over Me

### Core 10: Week Six

## I. Our Core Value

### We over Me

We value the community of life shared together with other believers. We strive to develop close relationships with other Christians to share in all the struggles and joys of a life lived in service to Christ.

## II. Our Scriptural Mandate

### Psalm 133

<sup>1</sup> How good and pleasant it is  
when God's people live together in unity!

<sup>2</sup> It is like precious oil poured on the head,  
running down on the beard,  
running down on Aaron's beard,  
down on the collar of his robe.

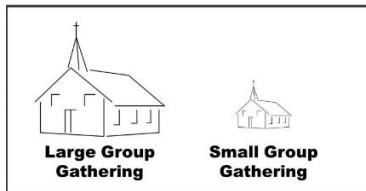
<sup>3</sup> It is as if the dew of Hermon  
were falling on Mount Zion.  
For there the LORD bestows his blessing,  
even life forevermore.

### Acts 2:42-47

<sup>42</sup> They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. <sup>43</sup> Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. <sup>44</sup> All the believers were together and had everything in common. <sup>45</sup> They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. <sup>46</sup> Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

## III. Living in Community

- “ \_\_\_\_\_ Church \_\_\_\_\_ Church”



- Our mutual \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ others
  - Reaching a resident of Grand Rapids for Christ will be most effective if we connect them to the body of Christ, our church (or another local church).
  - It can be very difficult for new attenders to feel connected in our church, because many of us have a web of relationships that can absorb our focus. People often fall through the cracks.
  - While preaching, musical style, and children's ministries play a significant role in whether someone chooses to engage in a particular church, one of the most important aspects is the sense of welcome the person experiences, and how quickly they connect in meaningful relationships with others.
  - So all of us who are part of Grace want to have a “radar” for new people, and we all want to play a role in welcoming others and help them connect in meaningful way.
  - Practically this could look like every week: (1) meeting someone you don't know, and (2) trying to greet again someone relatively new that you have met before.
  - Another good idea is inviting someone new at our church out to lunch after church.

### The Bottom Line

\_\_\_\_\_ regularly in \_\_\_\_\_ spiritual \_\_\_\_\_  
and take up the \_\_\_\_\_ of helping \_\_\_\_\_ connect with \_\_\_\_\_.

## What is True Community? (Michael Svigel, *RetroChristianity*, 152-53)

Community groups . . . community centers . . . building community . . . promoting community . . . community life . . . community churches . . . faith communities . . . the Christian community . . .

*Community* has become a buzzword in twenty-first century evangelicalism. Today's churches have reacted decisively against the unhealthy and unbiblical obsession with the personal preference, private spirituality, and individualistic Christianity so prevalent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In its stead, many have been drawn to a community-oriented Christianity that more accurately reflects the *koinonia* emphasis of the New Testament and the early church—the corporate disciplines of worship, fellowship, and ministry.

But what does true Christian community look like?

Imagine this kind of community: an uncomfortable hodgepodge of people we barely know, or, what's worse, maybe we know some of them far too well and wish we didn't. They come from different backgrounds, different walks of life, different pay grades, different generations. They're just plain *different*. But we've been artificially mashed together in some kind of church program—a Bible study, a Sunday school class, a small group, a ministry team. We grudgingly do our duties but keep our guards up and our masks on. We just can't wait until this excruciating, forced community is over so we can get back to the people we're comfortable with, the people we know, the people we love.

But then there's a different model of community: comfort . . . familiarity . . . friends whose names we know and whose faces we're actually happy to see. People we spend time with outside the church, people we'd actually *want* to invite for dinner. That kind of community usually means developing warm relationships with those of our own age group, our own stage of life. We love that kind of community. It feels more natural. This is the ideal kind of community we strive for. Clearly, the uncomfortable and awkward community can't possibly result in a healthy church; spiritual growth is much more likely in a community of comfort and ease rather than personality conflict and politics.

*Or is it?*

Not long ago a student wandered into my office to chat. After a few minutes, the conversation moved to the pervasive politics and personality conflicts involved in Christian communities. Our brief exchange went something like this: "It's everywhere," I said. "Every church or ministry deals with this."

"But we're Christians. It's not supposed to be this way. Doesn't it bother you?"

I hesitated, then grabbed a thick book from one end of my desk and placed it in front of him. Pointing at the volume on the history of Christianity I said, "But this is how it's always been. This is how it will always be." Then I placed my Bible on top of the history book: "And if you look in there, it's exactly the same. Until Christ returns, this is the best we can hope for. But God's Spirit works out His perfect plan in spite of us."

It's normal for Christians to be disappointed in other Christians. Sometimes we can be downright mean to each other. Even if we avoid outright conflict, there will still be frustration, inconvenience, discomfort . . . *all the necessary ingredients and effects of true community*.

Let me suggest that the more comfortable you feel in your Christian community, the less authentic the community. In 1 Corinthians 12:13 Paul writes, "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit." Sometimes we read a passage like that and fail to think through its practical implications. Jews and Greeks didn't get along in the ancient world. They came from completely different religious and cultural backgrounds, lived in separate communities, and had different customs and languages. Slaves and free were from opposite social and economic communities. They didn't mix well together. Division was the order of the day.

When these groups of men and women, slaves and masters, Jews and Greeks, were placed into one community, awkward discomfort—even outright conflict—ensued. Read 1 Corinthians to see for yourself. That's the natural result of mixing these diverse minicommunities into one meta-community. It was like mixing oil and water. Church growth experts opt for affinity groups. Common sense tells us not to try. Our emotions tell us to run in the other direction.

But shouldn't Christian community transcend the natural? Shouldn't it defy common sense? Shouldn't it seek to overcome the desire to only fellowship with people who make us comfortable?

Confusion . . . discomfort . . . frustration . . . uneasiness . . . conflict. These are the effects of true community. These conditions promote real spiritual growth. It's easy to fake the fruit of the Spirit among people we pick as fellowship partners. It's far more difficult to pretend love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control among those who irritate us. And putting our natural human inclinations to the test of real life gives God an opportunity to work among us in supernatural ways.

Let me make myself very clear. From a balanced biblical, historical, and theological perspective, true community is an essential part of sanctification. In true community the Spirit manifests the diversity of His gifts and provides the means necessary for spiritual growth. Apart from true community there can be no authentic and lasting progress in the Christian life.

## Grace Bible Chapel Core Values

*Grace over Judgment*

*Bible over Opinion*

*Worship over Self*

*Transformation over Stagnation*

*We over Me*

*Giving over Getting*

*Participating over Spectating*

*The Next Generation over My Generation*

*Mission over Comfort*

*Outward over Inward*

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