

Sermon or Lesson: Romans 12:13 (NIV based)

[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: Some Actions To Pursue That Build Community In A Church

INTRO: Why do you come back to this church?

- - You like something about it.
- - Or you are connected here somehow.
- - Or _____ some other reason.

For most of us, a significant reason we keep coming back to a particular church is because we have in some way a connection to the sense of community of the church - a social or relationship bond with someone or something there.

Let's explore this dynamic from the perspective of God's Word to see what we each can do to contribute to and enhance this phenomenon.

READ: Romans 12:13

[Lesson Question: Analyze and then list the dynamics of the activity to "share with God's people who are in need".]

SECTION POINT: The directive to "share with God's people who are in need" is a good way to **start** relational bonds and enhance a sense of community in a church.

"Share with God's people who are in need":

- - This statement is a directive from God, not a recommendation or suggestion.
- - This directive clearly identifies that interaction is to regularly take place between God's people, i.e. between true believers in Jesus. (Strong's #0040)
- - This directive clearly specifies that the interaction is to consist of material transfers - sharing that is of a charity gift nature and not of a business deal nature.
- - This directive clearly instructs those believers who have more material or financial possessions than they need are to share with those believers who lack enough of what they need.
- - This directive clearly targets and prioritizes the "needs" or basic essentials for living, which is distinctly different and separate from the 'wants' or non-essentials for living.

- - Let us realize that those true believers in need are members of the family of God, fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.
- - They are suppose to be or become fellow workers for the cause of Christ, our mission.
- - As fellow members and workers, those true believers in need have priority over sharing with unbelievers.

- - This directive implies that the transferring or giving of materials or finances is to be timely, occurring soon upon the need developing and not delayed while the need persists on-and-on.

- - This directive also implies that the amount of the sharing is to contribute to the adequate filling of the amount of the need, and not be stingy, a pittance, or a token amount.

- - This directive from God designates that those believers who have more material or financial possessions than they need are obligated and have a duty to continually watch for, seek out, identify, and initiate sharing with fellow believers who are in need.

- - Develop the mindset and the habit that every time you come to church, you are going to actively watch for and then pursue any presenting opportunities to "share with God's people who are in need".

- - If pursued and accomplished satisfactorily, this activity of meeting of needs will build and enhance community and well-being in the church and ministries, thus contributing to their growth as well.

[Lesson Question: Why does God want us to practice hospitality?]

SECTION POINT: The directive to "practice hospitality" can be a highly effective means to build and strengthen relational bonds and a sense of community in a church.

"Practice hospitality."

- - This directive from God not only instructs us to share with God's people who are in need, but also to practice hospitality as well.

-- "practice" = Strong's #1377 "pursuing; prolonged pursuing".

-- 'pursue' = (AHD) "1. to follow in an effort to overtake or capture, chase; 2. to strive to gain or accomplish; 3. to proceed along the course of; 4. to carry further; advance; 5. to be engaged in, continue".

-- "hospitality" = Strong's #5381 "hospitableness" - being oriented from and proceeding from a mindset of hospitality.

-- 'hospitable / hospitality' = (from AHD) cordial and generous reception of or disposition toward guests; disposed to treat guests with warmth and generosity and cordiality; being pleasant and friendly; kindness.

- - Practice hospitality is a command for everyone to do, not just for the church's leadership or those who are naturally good at it to do.

- - Practicing hospitality is an opportunity and a tangible means to be a nice person and to extend brotherly love.

- - This is a social activity, usually quite effective for building a bond of connectedness and community.

- - Note that the two directives in this verse can be combined to yield exceptional results, that the sharing to meet the needs of others can be an excellent gateway towards building a bond of relational connectedness especially if it is followed by the practicing of hospitality.

- - This is an excellent means that God uses to build and grow His church, to congeal into a community and be inclusive.

- - More importantly, this is one efficient way by which God starts the process of bringing people into the Kingdom.
 - - Fundamentally, our purpose for practicing hospitality in a church is to establish or maintain and strengthen a connection with guests and loosely-connected persons so they will come back, hear God's Word, believe in Jesus, and eventually become a disciple.
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BIG IDEA: Sharing to meet the needs of other believers and practicing hospitality are directives from God, that when continuously pursued, they can be very effective in building an attracting sense of community in a church.

APPLICATION STEPS:

[Lesson Question: How do we practice hospitality in a church?]

- - Develop the mindset that every time you come to church, you are going to intentionally and actively try to establish and maintain relationships with guests and people.
 - - Specifically target guests and others who are not solidly connected to the church.
 - - Arrive early and stay late in order to take advantage of possible opportunities to engage people in conversations, socializing with each person not in a superficial way but in a quality way, ideally for at least 10-12 minutes.
 - - Initiate conversations, beyond introductory welcoming greetings, that are beneficial to the guests: ask about their occupation, family, pets, etc. and listen intently; ask for prayer needs.
 - - Offer to take them to lunch or to go to lunch together after church.
 - - Invite them to get involved in church activities or with you in your church activities.
 - - Look for commonality: things you both like, hobbies, sports, etc.
 - - Discern or find anyone who seems interested in connecting with you; some will connect and some won't.
 - - Later on, when appropriate, contact them during the week.
 - - If it develops satisfactorily, build a friendship.
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CONCLUSION:

- - These activities of God's people and of His church have eternal value in God's sight.
 - - We can each participate in what God is doing in the lives of people and in the church.
 - - Practicing hospitality is not that difficult, even shy people can do it.
 - - Let's excel at being a warm, inclusive community of believers that shares to meet the needs of others and practices hospitality, which will attract in outsiders.
 - - Through sharing to meet the needs of others and practicing hospitality, we can each make connections for the Kingdom!
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