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TRANSFORMATION

"we are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory." 2 Cor 3:18

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH COMMUNITY AND SUBMISSION

This series of studies help us engage with God's work of changing us to become like Jesus Christ. Our task is not to transform *ourselves*, but to participate in God's work within and through us (Phil 2:12-13). We are changed from the inside out: God does in us what we cannot do by 'being good'. This is the work of God's Holy Spirit and yet we are called to be willing and active throughout the process: we cooperate with God.

In this study we are going to explore the way that God uses Christian community-- 'Church'-- in his process of change.

For Christian community that transforms to occur, we need to be intentional. This is foreign to us in our culture because we tend to be 'consumers' who exalt individualism and reward independence. Transforming community is about committing ourselves to people and sticking it out no matter what. And this is hard because generally we don't really know how to trust one another, how to support one another in pain, how to disagree in love, how to genuinely respect one another, and how to be 'for' each other in the long haul.

To learn these things, Jesus' communal life with his disciples becomes our model. This group was 'diverse', to say the very least. Imagine a 'discussion' between Simon the Jewish political zealot and Matthew the tax collector puppet of the Roman Government! And yet, Jesus called this group to love one another the way that Jesus had loved them; to become like him through being together.

We can therefore confuse Christian community with special friendships, which have different kinds of benefits and qualities. Here are some comparisons:

Christian Community	Special Friendships
You have many differences with this person	You are fairly similar kinds of people, with similar backgrounds
You disagree but still listen to each other	You know what the other person is thinking
You're committed to listening to God's call on each other's life	You agree on almost everything
You're committed to praying for each other	You say just what the other person needs to hear
Side by side with others, you give gifts of service which likely will never be reciprocated	You give each other special gifts
You might be very hurt and angry about something, so you walk away and process it with God. You reflect on how God is using that person in your life. You return to seek reconciliation.	You might occasionally be upset by one another but it is readily forgiven and forgotten.
You may have no interests in common	You love to do the same things
You are stretched to learn and appreciate new things	It's easy to 'hang out' together
You're astounded at how God uses such ordinary relationships in your life	You're astounded at what good friends you are

"Innumerable times a whole Christian community has broken down because it had sprung from a wish dream... He who loves his dream of community more than the Christian community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter, even though his personal intentions may be ever so honest and earnest and sacrificial"

Deitrich Bonhoeffer

When have you experienced Christian community as described above?

BIBLE STUDY: JESUS MODELS CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY WITH HIS DISCIPLES.

Read Mark 10:32-37

1. How did the band of disciples' final approach to Jerusalem lead James and John to make their request? (vv 35, 37)
2. What roles of power and honour to ordinary people think about?
3. If Jesus were to ask you, "What do you want me to do for you" what would tend to be your honest reply?
 - to be known as the one who achieved.....
 - to hold the position of....
 - to be friends with... or be part of a group of...
 - to own...
 - other
 - *If you were at the Understanding Personality seminar, you may reflect on your answer here in light of the kind of personality you are: the above suggestions broadly reflect the spectrum of passions that drive us.*

Read Mark 10:38-41

4. What was Jesus referring to when he said, 'Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptised with the baptism I am baptised with?' (if you get stuck, see Mark 14:36; Romans 6:3-8).
5. Why do you think the other disciples were upset?

Read Mark 10:42-45

6. Which of these methods of pushing people ('lording it over others') do you see used most often?
 - using guilt to get people to do what I want
 - having the last word
 - promising rewards
 - making every issue 'about me'
 - other: ...
7. James and John made their request out of a self-absorbed mindset (left column), but the Bible teaches us to have a community mindset (right column). How does one change and move from the left column to the right column?

Self absorption	Community
Wanting to be admired	Seeing oneself as a servant
Hoping to get our way	Choosing to be the slave of all
Thinking that we know more than others	Voluntary self-sacrifice
Pushing because we think we know what's best	Giving oneself up
Using guilt and manipulation to get our way	Respecting others personhood and ideas
Wishing to be loved in return for love	Loving others with no strings attached

8. What should I do when I don't *feel* like having a community mindset?

PRAYER EXERCISE

As an exercise in being mindful of others, we are now going to pray for one another in the group. But we are not going to first ask each other for 'prayer points'. Instead, in a few moments of quiet, we are going to call to mind each other's needs (as best as we know them) and then pray specifically for one another as a group.

HOMEWORK

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-19

1. What do all parts of the body have in common? In what ways are members of the body of Christ different?
2. If similarities and achievements are not what pulls Christian people together, what does?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:20-25

3. In what ways do we often treat certain parts of the body of Christ as more valuable? In what ways do we treat certain parts as less valuable?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:26-27

4. How is it an act of submission to suffer with others and rejoice with those who are honoured?
5. What steps do you need to take to be more resilient when community gets gritty and hard?
 - have a more realistic view of community (table above)
 - understand that you value to others even though you don't feel very useful to others
 - value those with Spiritual gifts different from yours
 - suffer with those who suffer and rejoice with those who are honoured
 - show more love
 - other: