

Going Deeper - BELONGING

Saanich Baptist Church
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A Christian/Disciple is someone who finds their identity, purpose and belonging in God's design.

Discipleship is: Spiritual formation that seeks to discern the wisdom necessary to influence the cultural setting in which Christians find themselves.

Disciples are those who have been so ravished with Christ that others want to be like them. Others look at those disciples' life in the Kingdom of God and they say, "this is the best thing I ever saw in my life. I must have that." — Dallas Willard

Discipleship is: Participation in a unique community of friends who take responsibility for one another's spiritual growth. Discipleship is a community activity.

Hebrews 3:12-14 CSB, [12] Watch out, brothers and sisters, so that there won't be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. [13] But encourage each other DAILY, while it is still called TODAY, so that none of you is HARDENED by sin's deception. [14] For we have become participants in Christ if we hold firmly until the end the reality that we had at the start.

Q: Which people have most shaped your view of Jesus?

In a gospel community disciples call one another up to the high calling of Christ, which is to image God. Community is not merely about being the people of God, but it is about being a people of God who image their God. — Bill Clem, Disciple

DESIGN – God Exists In Community

God Communicates - Within the Trinity there are six communication responsibilities: the Father communicates to the Son and the Spirit, the Son communicates to the Father and the Spirit, and the Spirit communicates to the Father and the Son. This community communicates (Gen. 1:26) and each member explains the others (John 14:8–9) to those outside the community. Jesus longed to return to sharing in the glory of God that he experienced with the Father before his incarnation (John 17:4–5).

Love's Instinct is to Create – Gen. 1:26-27, [26] Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth." [27] So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female.

Love's Expression is Complementary – Gen. 2:18-20, [18] Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to him." [19] The LORD

God formed out of the ground every wild animal and every bird of the sky, and brought each to the man to see what he would call it. And whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. [20] The man gave names to all the livestock, to the birds of the sky, and to every wild animal; but for the man no helper was found corresponding to him.

Created from Intimacy for Intimacy – Gen. 2:24, [24] *This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become ONE flesh.*

Created for Intimacy & Attachment – 2 Cor. 4:6, [6] *For God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the FACE of Jesus Christ.*

Q: What makes your best friend your best friend?

Distortion – Community as Threat

Gen. 4:8-14, [8] Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him. [9] Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's guardian?" [10] Then he said, "What have you done? Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground! [11] So now you are cursed, alienated from the ground that opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood you have shed. [12] If you work the ground, it will never again give you its yield. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth." [13] But Cain answered the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear! [14] Since you are banishing me today from the face of the earth, and I must hide from your presence and become a restless wanderer on the earth, whoever finds me will kill me."

Sin: Cain viewed Abel as a threat to determining his own worship. Instead of repenting and joining Abel in worship he destroyed the relationship.

Consequence: Alienation - Cut off from God. Isolation - Cut off from others.

Modern Day Isolation: Face-to-Face Interactions declined from 2003-2022

- Adult Men (-30%)
- Unmarried (-35%)
- Teenagers (-45%)
- Boys/Girls 15-19yrs reduced by more than 3hrs./week

There is no record of any period in history when people spent more time alone.

Q: How do you address alienation & isolation?

REDEMPTION – Jesus Re-Creates Community

Who was Jesus? God-Embodied, Friend of Sinners, Head of the Church

What did Jesus do? Washed feet before saying: "No greater love has a man than this, to lay down his life for his friends."

Jesus Modelled Community – John 13

The eleven needed a paradigm of how to recover from distorting the grace given them; in essence, how to rebound from sin. The model Jesus gives is community, a place to acknowledge sin, to confess it as wrong, and to make things right. Foot washing is not an issue

of eternal destination; it is about relationship. To the person who has experienced oneness with Jesus, there are few pains as unsettling as sinful discord.

If we have champions in Jesus and the Holy Spirit before the Father, we should certainly be able to champion one another within our communities. In fact, it is a way we image God, for we get the opportunity to forgive as Jesus forgave (Col. 3:13) and to advocate for one another in similar fashion to Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

The church itself is not made up of natural "friends." What binds us together is not common education, race, income, politics, nationality, accents, jobs or anything of the sort. Christians come together, not because they form a natural collocation but because they have been saved by Jesus Christ and owe him a common allegiance. In light of this common allegiance, in light of the fact that they have all been loved by Jesus himself, they commit themselves to doing what he says - and commands them to love one another. In this light they are a band of natural enemies who love one another for Jesus' sake. — D.A. Carson

Christian Friendship Progresses: From Infatuation through Let Down and into Covenant.

"Nothing is sweet or easy about community. Community is a fellowship of people who do not hide their joys and sorrows but make them visible to each other in a gesture of hope." – Henri Nouwen

Q: What makes friendship difficult?

Renewal of Belonging – Community as Friendship

While we believe that the church is not a building, or a program, but rather a group of people, we know that the relationships existing within the church need to be cultivated intentionally.

Building relationships of honesty, vulnerability and trust will ensure that people are connected in life-giving friendships, while rejecting any evidence of exclusivity within our groups.

Romans 12:9-18 CSB[9] Let love be without hypocrisy. Detest evil; cling to what is good. [10] Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Take the lead in honoring one another. [11] Do not lack diligence in zeal; be fervent in the Spirit; serve the Lord. [12] Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer. [13] Share with the saints in their needs; pursue hospitality. [14] Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. [15] Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. [16] Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud; instead, associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own estimation. [17] Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Give careful thought to do what is honorable in everyone's eyes. [18] If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

- Love honestly, speaking out against what is wrong. (v.9)
- Love even unattractive people, because they are your brothers and sisters. (v. 10)
- Love by making others feel honored and valuable. (v. 10)
- Love by being generous in practical ways with your home, money, and time. (v. 13)
- Love without bitterness. Don't "pay others back," or hold resentment against others. (v.14)
- Love with empathy. Be willing to be emotionally involved with others. (v.15)
- Love with humility. Be willing to associate with people who differ from you. (v. 16)

"Princeton's Robert Wuthnow has found that small groups mainly 'provide occasions for individuals to focus on themselves in the presence of others. The social contract binding members together asserts only the weakest of obligations. 'Come if you have time. Talk if you feel like it. Respect everyone's opinion. Never criticize. Leave quietly if you become dissatisfied.'" In Overcoming Loneliness in Everyday Life, two Boston psychiatrists... suggest that... groups 'fail to replicate the sense of belong we have lost. Attending weekly meetings, dropping in and out as one pleases, shopping around for a more satisfactory or appealing group - all of these factors work against the growth of true community.'" Randy Frazee, Making Room for Life

Community @ SBC – 2 Ways

1. Programmatically

- Formal - Time & Space are established annually
- Make-Up - Age & Stage
- Common Goal - Doctrine, Liturgy, Compassion, Ministry
- **Easy assimilation**

2. Relationally

- Informal – Time and space are established weekly
- Make-Up – Gender & Affinity
- Common Journey - Fear, Anger, Shame
- Easy invitation

*The church as the gather of disciples is God's ideal way of bringing people to fullness of Christ.
— Dallas Willard*

At a TABLE this week:

- Where have you seen Christ working through you?
 - When was love difficult?

At a TABLE every week:

- How have you seen Christ working in you?
 - When were you afraid, angry, ashamed?
- How have you seen Christ working around you?
 - What threatened your hope?
- How have you seen Christ working though you this week?
 - What made love difficult?