

Last week: Intro to the idea of Community

- “Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ.” Bonhoeffer
- Key verse, **Romans 12:5**, “*So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.*”

Story

- Trip to Ukraine, 2005, with Fred Wright
 - Raised in the height of the cold war
 - I remember being afraid of the impending nuclear war
 - Soviets were our enemy, unknown, not understood – the only thing we knew was that they hated us and wanted to destroy us...
 - Then I found myself in the middle of the former Soviet Union
 - The Ukraine was known as being more Russian than Russia
 - Of all the places I've traveled it was the most difficult to communicate because very few spoke English – we had been their enemy!
- But at the Leaders conference
 - It was amazing
 - I experienced complete unity of Spirit and mind and body
 - Spirit – we enjoyed the same Holy Spirit
 - Mind – I found out they struggled with the same issues, even when I had the opportunity to speak about economy and politics – the issues were almost identical, and we were in agreement...
 - Body – they were experiencing the same physical manifestations – even though most had hardly ever heard of Toronto, or even Canada let alone ever being in a renewal meeting.
 - In and through Jesus Christ, those who were my enemies, unknown and misunderstood – were now one body with me – we were “individually members of one another” just as Paul had written 2000 years earlier to those who lived in Rome!
 - I learned then to see every enemy as a potential friend, and every friend as a potential brother/sister in Christ.
- The Point
 - Our spiritual community in and through Christ is a REALITY
 - It is not something we aspire to or must construct
 - I didn't have to create community with the Ukrainians, I had community already through our shared relationship with Jesus.
 - It the same regardless of how similar or different we may be.
 - It's the same with Christians in foreign land, as it is with those next to you in Church today. We are “one body in Christ.”

Romans 12:6-8 NKJV *Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.*

- Central to Biblical community is the idea that each member has gifts that the community needs
- A parallel passage, **Ephesians 4:15-16 NKJV** *but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head Christ 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit*

together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

- Without YOUR part, New Day Community Church is not all of what God intends her to be.
- The church is not a community defined by geographic boundaries
 - I'm a member of the community of Portage merely because I live there
 - But I have little other connection with nearly everyone else that lives in that community
- Nor is the church supposed to be a community defined by a charismatic, influential leader (although many churches are defined in that way)
 - The church is not to be like a fan club for a pop star preacher
- Rather the Church is intended by God, and will be the most Biblical, and I believe the most effective and fulfilling, when *“each joint supplies”* and when *“every part does it's share.”*
 - New Day Community Church must be defined not by my gifts, but by our gifts – fully realized and shared among all
 - Then we can become who God has called us to be – then we can each fulfill our individual destiny – and we as a body will fulfill our corporate destiny!

“Having then gifts differing...” Vs. 6

- Biblical community relies on a diversity of gifts
- Biblical community isn't dependent upon everyone having the same gift (strengths, likes/dislikes, etc.) but rather upon a variety of people with a diversity of gives coming together IN and THROUGH Jesus Christ to further His Kingdom.
- Two potential problems with Spiritual Gifts
 - Gift Envy
 - When you envy (normally unconsciously) someone else's gift
 - Results in belittling yourself and not utilizing or despising the gifts you have
 - “If I could prophesy like Stephanie, then I'd be spiritual.”
 - But if you do not have the same gifts as Stephanie (or whomever you compare yourself to) then no matter how hard you try, you may never attain the same level in that area.
 - The real problem though is that you will never discover and develop what gift you do have – something the body needs, and others are suffering from the lack that you are intended by God to fulfill.
 - Gift Projection
 - This is when someone projects upon others the expectation of a particular gift, most often your own – or possibly others -- Preachers do this all the time...
 - An evangelist shares how easy it is for him to win souls
 - If you don't wins souls as easily there must be something wrong with you!
 - This can happen with any gift
 - A person with a gift of mercy can actually judge those who don't act as compassionate, thinking others are being judgmental
 - A teacher can judge others as carnal minded when they don't understand the things of God as readily as he/she does
 - The proper response is to learn from one another and even when we don't have a particular gift, we can grow in that DISCIPLINE, based upon the example and understanding we gain from those who genuinely have a particular gift.

“According to Grace”

- It is all unmerited favor
- No place for pride or prejudice
- If you want more gifts – get more grace

Use it or abuse it...

- **Romans 11:29** NKJV *For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.*
- It is not Use it or Lose it, when we talk about Spiritual Gifts.
- If we do not use the gifts God has given us, by default we will be abusing our gift
- Gifts given for the Kingdom, often end up only benefiting the individual
 - When the individual is not in a healthy Biblical community
 - Evangelist often end up as salesmen
 - Leader/admin as Business owner, or politician
 - Let me be CLEAR
 - It is great and proper to use your God given gifts in the Market place
 - That is exactly where we ALL are called to use them
 - But, we must also use them within the context of the Biblical community we are joined to (the Church) and in every place we must always use them with a Kingdom Mentality – or having the Kingdom of God as the priority
 - Jesus said, *“Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”* **Matt. 6:33**
 - Paul was a perfect example of this principle
 - For most of his life Paul was not in full time Christian ministry
 - He was a business owner, a tradesman
 - Yet he wrote much of the New Testament, planted more churches than anyone and is the father of Church as we know it

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The Message: let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't. If you preach, just preach God's Message, nothing else; 7 if you help, just help, don't take over; if you teach, stick to your teaching; 8 if you give encouraging guidance, be careful that you don't get bossy; if you're put in charge, don't manipulate; if you're called to give aid to people in distress, keep your eyes open and be quick to respond; if you work with the disadvantaged, don't let yourself get irritated with them or depressed by them. Keep a smile on your face.

Paul lists several gifts, this is not a complete list, but we'll take a quick look at these:

- Prophecy
 - Sharing the heart and mind of God
 - Normally for that moment, normally not a prediction of the future
 - Not mind reading but simply telling what you believe you are hearing from God about a person or situation

- Ministry
 - Serving – in the general sense
 - Used specifically of those “in ministry” or those who make a living from ministering
 - Interesting that this is a distinction that implies the other listed gifts, are not necessarily gifts of those “in ministry”
- Teaching
 - Simply someone who is particularly gifted in teaching other
 - Instruction
 - Line upon line informing others about doctrine and God's word and how to apply it to regular life
- Exhortation
 - *to call near*, that is, *invite, invoke* (by *imploration, hortation* or *consolation*): - beseech, call for, (be of good) comfort, desire, (give) exhort (-ation), intreat, pray
 - Different than teaching, a different gift
 - Can mean preaching – but is not limited to public ministry
- Giving
 - This is actually a spiritual gift
 - Like all of the gifts, everyone is expected to give
 - But those with a gift of Giving will often give more easily and more readily
 - They also will most often receive more than others – their lives and example for others to learn from
- Leading
 - KJV: Rule: to *stand before*, that is, (in rank) to *preside*, or (by implication) to *practise*: - maintain, be over, rule
 - *with diligence*: “speed”, that is, (by implication) *despatch, eagerness, earnestness*: - business, (earnest) care (-fulness), diligence forwardness, haste.
- Mercy
 - Compassion – someone who has a supernatural gift of being compassionate
 - With Cheerfulness – I love how God's word nails this, often those who have a gift of mercy, become overburdened by the cares of others – but God's word cautions that even when we are being compassionate – we need to be cheerful
- There are many other spiritual gifts listed in the Bible
- Paul's intention is not an exhaustive list, but rather to say that with whatever gift we have been given, we are to use it to build the community of Christ that we are part of.

Application

- Prayerfully consider how you are connected in community at New Day
- Discover your spiritual gifts
- Begin to, or increase the measure you utilize your gifts within the context of New Day as well as in the Marketplace of real life!