

Barriers to Authentic Community

1 Thessalonians 2:1-14

Pastor Dave Bennett

Introduction: the importance, and difficulty, of building authentic community

(Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; I Corinthians 12:21; Acts 2:42-47; Romans 15:5; Ephesians 4:4-6)

We believe that God has designed us to share our spiritual journey as a community of believers. We are better together. We were never intended to make it on our own. All of us are people in process, broken and needing healing in various ways. But each of us has been made in God's image, and with a unique shape. We believe that spiritual transformation happens best within the context of genuine sharing and face-to-face relationships in a small group. We desire to nurture relationships based on grace as well as truth in our leadership teams, our small groups and our homes.

I. Building Barriers

A. Cultural Barriers

B. Time Barriers

C. Inner Barriers

1. Fear

2. Pride

II. Breaking Barriers to Authentic Community

A. Team ministry in place of individualism

B. Personal investment in place of mere words

C. Genuine love in place of self-protection

D. Focus on God in place of self-promotion

Daily Bible Readings

January 26—February 1

FOLLOW-THROUGHS

Monday

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

In what ways do these verses illustrate the truth that we are "better together"? What recent examples can see you in your own life where your life has been better or your work has been more effective because of someone else? Thank the Lord for those people who have helped you. Are there any whom you can thank personally today?

Tuesday

1 Corinthians 12:1-31

What have you discovered about your own role in the Body of Christ? How would you describe your spiritual gift? How are you using it for the benefit of others? Why is it important to live together in authentic community in order for the spiritual gifts to be able to function effectively?

Wednesday

1 Corinthians 13

What characteristics of love does Paul list in these verses? How does each characteristic contribute to the building of authentic community? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you where your own deficiencies in love have been undermining or slowing the development of authentic community in the groups of which you are a part. Confess your sins to the Lord. Ask him to fill you with His Holy Spirit today, so that you could love as Jesus loves.

Thursday

1 Thessalonians 2:1-6

What are some of the masks that you tend to put on to hide your fear? Ask the Lord to give you courage today to live openly, honestly and boldly in each of your circles of relationship.

Friday

1 Thessalonians 2:7-12; Philippians 2:19-21

How did Paul and his team express their genuine concern for the believers at Thessalonica? Note the description of Timothy (one of the members of Paul's team, I Thessalonians 1:1) in the Philippians verses as well. How could your genuine, personalized concern and love for others in your group help to build authentic community? How could your selfishness and self-promotion undermine authentic community? To what extent would your friends and family members describe you as a Timothy?

WARM-UPS

Saturday

Isaiah 58:1-7

In what ways did the Israelite people think that they were serving God and pleasing God? What did God actually want from them? What does God most want from you?

Sunday

Isaiah 58:8-14

What sort of blessings did God want to lavish on his people? What were the conditions for receiving that blessing?