

Summer Series: “Vital: Churches Changing Communities and the World”

Sermon #6: “Where Everybody Knows Your Name”

Scripture: Acts 2:42-47

Text: Acts 2:42 (CEV) “They spent their time learning from the apostles, and they were like family to each other. They also broke bread and prayed together.”

Theme: God made every Christ-follower in every church to live in rich, deep, authentic and accountable relationships.

Blurb: Who knows your nickname? When a church grows, it may be too big for everybody to know everybody. But we should never be too big for everybody to know somebody. Small groups connect people in relationship. Being together in the community of a group can give Christ-followers both roots and wings. Roots keep you connected to Christ. Wings are what release you to serve. Are you in a small group? Everybody has a deep desire to be known, cared for, prayed for and welcomed...and that can happen only in a small group. Are we making room for new people to join groups within our church family? How will we intentionally create at least one more connection point?

Gathering Song: “Holy Is the Lord” - Sanctify

Welcome - Pastor David

Welcome - Introductions, Welcome Center

New web site

Turn off cell phones but like us on Facebook first. Can from our website.

HC - Open to all

HC - Different, in lobby

Songs: 1. “Open the Eyes of My Heart, Lord” - Sanctify

2. “In Christ Alone”

3. “They'll Know We Are Christians by our Love”

Worship Prayer - Andrew

Kid's Invited to Kid's Church - Pastor David

Wildfire Sharing- Pastor David

Hospitality Training

1. Look for people alone, introduce self, introduce to another

2. 10-5 rule: in the 10 minutes before and after worship, talk to 5 different people

3. Pray for the people you meet

Wednesday BBQ - Put into practice!

Opening Video - For the sermon series “Vital”

PP#1: “Vital: Churches Changing Communities and the World”

“Where Everybody Knows Your Name”

“They spent their time learning from the apostles, and they were like family to each other. They also broke bread and prayed together.” -Acts 2:42 (CEV)

“Vital: Churches Changing Communities and the World.” “Where Everybody Knows Your Name.” Acts 2:42 “They spent their time learning from the apostles, and they were like family to each other. They also broke bread and prayed together.”

PP#2: *Image of me in the Redwoods:* 08-31 RW16 Humboldt D

I love trees. So, I was particularly excited to visit the California Coast Redwoods about five years ago. These are the tallest trees in the world, some of them reaching over 370 feet tall! Imagine, that's trees as tall as a 37 story building. Incredible!

PP#3: *Image of a regular tree with its root system, next to a redwood tree with its root system*

But what's so shocking is that although they can grow that tall, their roots go down only about 10 feet. Can you imagine? We usually think of trees with as much below the ground as we see above, with roots reaching deep into the earth. But not so with the tallest trees on earth.

PP#4: *Image of the kids on a fallen Sequoia root system:* 08-25 Y M Fallen Monarch

Here on this Fallen Monarch you can see just how shallow the roots are. So how can they survive those terrible Pacific storms standing so tall? How do they live for thousands of years? Why don't they all just fall over?

PP#5: *Image showing the intertwining of redwood roots.*

The secret is that below the ground, the roots branch out and grow horizontally. They seek out roots from other nearby trees, and they wrap their roots around each other. Their roots are so intertwined that together they create a super-solid foundation. You really don't find lone redwood trees. They grow together, supporting each other, holding each other, making each other able to stand tall, to resist the wildest Pacific storms, and to last for thousands of years.

The Redwoods offer an amazing image for how followers of Jesus are to be. If we try to stand alone, our root system just can't support us through all the storms. But when we are locked together with other followers of Jesus, we can withstand almost anything.

PP#6: *Image of the book Vital: Churches Changing Communities and the World*

This summer, we're learning the biblical characteristics of vital churches. Jesus has entrusted His work, His ministry, to His followers. Jesus came to give life, and His followers not only receive and experience this life, they spread it around and share it. Churches must be vital: alive and life-sharing!

The author of this book identifies five biblical characteristics of vital churches. One is spirit-led leadership - faithful, fruitful, accountable. Second is churches unleashing the whole of the Body of Christ: God's dream in us, unleashed by the Holy Spirit, lived out as we mature in Christ. Third is authentic worship, when God's people worship with their bodies, emotions, finances, and resources. Today we're discovering that biblically, vital churches help people grow in small groups.

PP#7: *Image of a group of Christians praying together.*

Jesus followers are not loaners. We don't go it by ourselves. We're like the redwoods. We grow and flourish close to others, by linking up with them.

There's something important about this community of faith, something godly. After all, God is in and of Himself, a community. He's Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And when Jesus showed up on earth, He pulled a small group around Him. Since the very beginning, Christians have been in groups.

This is intentional. Yes, you can be a Christian all by yourself. You can give your heart to Jesus and receive salvation from sin and eternal life. You can stay at home and get good teaching on line or on TV. You can even worship alone, singing songs and praying by yourself. But you really can't grow as a Christian if you try it as a free agent. God wants you to grow in faith, in peace, in joy, in love, in spiritual fruit. It is so very hard to grow on your own. We need the support and strength of others around us to grow tall.

PP#8: *Image of a person around a lot of others, but still very alone.*

It is possible to be part of a church and not be connected. It is possible to worship in the large setting, help out at events, participate in activities, and still be alone. In one of the first churches I served there was a lady who had been a part of the church for 15 years. She rarely missed a Sunday, and she could be counted on to help out at events. But one day she came to me crying. Her adult son, who lived with her, has just been diagnosed with cancer. She came to me, she said, because she didn't know who else to tell. I asked her about those close to her at church. She said that she really had never shared much of private matters with anyone else. She was also so worried about how they would be able to handle the needs of their home and yard during his treatments. She said she had no one to ask for help. This woman had been a regular part of the church for 15 years! Yet she basically was trying to go it standing alone. Storms came, and she began to teeter.

PP#9: The Power of Small Groups

So, for Christians to be well linked up with others, for churches to be truly vital, there needs to be smaller groups within the church, where people can connect personally and experience true community. Small groups are crucial for spiritual growth and for being the Body of Christ.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, understood this, and from the beginning made being a part of a small group a key part of being a Methodist. Wesley would go around preaching and telling people about the amazing love of God. But when people responded to his preaching, Wesley didn't take them one by one, help them give their hearts to Jesus, and then send them on their way. No. In fact, Wesley was less concerned about them giving their hearts to Jesus and much more concerned about getting them into a small group. For he knew that it was in small groups that people could be led to give their hearts to Jesus, *and then*, as they continued in small groups, to be encouraged and supported to keep on growing in their faith. The main purpose for these groups was to help hold people accountable to the three general rules of Methodism: doing no harm, doing good, and doing those things that help you connect to God. They would meet and discuss together how they were doing on these. The primary strategy of Methodism was not to get people converted, but to get people into faith forming small groups. Spiritual growth naturally followed.

PP#10: The Power of Small Groups - Where Everybody Knows Your Name!

[Also use the image of the bar sign from Cheers?]

It is possible to be a part of a church and not grow. I know it is unlikely that here at church that everybody will know everybody. But it is possible that everybody can know somebody. That can come in a good small group.

Now, it is even possible to be a part of small groups and not grow. Sometimes our groups can be information-based, like learning about a book, or studying the Bible. For us to grow spiritually, we need to be a part of a small group that talks about our own personal lives, that serves as accountability partners, that deals with what we are going through in our lives. If our groups don't do that, we can just stay in our heads, and grow in information. Spiritual growth, however, leads to changes in our behaviors: how we live. It's being with people on a regular basis who know enough about us and our lives that they can help us with how we live our daily lives.

PP#11-12: The Power of Small Groups - Where Everybody Knows Your Name!

1. Fuels my spiritual growth!

Acts 2:42-47 (NLT)

“All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer. A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.”

This is a biblical model. Take a look at the early church in Acts. There we see Christians growing in small groups. Acts 2:42-47 describes what Christians did shortly after Jesus went back to heaven. It says, “All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer. A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.”

Do you see how they worshiped together in public places, but then they also met together in homes? They shared meals. They shared life together. Small groups that are a part of vital churches are groups in which people share their lives together. There may be study components. Their may be serving components. But I think a key component is always forming community.

Sharing about our daily lives together, what we are going through, being honest and transparent with each other, covenanting to support each other, and being accountable with each other, this is a primary way we grow spiritually.

PP#13: The Power of Small Groups - Where Everybody Knows Your Name!

1. Fuels my spiritual growth!

2. Fuels my ministry!

Acts 6:6 (NLT)

“These seven were presented to the apostles, who prayed for them as they laid their hands on them. So God’s message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too.”

Secondly, being a part of a devoted small group fuels our ministry. In Acts 6, seven people were identified as servants, and they were put into places of service. Because of their serving, God’s message spread, and the church grew. “These seven were presented to the apostles, who prayed for them as they laid their hands on them. So God’s message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too.”

In small groups is where we can identify our spiritual giftings, our passions, what we are good at. Others can know us enough to identify in us God’s gifts. They can affirm our abilities, and encourage us to step out in service. We can work together, encourage each other, and become bold and gain experience. Faith formation small groups fuel our ministries.

PP#14-15: The Power of Small Groups - Where Everybody Knows Your Name!

1. Fuels my spiritual growth!

2. Fuels my ministry!

3. Fuels my transformation!

Acts 9:17-22 (NLT): “So Ananias went and found Saul. He laid his hands on him and said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ Instantly something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized. Afterward he ate some food and regained his strength. Saul stayed with the believers in Damascus for a few days. And immediately he began preaching about Jesus in the synagogues, saying, ‘He is indeed the Son of God!’ All who heard him were amazed. ‘Isn’t this the same man who caused such devastation among Jesus’ followers in Jerusalem?’ they asked. “And didn’t he come here to arrest them and take them in chains to the leading priests?’ Saul’s preaching became more and more powerful, and the Jews in Damascus couldn’t refute his proofs that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.”

And thirdly, devoted communities fuel our transformation. In Acts, Saul was hunting down and arresting Christians. Then, in a dramatic experience, Jesus appeared to Saul and called him to stop trying to stop Christians, and instead to go and make more Christians. Understandably, this was a dramatic change for Saul. So Jesus had Saul go see a Christian named Ananias to help him.

Acts 9:17-22, “So Ananias went and found Saul. He laid his hands on him and said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road, has sent me so that you might regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ Instantly something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he got up and was baptized. Afterward he ate some food and regained his strength. Saul stayed with the believers in Damascus for a few days. And immediately he began preaching about Jesus in the synagogues, saying, ‘He is indeed the Son of God!’ All who heard him were amazed. ‘Isn’t this the same man who caused such devastation among Jesus’ followers in Jerusalem?’ they asked. “And didn’t he come here to arrest them and take them in chains to the leading priests?’ Saul’s preaching became more and more powerful, and the Jews in Damascus

couldn't refute his proofs that Jesus was indeed the Messiah."

You need people around you to help you transform into the person God is calling you to be. You need their prayers. You need their advice. You need their correction. You need their help. God is not just growing you, but also shaping you into a vessel for a specific ministry. You need people around you who can help you take those steps, to live into the transformation God is bringing in your life.

PP#16: The Power of Small Groups - Where Everybody Knows Your Name!

Get involved in one!

As we wind down the summer, each of us need to take seriously getting into a group like this. You need to be in a group that will fuel your spiritual growth, fuel your ministry service, and fuel God's transformation in you. A Bible Study won't cut it. A fellowship group won't cut it. They are good, but you need more. It needs to be a group in which you can really talk about your life, where you can trust the others enough for you to be honest and real, and a group where you can assess your growth and changes in behavior.

If you're open to that, pull me aside. Pull Andrew, or Andrew aside. Pull Greg Klaussen aside. Greg is our grow group coordinator. Or go on line to our church's web site's small group's page. Send us an email. We're launching new groups right now. We're going to be starting groups in September. Get involved in one!

We need to have good roots, roots that are interconnected with others. Then we can grow together, support each other, hold each other, help each other to stand tall, to resist the wildest storms, and to last through the years. We need to become redwood Christians!

I want you to see a video about a church that saw a need in their community, and moved to address it. As you watch it, notice the groups that activated to meet the need. See how they met the need of people who did not have community, and how they provided a community of support for them.

Video: #5 from the CD: Church Meal for Military (4:30)

Kids return during the video.

Holy Communion & Offering

Community of Christ

Prayers for Unity

Great Thanksgiving

Receiving the Elements in groups around tables in the lobby

Offering, plates on your way out the sanctuary doors

Musicians lead closing song while first half of congregation go receive the elements

Closing Song: "Come Thou Fount" - Sanctify

After first half of congregation is finished, everyone else goes to receive elements

Everyone leaves on their own.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR AUG. 2, 2015

Summer Series: “Vital”

Sermon #6: “Where Everybody Knows Your Name”

Scripture: Acts 2:42-47

Opening prayer

Introductions:

Introduce yourself and describe a great team you’ve been a part of. What made it great?

Read Acts 2:42-47

1. List out the different things the early Christians did:
2. What do we, as a church today, do that is similar, and that is different?
3. How could we become more like the early Christians?

Read: Acts 9:17-22

4. Skim the first part of the chapter, before these verses. What was the issue/problem going on that needed to be solved?
5. The early Christians designated certain people to perform specific tasks. How is this similar to how our church operates today?
6. Have you ever been “set aside” by the church for a specialized ministry? Describe your experience.
7. How is it easier to perform tasks when you work with other people, as opposed to working alone?

Read: Acts 9:17-22

8. Saul was undergoing a radical change. What role did Ananias play? Why do you think God might have had Saul meet with Ananias?
9. How did the community of Christians in Damascus help shape Saul/Paul’s ministry?
10. Application: What will you take away from this passage? How will you live it out?