

"A MESS WORTH MAKING"

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"Christianity is supposed to be a community where people can wonder out-loud. A place where people don't have to park their injuries outside and the questions they have around them."

- This series of talks are "Intentionally Unresolved" – They are meant to stir us towards a firmer, healthier, and more faithful tethering to God, the Church, Ourselves, and our purpose.

We have all had different experiences in the church...

- **I can honestly say...** *"Christian Community has changed my life!"*
- **MySpace** – *"Know what else is awesome? My Church!"*
- **I can honestly say...** *"Christian Community has also brought me some of the most painful experiences of my life."*

Church Facts:

- Washington state has the greatest percentage of people (32%) in the U.S. who say they are not affiliated with any specific religion.
- Between 6,000 – 10,000 churches in the U.S. are closing their doors each year. This means roughly 100-200 churches close each week.
- Less than 18% of Americans regularly attend church.
65% of churches are in decline or plateauing, along with 65% of the U.S. population having no real church connection.
- The last 10 years witnessed a 19.4% decline in church attendance.

Is this thing we call church worth fighting for?

- The Church is Broken... Then I'll fix it!"

What do we mean when we say church?

- (Vs.) Acts 2:41-47 (NIV)
- Luke, a doctor, found it necessary to document it in this way, that those who repented and believed were added "into the family of God."

(Vs.) Matthew 16:18 - *And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

Ekklesia – “A Gathering of Called Out Ones”

- The idea of church is not just a New Testament idea though...
- **Moses** - In the old Testament Book of Exodus we see the Hebrew people enslaved, and Moses is called by God to lead them, liberate them. Moses is told to gather together the assembly (Ex. 4), to tell them how this liberation is gonna go down...
- The word that is used is “Edah” meaning a “witnessing community.”
- Moses calls together a “witnessing community” who will witness their liberation. They will first witness it happen, and then they will be a witness to others about their liberation.
- “The Church is a community of faith witnessing their own liberation, and then creating the space for others to be liberated too.”

My role as a Christ follower is not just to bear witness to MY freedom, but also to OUR freedom.”

- Joseph Hellerman, in his book “When the Church Was a Family” states, *“As church-going Americans, we have been socialized to believe that our individual fulfillment and our personal relationship with God are more important than any connection we might have with our fellow human beings, whether in the home or in the church. We have, in a most subtle and insidious way, been conformed to this world.”*

As people living in this type of culture we have “unlearning” to do before we can truly bear OUR witness...

- “A Curse of Options”
- The “idea” of Christian community can kill Christian community (Acts 2)

Benedictine Vow of Stability – *“We vow to remain all our life with our local community. We live together, pray together, work together, relax together. We give up the temptation to move from place to place in search of an ideal situation. Ultimately there is no escape from oneself, and the idea that things would be better someplace else is usually an illusion. And when interpersonal conflicts arise, we have a great incentive to work things out and restore peace. This means learning the practices of love: acknowledging one’s own offensive behavior, giving up one’s preferences, forgiving.”*

“In his letters, Paul refers to Jesus as “our Lord”—that is, as the Lord of God’s people—53 times. Only once, in contrast, does the expression “my Lord” appear in Paul’s writings (Phil 3:8). This speaks volumes about the priorities of the great apostle. Paul’s overarching concern in his ministry went far beyond the personal spiritual pilgrimages of his individual converts. Paul’s driving passion was to establish spiritually vibrant, relationally healthy communities of believers.”

– Joseph Hellerman

- (Vs.) John 21:3-19
- Two Charcoal Fires (John 18)
- Awkward/Messy!

“What happens in the messiness of relationships is that our hearts are revealed, our weaknesses are exposed, and we start coming to the end of ourselves. The health and maturity of a relationship are not measured by an absence of problems, but by the way the inevitable problems are handled.”

– Paul Tripp

“Spiritual formation occurs primarily in the context of community. People who remain connected with their brothers and sisters in the local church almost invariably grow in self-understanding, and they mature in their ability to relate in healthy ways to God and to their fellow human beings. This is especially the case for those courageous Christians who stick it out through the often messy process of interpersonal discord and conflict resolution. Long-term interpersonal relationships are the crucible of genuine progress in the Christian life.”

(Vs.) John 13:34-35 (MSG). - *“Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another. This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other.”*

(Vs.) John 17:21 (NLT) - *“Pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me”.*

We need community to help us remember.

- **Thought:** We can look to the bible for the history and definition of the church, but we are its living expression.
- 10 years into this “mess” we call Kessid...but it’s a mess worth making.

Closing Challenge

1. Are you willing to press into authentic community, in essence, get messy?
2. If so, how?