
Sunday, July 30, 2017
Did You Know?

God's Community

One of my favorite books on community is Life Together by German Theologian and Pastor, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. I am refreshed each time I read it because not only does it remind me again and again of the challenges of doing life together but also of the wonderful blessings that come as we face each challenge with obedience and love.

Early in the book, he writes this warning:

The serious Christian, set down for the first time in a Christian community, is likely to bring with him a very definite idea of what Christian life together should be and to try to realize it. But God's grace quickly shatters such dreams....By sheer grace, God will not permit us to live even for a brief period in a dream world.

A person who has his or her own dream/vision of community rather than the community that actually exists, becomes arrogant and judgmental/critical. He continues:

When things do not go his way, he calls the effort a failure. When his ideal picture is destroyed, he sees the community going to smash. So he becomes, first an accuser of his brethren, then an accuser of God, and finally the despairing accuser of himself.

Bonhoeffer has identified a key destroyer of community life. No matter how many small group communities of which we have been a part or how informed we are of small group ministries, each small group is different. In our arrogance and assumptions, we will try to recreate the "perfect" community so we say and do things to promote our understanding, our desires and disregard opposing or competing ideas. Soon, frustration and impatience set in because the community is not changing as fast as it should, people are not responding as they should, things are not at all like what was expected.

So, what happens? Criticism and judgment enter our hearts. We start to point fingers and blame -- first, to our small group members for not doing their part, then to God for putting us in such a group and eventually to oneself for even trying to change things. Soon, we start thinking about leaving the community to find another one.

What is amazing is that God knows our hearts and knows our tendencies. So, in his amazing grace, He quickly shatters such dreams because He does not want us to live in such delusions that say we can control or fix how our small communities function.

Brothers and sisters, God sends us into life groups, discipleship groups, ministry groups, and other small group communities not to fix them but to do life and faith within them and we leave the results to God. For be assured, His vision of community is far greater and more awesome than we can ever imagine. Community is something He has birthed to bless His children. Community is a wonderful gift from our Father in heaven, and He will give it according to His time, His will, and His purpose in the power of the Holy Spirit.

So, enter in to His community with a heart of humility, obedience, availability and love.

Pastor Jane