

Mutual Care

I. Sharing Life

- A. Relationship grows by social interaction and working together.
1. Just interacting does not produce good relationships.
 - It has to be based on a common mind.
 - *Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.* (Phil 2:2)
 - It also has to be based on mutual love.
 - *You shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.* (Lev. 19:18)
 2. But central to developing relationships is doing enough together to make relationships possible.
- B. In order to build Christian relationships in the modern world, there needs to be commitment.
1. Modern life tends to fragment people's lives and dissolve or weaken relationships.
 - People are adverse to being tied down, being restricted, having stable requirements.
 2. Modern individualism (and human sinfulness) makes stable relationships even harder.
 - We are taught that caring for ourselves is the route to happiness.
 3. Yet modern people desire very strongly the things that community provides.
 - In fact it brings great blessings.
- C. As community members we should be largely concerned with strengthening our relationships, with the Lord, of course, but also with his people.
1. In order to reach this end we must be serious about maintaining our commitments and disciplines.

II. Building Committed Love

- A. We learn in Christian Personal Relationships the basics of brotherly love: mutual help (especially in needs), affection, honor, encouragement, and the "building up" of one another.
1. This of course is all done faithfully and out of a commitment to one another.
- B. We need to live out brotherly love in our community and do all we can to increase it.
1. We must do our part to improve the quality of brotherly affection.
 - Let us watch out for it in our community, from the districts down through (and especially) in our small groups.

- We need to see that nobody "falls through the cracks" when in trouble.
- C. Members should be actively caring for one another and here are the degrees:
 1. We should be most active with those with whom we live.
 2. We should also be active with those within our small groups.
 3. Within the district and the community we should be ready to shoulder some service to help with needs as they arise.
 4. Within the Sword of the Spirit, our community of communities, we should be ready to provide hospitality, prayer, and financial contributions as necessary.
- D. We need to watch over all of our social relationships.
 - The bulk of them should be in the community.

III. Balancing Various Elements

- A. The basis is the common spirit that is, subordinating our lives to the common good.
 - *Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. (Phil. 2:4)*
- B. We are stewards of our time and money for the Lord.
 - This includes our personal lives (i.e. personal needs, work, church, etc.).
 - This includes the lives of our families.
 - This includes the brothers and sisters and the Body as a whole.
 - This includes our common mission.
- C. Though it is the responsibility of the community leadership to oversee all of this, the brothers and sisters are primarily responsible for living for the Lord and the common good on their own.

IV. Some End Thoughts

- A. Covenant community as we understand it and attempt to live it isn't our idea, nor is it a new concept. It was initiated by God and goes back, at least, to Abraham.
- B. Scripture is clear that God wants us to be a people, a nation set apart for him.
- C. The Christian life is not individualistic in nature and was never meant to be so. Community isn't an option. Committed relationships are part of the package God has ordained for us. We absolutely need one another to be what he intended us to be and to go where he intended us to go. The Lord speaks mostly in the plural to us. Look at the examples of Abraham, Moses, and Paul. The call to the nations is radical and it is plural!
- D. Let us close with this thought: *I will call them my people who are not my people; and I will call her my loved one who is not my loved one. (Romans 9: 25)*