

# THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY

## INTRODUCTION:

- A. The church is losing its young people to the world
- B. What are the Reasons? Education or lack thereof? Parental guidance, influence, or lack thereof? A whole host of factors?
- C. Consider the lack of community as a possible reason

## DISCUSSION:

### I. CONSIDER MOMENTARILY THE AMISH PEOPLE

- A. Overall, relatively unchanged since 17th century. Focus on simplicity and traditions. Separate from the world at large
- B. Teenagers given opportunity to experience world, to determine whether to be part of Amish community or the world. 90%+ choose to stay Amish (Steven Nolt, A History of the Amish, 284-285) So about 10% choose to leave the community
- C. Why high percentage? Don't they like technology? Surely would rather not work so hard! Don't they like us? No apparent animosity. Is it because they are brainwashed?
- D. More startling is what it used to be. Amish in 1900 almost ready to be non-existent. Died out in Europe in nineteenth century, they either became Mennonite, or returned to state churches. Between 1850-1920, over half began to move away from traditions, eventually becoming Mennonite and very few were left! The actual rate of teenage departure much higher! 1930s: 21% left (ibid, 284) 1700s: more than 60%; not one Amish family in America had all of their children stay faithful to their tradition (74)
- E. Issue is not only within Amish? Most denominations / churches (except those using various social programs) are losing youth, the Amish are now gaining theirs. Why is it that someone who was raised Amish don't want what we have, but prefer own lifestyle?
- F. The issue is most likely community (*people who are considered as a unit because of their common interests Cambridge Dictionary*)! What would prompt a teenager to reject all of our technology, "fun", and society, and consign themselves to a life of hard service? They find community amongst the Amish that America no longer has!
  - 1. Technologies & modernization isolate us from our "community"
  - 2. Amish reversed losses, it seems with a sense of community.
  - 3. But in the church, the sense of community seems to be lost.
- G. Not suggesting we become Amish, but look at community from the Biblical standpoint

### II. COMMUNITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

- A. From beginning of church – a sense of community Acts 2:42-47
  - 1. They were "together" "continued steadfastly" (koinonia – joint participation or sharing together)
  - 2. They were glad and joyful! They grew Acts 2:46-47
  - 5. They needed each other for strength and encouragement

- B. Image of the church as a body 1Cor 12:12-28
  - 1. Church must work together for common purpose (community) strengthen weak and maintain strong Rom 12:15; 15:1
  - 2. Involves interaction between all individual members!
  - 3. Each member must decide to do so for church to function
- C. Restoring, bearing one another's burdens Gal 6:1-2, Jas 5:19-20
  - 1. Implicit in this is a relationship that makes this possible
  - 2. Those in close relationships know when things are wrong!
  - 3. All suffer difficulties, and none are always "good" or "alright"
  - 4. Will we invest in one another to have these relationships?
  - 5. Withdrawing fellowship is futile when there was little or no association in the first place!

### III. THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY

- A. Community is taught in Scripture. Theoretically, it always exists. But how strong is it? 1Cor 12:12; Eph 4:4
- B. It must remain central in our society! Where can people find it?
  - 1. Social groups and clubs are fading (one reason for Mega-churches).
  - 2. Families divided by divorce or people rarely see each other
  - 3. Elderly end up in nursing homes or assisted care facilities
- C. We sacrifice "community" on altar of technological progress!
  - 1. Depression & suicides are rising! People feel isolated, alone
  - 2. Elaborate social systems (welfare, Social Security, etc.) take the place of what used to be family and community functions
- D. Must we blame technology and modernization? They are morally neutral and can be used however directed. 1Cor 9:27
- E. We can maintain some communities while others collapse! The physical family and the spiritual family
- F. A spiritual community can survive technology and modernization. If Amish can willingly choose their lifestyle over what the world offers, then we can maintain local church as a strong community by teaching Biblical principles regarding such Eph 4:3.
  - 1. If church is no more of a unit with common interest based on Scripture than denominations or the world at large, why are we surprised that our youth leave?
  - 2. If we act little different from denominations in terms of our common interest, why should we really expect anyone to find us that different and desire to be part of us?

## CONCLUSION:

- A. We have shown critical importance of community within the church
- B. Possible to establish strong community in midst of an isolated world
- C. Our youth and outsiders alike cry out for such community to exist!
- D. Let us strive to love one another, open up to one other, be involved in one another's lives, and represent a strong community Prov 18:24
- E. If we manifest the same qualities as the early church in Acts 2, we will obtain similar results