



Connection Group Questions
April 18, 2021
Series: *Signs of Belonging*
Message: *Member*

***“So in Christ we, though many, form one body,
and each member belongs to all the others.”
~ Romans 12:5***

Opening

“You are a part of the body of Christ.

Christ loves you, died for you, rose for you, is coming again for you.

Without you Christ’s body is broken.”

You were created for connection- to God, others, the world, yourself. Without connections we suffer. *How have you suffered from disconnection in life? Or, how have you been blessed by finding and building connections? Do you feel more or less connected from a year ago? How would you like your connections to grow in the next year? Would you say that you are a part, a member, of the body of Christ? Why, or why not?*

Discuss

Read Romans 12:1-8

You can start by discussing the “Therefore.” What about God’s mercy amazes you?

Your life has always been inextricable connected to others, since you were conceived, for good, and for bad. How have you experienced joy and suffering in the body of Christ? (Live with this for as long as it takes to really let it sink in...)

George applied M. Scott Peck’s journey to true community from his book, “A Different Drum: Community Making and Peace.” According to Peck, any group of strangers coming together to create a community goes through four distinct and predictable phases:

Pseudo-community

The essential dynamic of pseudo-community is conflict avoidance. Members are extremely pleasant with one another and avoid all disagreement. People, wanting to be loving, withhold some of the truth about themselves and their feelings in order to avoid conflict. Individual differences are minimized, unacknowledged, or ignored. The group may appear to be functioning smoothly but individuality, intimacy, and honesty are crushed. Generalizations and platitudes are characteristic of this stage.

The Tunnel of Chaos

Once individual differences surface, the group almost immediately moves into chaos. The chaos centers around well-intentioned but misguided attempts to heal and convert. Individual differences come out in the open and the group attempts to obliterate them. It is a stage of uncreative and unconstructive fighting and struggle. It is no fun. It is common for members to attack not only each other but also their leader, and common for one or more members--invariably proposing an "escape into organization"--to attempt to replace the designated leader. However as long as the goal is true community, organization as an attempted solution to chaos is unworkable.

Emptiness

The way through chaos to true community is through emptiness. It is the hardest and crucial stage of community development. It means members emptying themselves of barriers to communication. The most common barriers are expectations and preconceptions; prejudices; ideology, theology and solutions; the need to heal, fix, convert or solve; and the need to control. The stage of emptiness is ushered in as members begin to share their own brokenness--their defeats, failures, fears, rather than acting as if they "have it all together."

True Community

True community emerges as the group chooses to embrace not only the light but life's darkness. True community is both joyful and realistic. The transformation of the group from a collection of individuals into true community requires little deaths in many of the individuals. But it is also a time of group death, group dying. Through this emptiness, this sacrifice, comes true community. "In this final stage a soft quietness descends. It is a kind of peace. The room is bathed in peace." Members begin to speak of their deepest and most vulnerable parts--and others will simply listen. There will be tears--of sorrow, of joy. An extraordinary amount of healing begins to occur.

- *How have you experienced Pseudo-community?*
- *Have you ever bailed out of the Tunnel of Chaos? Have you ever gone through with a group of people and made it to the next phase?*
- *What was the work of emptiness for you or your group? What did you have to let go?*
- *Have you ever experienced True Community? Talk about that community. Or, if you haven't, what has that search for community been like for you?*

Apply

Jesus traveled in the opposite direction for our sake: He left the true and perfect community of being in heaven- Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He emptied himself for our sake (See Philippians 2:1-11). He reached into the chaos of our world and our lives. He invites us to step out of pseudo community and into the light of his life. This requires faith. Repentance and confession. Courage.

Are you willing to step into true community with Jesus and with the body of Christ?