

CHAPTER 3: THE CREATURE IN COMMUNITY

SUMMARY

“So although we are more connected than we’ve ever been, we also feel more alone and unknown than at any other time in human history. We relate without relationships, all together but all alone. Thus, without the gospel forming community, we are doomed to connectivity and aloneness in the midst of crowds. Only the gospel forms deep community” (p. 47).

The questions and activities below are designed to help you and your church staff move toward a deeper biblical, gospel-centered community.

Take time to answer the questions that best challenge you. If you’re doing these activities alone, find a few other believers with whom you can work through some of these questions. Enjoy.

AUDIT QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES

1. **Does your church provide a context (small groups, Sunday School class, etc.) where members can be deeply connected in biblical community with each other? If so, how does this happen?**
2. **Are there clear and accessible pathways built in your church to connect people to community?**
3. **How does the fact that God Himself exists in community (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) challenge you to form these types of communities for your members? (p. 46)**
4. **How are your forms of biblical community based on the gospel of Jesus Christ? What evidences do you have of such? Are the group leaders trained so that the gospel is what these gatherings are based on? (p. 50)**

5. What evidences of interdependence among group members have you witnessed? (p. 51)
6. Where would you gauge your church members along this continuum? Where are you on this? (p. 51)

Dependence

Interdependence

Independence

7. Are there “levels in Christianity” at your church? In your groups? Are some of your groups based on more “mature” Christians and some on less “mature” Christians? (p. 52)
8. Is there an intentional movement toward discipleship in your communities?
9. Do you train your leaders to make disciples? Is this a part of your church language?
10. Romans 12:9 (ESV): “Let love be genuine.” How much mask-wearing exists in your church? What masks are most present? How does the gospel combat these falsehoods? Is your church a place where honesty and authenticity are practiced? (p. 54)
11. Is your church a safe place for people to struggle? If so, is it also an environment where those struggling will be actively engaged to pursue healing in Christ?
12. Romans 12:9 (ESV): “Abhor what is evil.” What does church discipline look like in your church? Is it a delicate balance of grace and discipline? Is there a process for church discipline? (p.55)
13. If a situation gets out of hand or goes beyond the scope of a group leader or teacher, are there accessible means of help and training for them?

14. Are your church leaders – pastors, staff, elders, deacons – in these type of biblical communities themselves? If not, why? What steps can you as a staff take in this direction?

15. Romans 12:10 (ESV): “Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.” What evidences of this verse have you seen in your church? What evidences of entitlement exist among the church staff? How are your staff and members “showing honor” to one another in tangible concrete ways? (p. 58)

16. Are church members rejoicing together, being patient together and praying together? How is this happening? What avenues exist to encourage sharing the of gratitude? (p. 59-60)

17. Romans 12:13 (ESV): “Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.” How is your church living out this verse? Is the staff having to facilitate these movements or is the body being the body to each other without the staff having to lead or direct their efforts? (p. 60)

18. Are your communities looking to see how the gospel cannot only be practiced in relationship with one another but spread beyond the walls of your church? Are people coming to faith in Jesus Christ?

RENEWAL QUESTIONS & ACTIVITIES

1. Are you living in gospel-centered community with other believers? If not, what are 2-3 actionable steps that you can take in the next 30 days to make that happen?

2. Does your church provide opportunities for its members to experience gospel-centered community? If not, what are 3-5 actionable steps that you and your church leaders can take in the next 30 days to make that happen?

3. Of all the assessment questions you chose to answer, which ones were the provided you the most opportunity for growth and movement toward gospel-centered community? Outline 3-5 actionable steps to take in response to those questions.

PRAYER

Father, help us to examine this area of gospel-centered community through the lens of the gospel, not through our perspective. Give us courage to change what needs to change and wisdom on which action steps we need to take. Help us to remove our masks and speak truth in love to one another about this subject. Thank You that You've created us with a desire to be known, loved and cared for. Help us to realize that we get more of You as we pursue gospel-centered community, and You are all we really need. Amen.