

TOTAL REVOLUTION of Identity

Session #4: Transformational Community

Session Objective: Often we think the Christian life is just about “Jesus and me.” Although the intimacy aspect of our Christian identity is personal, we are also part of the body of Christ – locally, globally and eternally. Developing this aspect of identity is critical for the healthy functioning of both the church and the individual. Recognizing the limited time each student is in our youth ministry and the high probability of their mobility in the near future is a great encouragement to help them develop a love for the church and a place to serve within it. Therefore, this session will:

- Examine the uniqueness of the church (Acts 2:42-47)
- Establish benefits, costs and obstacles to being part of a church community
- Provide a compelling rationale for being part of a church community
- Provide an opportunity for encouragement

Extended Prep:

- Through spiritual gifts, God provides special areas for us to serve others. Lead your group through a spiritual gift inventory and help them understand how God may have uniquely gifted them to serve.
- Provide a listing of ministry opportunities in your ministry or church.
- Bring paper and art supplies for encouragement notes. Focus on preparing encouragements for absent group members, group members at college/university, leaders, church members, parents, etc.
- Take a group picture and send it to group members, put on email, website, etc. You could also have a border that the group signs before hanging the picture.
- Get a large piece of foam board and some coloured markers. Have group members write something they are thankful for about the group/church, present to church and/or hang in youth room.
- Present the opportunity for students to learn more about baptism and church membership. These times can be huge community builders.

Session Outline

Small Group Questions:

1. When you hear the word 'church' what do you think of?

Options like: buildings, programs, community, impact, boredom, hypocrites, stained glass, organs, etc.

The early church defined itself in large part by the uniqueness of the community. Read Acts 2:42-47.

2. What stands out to you about this community?

Things like: devoted to teaching, fellowship/community, prayer, awe/adventure, unity – 'all the believers were together and had everything in common', generosity, family, favour of others, lives changing regularly.

3. What are some of the benefits to being part of a community like this – both things that can be received or given?

Leader Note: Bring out these points as needed:

Opportunities to Receive – teaching, care, prayer, family, unity, discipline, encouragement, accountability, protection – see 1Peter 5:8; Opportunities to Give – God has given all of us specific gifts to contribute (spiritual gifts, experiences, talents, etc.) – see Romans 12:3-8.

Option: Play Imagine... imagine if _____ weren't here. How would our group be less than it is today? (Leader's Note: be sure to focus on people with different gifts, personalities, and contributions)

4. What are some of the costs to being part of a community like this?

Possibilities include: Time, emotion, independence, energy, sacrifice, heartache, hardship etc.

5. What are some of the obstacles to getting connected or staying connected to a youth ministry/church community?

From the church side, options include: irrelevant, lack of love, acceptance, safety; from our individual side: time pressures – so much to do, so little time; fear, independence

6. Why do you think Jesus chose to live, minister and suffer in the context of the community of disciples – especially when he knew their failures, etc.?

From a theological perspective, community is at the core of who God is – God-Father, God-Son, God-Spirit. In the trinity we see both the mystery and wonder of God in community. This same value for community is foundational to the establishment of Israel as the community of God's 'set apart' people and then the church as God's 'set apart' people.

From a practical perspective, Jesus chose community as an example and model to us – that people matter and the Church is his primary community for his followers – even when it's difficult. He also started His worldwide revolution through this small imperfect community – what could God do through our small imperfect community?.

7. What are some aspects of the body of Christ – our group or church - that you really value?

8. What gifts are you thankful for in our group/ministry/church?

Prayer Options: Thanking God for the church/group. Thanking God for various gifts. Praying that our group might be more like Acts 2. Pray that we might stay connected – pray for those students away at university/college.

Action Steps

- Take a **Spiritual Gift Inventory** – This simple questionnaire can help you discover how God has uniquely gifted you to serve in the body of Christ. Also, the book and workbook, “**Find Your Fit**”, by Jane Kise provides an overview and detailed process to help a student better understand how God has wired them. Available at Read On Bookstore.
- Join a Ministry Team - There are always many important ministry needs.
- If you haven't already, consider being baptized – baptism is an important individual step as well as a step toward being part of the local church community

Comments and Feedback

Leader Note: This is your place each week to record significant sharing or growth in the lives of your students for subsequent follow up. You can also use this space to provide feedback on the material. All suggestions are welcome.

Please see the following handout. You have permission to reproduce these handouts for your group.