

Community: Unity & Love

Monday, 5/3/10 – Read Ephesians 2:13-22

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: This week we continue our exploration of living together in faithful community. Today’s reading is a passage that we spent quite a bit of time with a couple years ago. ... Communities often split apart and fragment because of the natural differences between groups of people -- ethnic differences, cultural differences. The miracle of early Christian community was that Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews) found themselves drawn into community together because of their common allegiance to Christ. Christ was experienced as unifying power. ... When have you experienced yourself in real relationship with someone very different from yourself -- because of your common loyalty to Christ?

Tuesday, 5/4/10 – Read Romans 12:3-5

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: The metaphor of a single body with many different parts is understandable. But it may not be obviously clear what is meant by the phrase in verse 5: that we are “members one of another.” ... Think of someone in your family you feel really good about and deeply connected to. Not all our family relationships are like that, of course. But when it does happen, we know we are “members one of another.” ... When have you felt that deeply connected to others? Has that ever happened for you in the church?

Wednesday, 5/5/10 – Read Romans 12:6-8

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: Within the church people are different from each other. This is by design. For the church to be fully

functional in fulfilling God’s mission is needs a variety of functions -- and a variety of people. The Bible does not envision the church as a community where everyone is alike. ... What are the kinds of gifts and functions that are hard for you to appreciate? Maybe you’re an artistic type and sometimes feel impatient with those who are focused on numbers and the bottom line. Or maybe you’re a practical, hands-on, get-the-job-done type -- and feel frustrated by the dreamers. What are the gifts that you have trouble appreciating?

Thursday, 5/6/10 – Read Galatians 3:27-29

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: One of the most radical and mind-boggling features of the early Christian communities was that people of very different cultures and people of very different social status were all included as equals within the church. It was an extraordinary thing! ... When have you seen the church break down the social barriers that isolate people from each other?

Friday, 5/7/10 – Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-17

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: We should never think that those earliest Christians achieved perfect community! Far from it. Those early little churches had terrible problems, and the church at Corinth (in Greece) was a prime example. That church was fragmented and threatened to break into factions - - each group following their own leader. ... This, of course, is also true of the church in our time too! ... Paul was deeply distressed by this fragmentation within the Body of Christ. Does it distress you? What’s one small thing that you might do to repair the church’s factionalism? Perhaps there is someone with whom you disagree -- could you work at building a relationship with that person? Perhaps you know someone

from another, very different church -- perhaps you could communicate an appreciation for the positive faith that person exhibits. What's something you could do to help bring unity to Christ's body?

Saturday, 5/8/10 – Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: Some of the members of the Corinthian church had only recently been worshippers in the pagan temples -- worshippers of Apollo or Aphrodite (Venus). It disturbed them deeply when they saw their fellow Christians eating food that had come from ritual offerings in the pagan temples. Paul's conclusion was that he was free to eat whatever -- since these pagan deities didn't actually exist. But he would voluntarily limit his freedom if that would cause a problem for his brothers and sisters in the faith. ... Love sometimes asks us to voluntarily limit our freedom. Does that make sense to you? Can you think of a modern example, some situation where you would voluntarily limit your freedom out of love for someone else?

Sunday, 5/9/10 – Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: Christian community is a laboratory of love -- a place where learn and practice the love of Christ in our relationships with others. Read again Paul's great chapter on love. Let the words sink deeply into you. What characteristics of love inspire you? Which ones challenge you most? ... Pick one to work on this week -- maybe practicing kindness or not being envious or not rejoicing when someone else stumbles. What will you work on this week?

My Faith Journal, May 2, 2010
Heart for Community #2
The Saving Community

What do I hear God saying to me today?

What action do I intend to take this week?

Each day this week, take a few minutes. Begin with PRAYER. Then READ through the Bible passage indicated on the inside of this guide. WRITE down your own thoughts, reactions, observations. ANSWER THE QUESTION to begin connecting the Bible with your life. Use additional paper or your own notebook if you need more space to write.