*The Purpose of this session is to theologically justify community, the study of Scripture, prayer, and the exercising of spiritual gifts as the means of grace whereby God builds up His Church.*

**I. The Place of Community in the Story of Redemption**

1. Community in Creation - Genesis 1-2 (God in perfect relationship with his (all) people in a specific place)

2. Community broken by Sin – Genesis 3 (shattering of relationship – isolation and shame)

3. Formation of a Redeemed Community through Abraham– Genesis 12.1-3

4. Formation of a People Continued in Moses

a. Exodus 6.2-8

b. Exodus 19.1-6

5. The Community in Exile - Synagogue Phenomenon During Captivity

Beckwith argues that the Synagogue model developed in Exilic Israel during the time of Captivity (Beckwith). He then demonstrates that the house church model in the early Christian movement is a duplication of the synagogue model, and ultimately argues that the ordained offices are appropriated from the leadership structures inherent in the Synagogue model. Thus, the model of small community is evident in both the Old and New Covenants.

6. The Community Fully Redeemed through Jesus

a. Jeremiah 31:31-24

b. Hebrews 8:6-9

c. Matthew 26:26-28

7. Formation of New Covenant Community

a. 1 Peter 2:4-10 – Identity

b. Acts 2:42-47 – Community

8. Community in Church History

a. Early Church - Particularly after the persecution from the Jews and expulsion from the temple (Acts 8), the earliest Christian meetings took place in homes (Green 329).

b. Living among and Evangelizing a Pagan Society –

“Through your small group, and the community’s life, and perhaps as a soul friend, you observed and gained experience in ministry and witness to pre-Christian people. The community’s purposes for you, through this fivefold structure, were to root your consciousness in the gospel and the scriptures; to help you experience the presence of the Triune God and an empowered life; to help you discover and fulfill your vocation; and to give you experience in ministry with seekers (Hunter 48).”

c. Living among and Evangelizing a Post-Christian Society

i. Formation

“The essence of becoming a disciple is, to put it colloquially, becoming like the people we hang out with the most. Just as the single most formative experience in our lives is a membership in a nuclear family, so the main way we grow in grace and holiness is through deep involvement in the family of God. Christian community is more than just a supportive fellowship; it is an alternate society. And it is through this alternate human society that God shapes us into who and what we are (Keller 311).”

ii. Witness

“Community shapes the nature of our witness and our engagement in mission. The real secret of fruitful and effective mission in the world is the quality of our community… In fact, Jesus states that our deep unity is the way the world will know that the Father sent him and has loved us even as the Father has loved him (John 17:23). Jesus says that the main way people will believe that Christians have found the love of God is by seeing the quality of their life together in community (Keller 311).”

iii. Practice

“In addition to the conventional small groups of four to ten people, many city churches will also find that midsize ‘parish’ or ‘mezzanine’ groups are helpful for creating community. These groups usually have twenty to sixty people who live in a neighborhood, work in the same profession, or share a common passion in the city. They eat together regularly and consider how to reach out and serve the surrounding cultural, vocational, or geographic community (Keller 314).”

9. Realization of Perfect Community through Jesus – Revelation 21: 1-5

**The Place of Community Summary**

**II. The Place of Scripture**

Hugh Latimer was an English Reformer and was consecrated Bishop of Worcester in 1535. In writing about Hugh Latimer’s stance on the word of God during the English Reformation, John Stott writes this:

“His great burden was that the people of England were still lost in spiritual darkness, and that the clergy were to blame for this because they neglected the ministry of the Word. Specially blameworthy were the bishops. They were so taken up, he said, with ‘ruffling in their rents, dancing in their dominions… munching in their mangers, and moiling in their gay manors and mansions’ that they had not time for preaching (John Stott 26).”

**Psalm 1** Blessed is the man
    who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
    nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
2but his delight is in the law of the Lord,
    and on his law he meditates day and night.

3He is like a tree
    planted by streams of water
that yields its fruit in its season,
    and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.
4The wicked are not so,
    but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

5Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
    nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
6for the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
    but the way of the wicked will perish.

**1 Timothy 4:13** Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching.

**1 Timothy 3:16 - 4.2** 16All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, **17**that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: **2**preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

**The Place of Scripture Summary**

**III. The Place of Prayer**

**154. What is prayer?** Prayer is turning my heart toward God, to listen and to speak with him. (Psalms 84; 123; Matthew 7:7–11; John 17:1–9) To Be A Christian: An Anglican Catechism

“…it is not the emotional intensity of our prayers that makes God attentive to them. He listens intently and attentively because he loves us, not because of the passion with which we pray to him. We need to be reminded of this, for we very readily judge ourselves , and others, about the quality or value of our prayer life, and the criterion we use for this adjustment is often the emotional fervor or the experiential strength of our feelings when we pray (Barrs 20).”

**Philippians 4:4-7** 4Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. **5**Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; **6**do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. **7**And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

**157. Why should you pray?** I should pray because God calls me to do so, because I was made for fellowship with him, because I need the help of his Holy Spirit, and because he has promised to answer the prayers of his people. (Exodus 33:7–11; Psalm 50:14–15; Matthew 7:7–11; Luke 18:1– 8; Romans 8:26; 1 Timothy 2:1)

**Acts 2:42** 42And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

“The fourth characteristic of the church is the ‘prayers’ of the believers. The plural implies regular prayer practices of the Christian believers, perhaps also referring to the traditional prayers that Jews regularly recited. Luke does not clarify whether private or communal prayers are in view, but 1:24 and 4:23-31 indicate the latter are certainly included (Schnabel 179–80).”

**158. What should you pray?** I should pray the Lord’s Prayer, the Psalms, the collected prayers of the Church, and my own prayers as the Spirit leads me. (1 Samuel 2:1–10; Psalms 2; 62:8; Luke 1:46–55; 2:25–35; Acts 4:24–30; Romans 8:26–27; Revelation 4:8–11)

**The Place of Prayer Summary**

**IV. The Place of Spiritual Gifts**

“The Lord has fashioned his church as an organic body. The gifts he grants are not given for their own sake; their presence does not support pride, or their absence justify envy. When the gifts are in any way detached from the fruit of the Spirit in the service of love, they become distracting noise, attracting attention but accomplishing nothing (1 Cor 13) (Clowney and Bray 240).”

**1 Peter 4:7-11** **7**The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. **8**Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. **9**Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. **10**As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: **11**whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

See Also

Ephesians 4:1-16

1 Corinthians 12

The Place of Spiritual Gifts Summary

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