

# Life In The Worshiping Community

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*The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tents of the righteous. Psalm 118:15*

## Introduction

- Created in the image of God, man was created to be relational (“it is not good for man to be alone”), with innate desires to love and be loved. Our primary design is to first love vertically (Matt. 22:37,38), and then horizontally (Matt. 22:39). Created to worship our Creator, we gather in community to do so collectively. Bound together by our covenant keeping God, worship begins in the home, fellowship extends to other families, and then we all assemble together to worship God as the collective, organic, body of Christ on Sunday morning.
- To live in covenant community (“parish life”) is the wish, dream, and hope of many Christians. Joy, bliss, and laughter forever and ever. Right? Wrong. We soon find out that the paradise we had hoped for has a problem. And that problem is called “sin”. We soon find out that the community has people, and if there’s one thing we ought to know by now: if anything has people, that thing will have sin. Gossip, slander, malice, anger, and bitterness. Offenses given, offenses taken. Some real, and some perceived. But this sin shouldn’t shock us. And we shouldn’t run from it. On the contrary, the “stepping on each other’s toes” is just what we need. It is the orchestrated plan of God to bring about our sanctification through the relationships we encounter, beginning first in our home, and extending out to the covenant community at large.

## Home

- **Psalm 128:** The Bible teaches that the house, and everything in it, belongs to the husband/father. Our feminized, egalitarian ears recoil at the teachings of Psalm 128, much as they do when we hear that Sarah called her husband “lord.” But what does this mean in Psalm 128? It means that the Husband is 100% responsible and accountable before God as to the state of his home, and every person in it. He is the federal head, and as such, he assumes all responsibility. And so, we must ask ourselves: How are our homes used? Do the sounds of rejoicing and salvation emanate from your windows? Or is there yelling, anger, and petty bickering? Is there hospitality and feasting around your table, or is there sullen silence, complaining, and gossip about this thing or that? Men, it is our responsibility. And, if we truly get it, we’ll be overwhelmed. Which is exactly the point. Driven to our knees, may we embrace and discharge this duty by God’s grace. He resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5).
- **Tent Sin #1-Complaining:** The home (Deut. 1:26-33) is the petri dish for grumbling and complaining in the church. The home is the epicenter, and as such, all sin (or righteousness!) flows out from the home to act as leaven in the community and in the assembly. As husbands, we are responsible to ensure the doctrines of foreordination and providence permeate our homes, and that the practical application of these truths produces abundant gratitude and thanksgiving in every member of our household. The truth of God’s sovereignty must constrain and guide all our thoughts and words, causing us to see the Lord as the source of all people and circumstances in our life (Exodus 16:1-8).
- **Tent Sin #2-Gossip:** It is very easy for husbands and wives to fall into the pattern of talking about ethereal 3<sup>rd</sup> parties in the “privacy” of their homes/cars, and then passing on their opinions and/or half-truths to others in the church (Leviticus 19:13-18). A gossip, or talebearer, is one who is a purveyor of malicious murmuring, with little concern for the truth, the person, or a remedy/solution. They cannot be trusted (Proverbs 11:13), people ears are tickled by their words (Proverbs 18:8), they stir up strife in the church (Proverbs 26:22), and they tend towards idleness (1 Tim 5:11-13). Are you speaking about a non-present 3<sup>rd</sup> party? Ask yourself: Is it true, kind, and necessary? Are you prepared to speak in public (same words, same tone, same body language directly to this 3<sup>rd</sup> person) what you are speaking in private? When you conclude the discussion with your spouse about this other individual(s), how will you be a part of the solution, rather than a part of the problem?

## Community

- **Romans 12:9-16:** Love becomes hypocritical (v. 9) when we stop thinking of our part in the body as that of an organic relationship (v. 5). It is not enough to show up as a marble in a bag once a week on Sunday morning, complete with nicely pressed clothes and a smile to match. We are required to *know* people, and not just about them. And that, husbands, is your responsibility. Non-hypocritical love is assertive. It is non-Eyore like, and shows its fervency through the manifestation of hospitality. Hospitality is who we are as the organic body of Christ living in community. It is not something we do. If the claim to generosity is revealed by the checks actually written in a checkbook, then the claim of fervent love is revealed by the

hospitality you have shown to people who have been around your table in your home. One does not possess fervent love who is not given to hospitality (1 Peter 4:8,9). The two go hand in hand.

- **Hospitality:** Here are some general principles regarding hospitality:

It is Guest Centric (Rom 12:10; Phil 2:3,4)- Conversation and questions should center around your guests. As a test, seek to ask a multiple string/series of questions of your guest, on the same subject, without bringing the conversation back to you. It really is amazing how much we all like to talk about ourselves.

It is Marked by Initiation (Rom 12:13; 1 Peter 4:8,9)- We should pursue hospitality fervently. Just as God in Christ pursued us, and first initiated His love towards us, so too should we pursue having others in our home. No friends? Then be a friend. Not invited? Then invite.

It is Heterogeneous (John 13:34,35)- Natural affiliations/relationships are good and proper. They are gifts from God. While maintaining these relationships, we need to also aggressively pursue hospitality towards those that we might not normally interact with within the covenant community of believers. These “parallel universes” within the covenant community might include marital status (single vs. married), age (young vs. old), and educational method (institutional vs. home schooled). Our unity is in Christ. And as such, it is supernatural, thereby incorporating natural affiliations while also transcending them.

It is the Primary Means for Socialization-No other pattern but the home is given in Scripture wherein our children are to be socialized. It's not the mall, and it's not the church youth group.

- So, don't make excuses when it comes to hospitality. The point isn't what you *don't* have (“Our house is too small.”), or *can't* bring to the table (“I'm not a conversationalist.”). The point is, “Do you have a door with operable hinges?” Then let people in. “Do you have a table?” If so, then have people sit around it and give them something to eat. That's what it's for.

- **Miscellaneous Points about Living in Community:**

- Keep Your Word- Let your yes be yes, and your no be no. No idle or inconsistent words. If you say, “we'll have you over,” then have them over. If you say, “I'll pray for you,” then pray for them. If you say, “count us in,” then people should be able to count on you to be there.

Rejoice With Those Who Rejoice, and Weep With Those Who Weep- This cannot happen apart from true Christian community being lived and practiced (Romans 12:9-16). So, is somebody else rejoicing in the body of Christ? Then you have no option but to rejoice. Not invited to the luncheon? Well, somebody is rejoicing and having a good time at that luncheon, so you have no option but to rejoice. Child not invited to the party? Well, some children are having a lot of fun and rejoicing at that party, so you have no option but to train your child to rejoice with them. Somebody promoted? Somebody pregnant? It's time to rejoice.

Think The Best About People- If you don't have the facts, don't presume sinful motives (1 Cor 13:5). Always presume pure and righteous motivations unless proven otherwise. And if that does occur, then its time to show your love by extending forgiveness.

Let Love Cover It- If “always” and “never” are cropping up in your conversation about others in the church, then ask yourself if you're keeping a record of wrongs. Letting love cover it does not mean to suppress anger or resentment. Time does not heal all wounds. Forgiveness does. “Covering love” is fervent love, love that forgets, forgives, and initiates. It is love that manifests itself in reaching out to others (1 Peter 4:7-9).

Encourage People- Our church should be filled with people like Barnabas (Acts 4:36), who always sought to engraft and encourage people in the body (Acts 9:27; 11:22-30; 13:43). It is so easy to be critical under the banner of “discernment” and “insight.” Our speech should be characterized by edification, grace, and kindness (Ephesians 4:29-5:4).

## **Assembly**

- **Psalms 15:** With the family as the cornerstone, and the community as the foundation, God's people gather in assembly each Sunday morning to worship the Lord. And who may dwell in the presence of God? He who loves his neighbor, who does not backbite with his tongue, who honors those who fear the Lord, and he who keeps his word even when it hurts and is inconvenient. Love of God and love of neighbor are organically intertwined. May our corporate worship of God be consistent with the love we showed our brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the week.