

Tuesday 22nd September

Discipleship is relational

There was a general recognition in our discussions of the greater value of small groups and through this the deepening of relationships which have been formed. In lockdown many have discovered the value of small groups in a new way and in turn this has the potential to lead to a more relational way of working. If small groups are of such high value and can be seen as a key place for discipleship, that may lead us to the question about where our churches should focus their resources.



Moving forward do we need to let go of the high attention paid to gathering on a Sunday morning and all the resources that go into that and instead invest in, empower and equip our small groups and their leaders in relational discipleship both for Christians and for those who do not yet know Jesus? It is almost as if we are being forced into missional communities as a result of lockdown. Small groups can be easily relational; they can be creative and imaginative much more so than one large weekly gathering. With all the changes which have come about regarding how we meet and connect as a result of lockdown, it begs a further question about whether we will naturally become multi-congregational, meeting through differing platforms. However, for churches who have either chosen not to or not been able to connect online, what changes have there been? Anecdotal evidence would suggest that these churches which have connected with each other and their communities by telephone or through newsletters, have still seen an increased value placed on relationships and for some, a deepening of those, as well as greater missional opportunities. What will church look like post-lockdown? <https://www.easternbaptist.org.uk/news/what-might-god-be-saying-collation-of-zoom-discussions/>

Biblical Reflection

Acts 2:44-47 At first glance it seems as if the first church was making it up as they went along - there was no constitution to tell them how to do things. Luke tells us that they shared everything, gave generously to those in need, continued to worship in the Temple, and they also gathered in smaller groups in their homes to 'break bread'. How did they know to do these things? Well, instead of a constitution they followed Jesus: that's why they did things how they did.

The common life that they shared was based on their common faith in Jesus. They were together because they were his followers. They shared everything because they shared Jesus. They gave generously to *anyone* as they had need because Jesus was generous. They worshipped in the Temple because he had worshipped in the Temple. They broke bread in their homes because Jesus told his followers to remember him that way. (They couldn't share the Lord's Supper in the Temple so they did it in their homes).

It was a profoundly relational experience. Look at the words Luke uses: "All the believers were together and had everything in common." "Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts." "They broke bread in their homes and ate together".

"And," Luke tells us, "the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." Is it any wonder that people wanted to join the Jesus community?

Questions for Reflection

The Acts 2 model of church is very different to 21st Century Baptist Churches. In what new ways can we be together and at the same time meet separately?

How can we connect with people in ways that most naturally fit with them?

Are we such an attractive and generous community that we can expect the Lord to add daily to our number those who are being saved?

Interview with ...

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Claire Earl from Burlington Baptist Church, Ipswich

<https://youtu.be/vY-DpWiZ2Cl>

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/lmThE7CfwbvQViC4XnqsQOrF4VA15K1A7W719jHSIxZHh9bQj_YGqTIPBFp9MnHG.WvH7yNBGqJ29mctb Passcode: B4YSK28.

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