

THE ANATOMY OF A HEALTHY COMMUNITY

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. 46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

As we continue with our series on “A LIFE GIVING COMMUNITY”, we dedicated the last 3 weeks talking about the individuals who make up a community. I am hoping that from the issues we covered, you started a journey that will ensure you wholeness. A healthy community is made up of whole individuals, people who are in pursuit of personal growth.

A community is as strong as the weakest link – if you think about this, it puts the responsibility on each of us to continuously work on ourselves.

Now that we have dealt with the individual, today I am going to start dealing with the sum of the parts/individuals. I have entitled my message – THE ANATOMY OF A HEALTHY COMMUNITY, in our case we are referring to our church.

The anatomy of something is simply the study of the structure or internal workings of something

The questions we need to answer are as follows:

- How does a church that draws the attention of heaven look like
- How does a church that gets me look like
- What are its workings

1. They are fully given to the word of God

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine

- To be steadfast is the characteristic of a man who is unswerved from his deliberate purpose and his loyalty to the word by even the greatest trials and sufferings
- The early church was devoted to the apostles' teaching
- Devoted –
 - this means to persevere in doing something,
 - to give constant attention to a thing
 - to adhere to something
- Committed

THE ANATOMY OF A HEALTHY COMMUNITY

- Excited by the preached word – not only excited but takes seriously the taught word.
 - People receive the word with excitement and faith
 - When a church takes seriously the taught word, people grow together into maturity.
 - The church is able to walk in faith towards anything that God places on their hearts
 - God can use the church for kingdom purposes
- Everyone in the church is motivated to the Self-study of scriptures
 - People invest in their own learning
 - The Bereans were devoted to the teaching of the apostles and it showed by the fact that they searched the scriptures after being taught

Ac 17:10 Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

- A church that is rooted in the word is shielded from heresy and false teachings.

1 Timothy 4:13 Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. 14 Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. 15 Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. 16 Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.
- A church that is word based has life and is able to build the future with confidence – God watches over His word
- A word driven church makes progress in its calling and mandate – this applies to the individuals in the church.
- Every programme in the church is shaped by what the word says
- When the word of God is the ultimate authority in a church, it is no longer man's opinion that trumps the moment.
- A church that is built around man's philosophy is governed by who can speak the loudest or who is closest to the leadership

2. They treasure the gathering of believers

- The believers in the church at Jerusalem were into each other – they met corporately for worship and for fellowship

THE ANATOMY OF A HEALTHY COMMUNITY

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread ...46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,

- The early church was an intimate group that understood the importance of gathering together in the house of God
 - The church was still new and was seen with a high level of suspicion – the way the world looked at them made them to get closer to each other.
 - They met regularly in the temple and in so doing they cemented their relationships
 - They had fellowship with one another in religious worship. They met in the temple:
 - Joint fellowship with God is the best fellowship we can have with one another
- 1 John 1:3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.*
- When we meet in the house of God, in a cell group structure, our hearts are cemented together because of the presence of the father.
 - It is in the context of meeting together that we are able to remind each other of the finished works of Calvary – celebrate the Lord's supper
 - Fellowship with God in church enables us to continue with the fellowship outside of the church.

Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

- Worshipping God is to be our daily work, and, where there is opportunity, the oftener it is done publicly the better
- A church that does not meet corporately misses out On the corporate anointing that is experienced when believers come together in worship
- God has a word specifically for His church and when we don't gather together as a family, we miss out on the opportunity of hearing what the Father has to say to us as a family.
- A church that worships together grows in love for each other.
- When we gather in worship, we are strengthened and encouraged

1 Corinthians 14:26 How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.

THE ANATOMY OF A HEALTHY COMMUNITY

- What the above shows is that there are certain things that are expected when believers gather together.

- Paul actually tells Timothy that there is a way to conduct himself in the house of God

1 Timothy 3:14 I am writing these things to you now, even though I hope to be with you soon, 15 so that if I am delayed, you will know how people must conduct themselves in the household of God. This is the church of the living God, which is the pillar and foundation of the truth.

- The gathering of believers ought to be different from that of none believers
 - Our gatherings are meant to edify
 - Our gatherings are meant to inspire people to love God
 - Our gatherings are meant to attract the very presence of God – there are things that we do that trigger the presence of God to manifest
- There is a problem when the lifestyle of a believer falls short of the standard of the world
- The Corinthian church was a church in trouble (divisions, drunkenness, idolatry,)

1 Corinthians 5:1 I can hardly believe the report about the sexual immorality going on among you—something that even pagans don't do. I am told that a man in your church is living in sin with his stepmother. 2 You are so proud of yourselves, but you should be mourning in sorrow and shame. And you should remove this man from your fellowship.

- No alcohol and smoking to be served during our church gatherings
- You are free to do what you want in your gatherings – however consider the testimony of Christ and of the body of Christ

Romans 14:11 For it is written: "As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God." 12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. 13 Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.

1 Corinthians 8:8 But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse. 9 But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.

THE ANATOMY OF A HEALTHY COMMUNITY

1 Corinthians 10:23 All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. 24 Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.

- The Bible does not say thou shall not drink other than use of strong drink or smoke but there is more written about the negative aspect of alcohol
- We are in a country that is ravaged by alcohol and drug abuse – it is to our benefit to set a higher standard in order to provide an alternative to the masses that suffering.
- We have standing agreement in our leadership that we will not drink and smoke and this applies to anyone who wants to be a leader in our church.