

**Doing Life Together Part 3**  
***Mishpucha***  
**Acts 2:42-47**

**Talk to Steve/Scott about Haiti**

**Dave:** Steve Fitterer one of our Board members along with Scott Thompson just got back from Haiti. Last year as part of our Easter offering our church our church sponsored 160 children with one meal a day @ \$180 per child. I thought it would be good to hear from them how the trip went. Why don't we start with Scott. How did Thompson concrete first get involved with this work in Haiti?

**Scott:**

**Dave:** Steve works with Thompson Concrete and they have been building a nutrition center. Steve, tell us about the nutrition center where they are feeding the children.

**Steve:**

**Dave:** Scott, you are working with a missionary couple down in Haiti Larry and Diane. Tell us about the work that Larry and Diane have been involved in.

**Scott:** They are located north Haiti, Port de Paix, and poorest part of the entire country. Average income at about \$25 a week, \$5 a day. Built several churches, hospital, orphanage, senior center, nutrition center)

**Dave:** Steve, tell us about this vision to build the cross. What are the future plans?

**Steve:**

**Dave:** 1 Corinthians 1:18 "For the message of the cross ... is the power of God." So Scott what are the future plans down in Haiti?

**Scott:**

**Dave:** So we will be taking our Easter offering again this year. And we give it all away to THREE different foreign missions (Haiti-feed children, Brazil-water filters, Vietnam-wheelchairs). So this would be a time to start praying about your Easter offering. Steve, what does \$180 provide for the children?

**Steve:**

**Dave:** If you have any questions about the work going on in Haiti, both Steve and Scott would be happy to talk with you after the service. Thank you both for the work you are doing down there. As many of you know there is a lot of unrest going on right now in Haiti. Also in Port Au Paix, there was an earthquake a few months ago (October 2018) Let's take a moment and pray for the people in Haiti.

**Also, our Vietnam team is leaving this week.**

- A. Two of our members are already there, Bob and Jenny Eversole. Can we have our team stand up?
- B. Take a moment to pray for them. Look forward to hearing from you when you come back.

**Introduction**

- A. Two weeks ago we started a sermon series, "Doing Life Together." Chip looked at Mark 12:31, where Jesus said the entire Bible could be summarized in ONE command, "Love God and love your neighbor." To us, that sounds like TWO commands. But Jesus said they really were ONE. What He was saying is that you cannot do one without the other. It is not possible to truly love God without loving our

neighbor. This teaching by Jesus made it clear that nothing was more important to God than relationships. The evidence that we are truly connected to God is that we will value our relationships with people and seek to love them as Jesus loved them.

- B. Then last week Paul talked about how the apostle Paul did life together with the church at Thessalonica. He talked about how Paul not only shared the gospel with these people but he shared his life with them. Paul talked about how when we do life with people it changes us. We tend to imitate each other and others take notice. Sharing life with people is something that we all hunger for and when we see it, we are drawn in when we see it in others. Doing life together is one of the great witnesses of the kingdom of God.
- C. I don't have much time today but I would like to share another thought about this whole idea of "Doing Life together."

### **Mishpucha**

- A. Last weekend I learned a new word. Mishpucha. It is a Hebrew or Yiddish word that means "family." It means your immediate family: grandparents, parents, siblings, children, nieces, nephews, in-laws, etc. However, *mishpucha*, has a much wider connotation. It also includes close friends and neighbors. Mishpucha is a community of people who have done life together.
- B. Mishpucha is a beautiful thing. I learned this word at Joshua Poland's and Summer Clark's wedding. At that wedding, there were people that I wanted to call family. They were people who I have done life together some for over forty years. Some were blood relatives, some were blood relatives once or twice removed, and some were just life-long friends.
- C. In this sermon series, we are talking about "Doing Life together." One of the great benefits of doing life together with people is this concept of Mishpucha. You get to BELONG to a community of people.

### **Fellowship Acts 2:42-47**

- A. The Bible has a lot to say about belonging to a group of people, being a part of a community of people. I want to take just a few minutes and read a passage to you about this.
- B. The early church gave itself over to four things mentioned here:
  1. The Apostles' doctrine, (teaching of the Word of God. Bible study),
  2. The breaking of bread (taking communion regularly and I think this also included eating together.)
  3. Prayers (corporate and individual)
  4. And then it says "fellowship."
- C. Now if we were to do a survey and ask your average churchgoer, "What were the four most important things the early church gave itself over to?" Or, "What the four top priorities of the early church?" I would guess we would get things like teaching, prayer, giving, worship, evangelism, or serving. But I seriously doubt no one would have said, "fellowship." Yet here we can see it was considered one of the four basic ingredients of the early church life.
- D. I think this word "fellowship" has gotten a bad rap. Many Christians don't value this as much as they value prayer or a good sermon. Let me help you with something. It is

fellowship that produces MISHPUCHA. If you want community you are going to need fellowship.

### **So what is fellowship?**

- A. The Greek word used here is “Koinonia” which means doing life together, sharing, being part of a community, spending time together.
- B. True Christian fellowship cannot be forced or scheduled; it must be chosen and accepted. It is connecting with someone who is making the attempt to follow Jesus in his or her life. It is talking to someone about spiritual matters, but NOT JUST spiritual matters.
- C. Fellowship is doing life together. It doesn't happen overnight. It involves working through difficult times together. It means you don't quit because you are offended. It requires an investment of time energy and money. But the fruit of fellowship is MISHPUCHA.
- D. The very next verse states that the early church enjoyed a newfound favor with all the people, vs. 47. These two facts are related. The reality of God's new life was cultivated to such a degree in daily fellowship that the outside world couldn't help but marvel at the believers. This is just what Jesus talked about in John 14:34-35, *“Love one another as I have loved you, and the world will know you are my disciples.”*

### **What about the length of our Sunday service?**

- A. I want to talk a minute about a change we have been making with our Sunday service. When asked by people about the length of our Sunday service, we are inclined to ONLY count the time when the music starts and the sermon and the worship at the end. So for the past year, we have kept that around 65 minutes on a regular Sunday.
- B. One of the reasons we have kept that part of the service to about 65 minutes is because we want people to take some time to hang around and fellowship and begin to make connections. On average that is happening for about 20 minutes or so. So really what we are saying is that our Sunday service including fellowship is really 1½ hours long. What we are trying to do is elevate the value of fellowship and hopefully promote the seeds of mishpucha.
- C. Now there will always be some who just want a good sermon and a few good songs, and then they will leave. Well, that is better than not coming to church at all on Sunday. But I think people are missing out when we don't value fellowship the same way we value a good sermon or prayer.
- D. We want to count FELLOWSHIP as part of our Sunday service. It appears that the early church did!!! This is also a significant opportunity for evangelism. We want to work together with all of you. You bring your friends and co-workers, neighbors and family to church on Sunday. We will do our best to give them an opportunity to experience God's Holy Spirit and open their hearts to Jesus. But we also want to give them time to visit with our church family. Fellowship is that opportunity to reach out to new people and make new connections.

### **Summary**

- A. There was a study done in California in which researchers followed almost 5,000 residents of Alameda County for 10 years, starting in 1965. At the outset, the

participants checked off their key sources of companionship, who they hung out with and estimated the time they devoted to each of these relationships. Over the course of the study, the people who reported the least social contact died at nearly three times the rate of those reporting the most. **The death rate was three times higher among those who were isolated.** Did you catch that? The source of the companionship did not much matter. In other words, it did not matter if the companionship was romantic, or a relative, or different ages, but time spent with others was critical.<sup>1</sup> We were made to be 'social people.

- B. So if you want to live longer, you need mishpucha, strong community. Healthy relationships are a key prescription for healthy living. Rather than a medicine cabinet filled with drugs, we need a life filled with community.
- C. True Christian fellowship must have unique components: we must first connect with God, then we must connect with others, sharing of our inner lives. Churches need to recognize the need for people to form healthy relationships. Most people visit a church for the first time looking for relationships. The potential for forming healthy relationships is the number one reason people will choose to stay at a new church.

## **Communion and Lord's Prayer**

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<sup>1</sup> "Is Love the Best Drug?" by Geoffrey Cowley with Anne Underwood, NEWSWEEK, March 16, 1998, p. 55.