

Thought for a Wednesday

June 30, 2010

I've got some rather big news to share with you today – news that comes with a bitter-sweet ring to it in my ears and possibly in your ears as well... This past Monday night at our TLC meeting with various ministry leaders, the elders made the announcement that as of now, we are putting the Saturday night service on hold indefinitely.

We (the elders) have been in a dialogue about the Saturday night service for over a month now and have diligently spent time together and individually praying about the purpose, vision and direction that Saturday night has taken and whether or not God is continuing to use this service for His purposes. None of us at this time have a clear leading from the Holy Spirit to continue this service at this time. We are spending the Summer and longer in prayer for the purpose, vision and direction and we would ask you all to keep us in your prayers – asking God to specifically give us His wisdom in this matter. I believe this is a biblical approach...

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.” (James 1:2-5, NIV)

Along with your prayer support in our conversations and prayers over this matter, we also would encourage your insight, your thoughts about what a Saturday night service could or should look like. Feel free to dialogue with the elders through the church office email, or give us a call. Please understand that if a lot of you give us your input, it will be impossible to implement every idea. But it will give us an understanding as we pray and seek God's leading in this venture. In the meantime, we will pour all our efforts, resources and volunteer-hours into ensuring that Sunday Celebration is a great experience for the entire church family.

However, remember that New Life Fellowship is not just about the weekend service – It's valuable as it affords the entire family NLF to come together to celebrate the goodness of the Lord in our midst. But, when you look at the Christian life, it is most effectively lived out in community. Here at New Life we call that our cell groups right now, but it can be even more than that – it can exist between 2-3 people getting together for coffee at Uncommon Grounds or the Fortunate Cup and encouraging, engaging and praying for one another. It can be two couples going out for dinner to get to know one another better – It can be 3-4 families getting together at Saratoga Spa Park for a cook-out and games. It's simply being with one another, doing life together and allowing the Spirit of Christ to make us more one.

Why is this important? First, decision making is best made in community. So many believers try to live life on their own, even those who are faithful to attend church. They may show up on Sunday or even attend a cell group but they still view their money as their money, their time as their time and their life as their life. But life should be lived together and decisions should be made together. Our decision making, especially as we engage the world and work in it, is best achieved by talking about it in community. I've witnessed too many people who have made decisions for their life (because it is “my life”) and made a mess of it in the process.

Another area of the Christian life is outreach, which is best done in community. So many people are looking for programs they can go to, like a switch they can turn off and turn on. This way outreach becomes something I do when I have the time for it. But outreach is most effective in our culture as a lifestyle (you can call it missional living if you like). Many times the lost are often more attracted to the Christian community before they are attracted to the Christian message. This is why

Jesus said *“they will know you by your love for one another.”* Our Christian community can either enhance our outreach or hinder it significantly.

One final area of the Christian life that is best done in community is discipleship. Jesus spent much of His time, not so much one on one as in groups. It is highly probably that much of the habitual sin in our life is the result of a lack of community involvement with other believers. We need to be living out and talking about the Word in relationships. This means that we need to be in smaller groups, living life together and conversing about the Word and repenting together. I would encourage you to not underestimate the power of the Christian community in your life.

Just a thought... wish I could say I was an expert on this... but I'm actually still learning HOW!! Really looking forward to continuing a dialogue with you on this matter... Feel free to share your thoughts to me!

Be strong... Be courageous... Be fearless...

Christ is All,
Pastor Mark