

Social Media, Wikipedia, and Ekklesia

(Acts 2:46)

Yearly Theme: “Joy is...”

Series Title: “Church & Culture”

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Something to think about:

With the dawn of technology and the internet has come multiple social sites and networking sites that have the hint of community within them. These tools (as any tools are) are not evil in and of themselves, it’s what we do with them that matters. With this in mind, how can the church continue to be a community of oneness in the 21st century and beyond?

Let’s start by taking a look at our key passage of Scripture today...

Acts 2:42-47 (NLT),

⁴² All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer.

⁴³ A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. ⁴⁴ And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. ⁴⁵ They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need.

⁴⁶ They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— ⁴⁷ all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

The early Christian Church valued their time together. The desired fellowship with one another out of the natural flow of their love for God and each other. From verse 46 we notice that the believers worshiped *together* at the Temple *each day*, they *met in homes* for the Lord’s Supper, and they *shared* their meals with great joy and generosity. This was a community that was actively together on a regular basis... (Not just on Sundays).

However, in our busy American culture, we rarely have time (or take time), to be with one another beyond a couple hours a week on Sunday mornings, and though we have the internet and social media as connection points, these things are poor tools of fellowship.

Key Point: “Social media is a tool for, not a replacement of, true community.”

Because of our busy lives and schedules, we’ve reduced our fellowship to a few buzz phrases on Facebook or Twitter or Instagram to let people know how we’re doing... in general. But way too often, people mask who they are and what’s really going on in their lives. On the flip side, you have people who “tell it like it is” to the point that there is no tact or gentleness in their tones, and they always seem to be on the attack.

So, how is the Church to be different than the world in how we fellowship with one another? What should the Church look like as a “Community of Faith.”

1. The Church is supposed to be a community of oneness.

The Church is a people who join together with a common vision and purpose that is centered on the worship of God in Christ Jesus, and their oneness/unity is derived from a closeness that is fostered through the power of the Holy Spirit in that common focus.

2. There are hindrances to “oneness” within the Church.

- *Selfishness*
- *Pride*
- *Unforgiveness*
- *Resentment*
- *Hatred*
- *Greed*
- *Gossip*
- *Anger*

3. Social media can be a tool for, or a hindrance to, true fellowship within the Church?

Social Media has become the “front porch” of our day and age. It is the place where we gather to distribute ideas, news, and information. Though it has been a useful tool for communication, it has been a poor substitute for true community. In addition, it is often used to tear down and hurt others rather than build others up.

Something to take home:

Being a part of the Community of Faith is a great privilege and an awesome responsibility. Jesus established the Church as an expression of the Kingdom of God this side of Heaven. This visible expression of God’s Kingdom is typified by grace and truth: *the grace of God in Christ’s sacrifice*, and *the truth of God who is Christ*.¹ The Church’s unity doesn’t center around the Body of Christ, but rather Christ himself who is the truth incarnate.

John V. W. Smith goes further to explain that,

“Jesus Christ founded only one church; it is composed of all persons who have experienced redemption in Christ; its faith is based on the whole Word of God; it is ruled by the Holy Spirit. These basic theological concepts were also lyricized and congregations witness to these truths as they sing ‘I’m redeemed ... and I’m walking in the light,’ ‘Back to the Blessed Old Bible,’ and ‘How sweet this bond of perfectness.’ They saw the one church of God, and they knew it was not theirs to construct or organize; a united church was not something to be fashioned by any human process. Real unity comes only as the gift of God and is an expression of his love.”²

And, as far as social media is concerned, it is a *tool for*, not a *replacement of*, community.

Kruger concludes:

“Technology does not necessarily create sin patterns, but exacerbates the sin patterns that are already present within our hearts, and the hearts of our congregations. In response, we need to do something that we needed to do anyway: *give our people a robust and vibrant picture of what the church is and their place in it*. In other words, we need to give them a full-orbed, biblical ecclesiology [a picture of the Biblical church].”³

Key Point: “Social media is a tool for, not a replacement of, true community.”

¹ John 14:6.

² John V. W. Smith, *I Will Build My Church* (Warner Press: Anderson, Indiana, 1999), 126-127.

³ “5 Ways Facebook May Be Harming Your Christian Life” (emphasis mine).