



Leading Virtual Small Groups Toward Biblical Community

first ... what is biblical community?

then ... is virtual community biblical?

What is biblical community?

Koinonia → *community*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fellowship intimacy association communion joint participation 	}	<p>Acts 2:42-47 depicts how <i>koinonia</i> functioned</p>
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Acts 2:42-47 (NIV)

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship [*koinonia*], to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

What is biblical community?

koinonia revolved around belief

but it was primarily an intimate behavior

Essential features of NT Christian community

- centered in Jesus Christ and his love
- this fellowship was a gift of the Holy Spirit
- the community was missional

Authentic Fellowship, Howard Snyder (2003)



Aspects of biblical community:

- Ro 12.5** - each member belongs to all the others
- Ro 12.10** - be devoted to one another in brotherly love
- Ro 12.10** - honor one another above yourselves
- Ro 15.5** - enjoy a spirit of unity among yourselves
- Ro 15.7** - accept one another
- Ro 15.14** - instruct one another
- Ro 16.3-6,16** - greet one another
- Gal 5.13** - serve one another in love
- Gal 6.2** - carry one another's burdens
- Eph 4.2** - bear with one another in love
- Eph 4.32** - forgive each other
- Eph 5.21** - submit to one another out of reverence for Christ
- 1 Thes 5.11** - encourage one another & build each other up
- Heb 10.25** - meet for habitual worship to encourage one another



The Shaping Effects of Technology

“We give technology the power to shape and change and fashion us, remaking ourselves in its image.” (27)

“The challenge with a given form of technology is that we must seek to anticipate the changes that may result and respond to such changes with wisdom and discernment before they overtake us.” (39)

The Next Story: Life and Faith After the Digital Explosion by Tim Challies



Virtual Connections

“...we look to the network to defend us against loneliness even as we use it to control the intensity of our connections.” (p. 13)

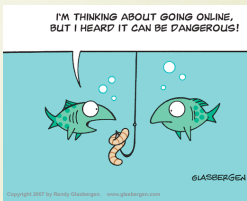
“The world is now full of modern Goldilockses, people who take comfort in being in touch with a lot of people whom they also keep at bay.” (p. 15)

Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other by Sherry Turkle



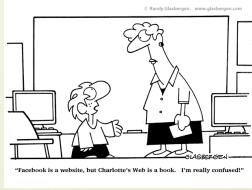
Blurring Effects of the Digital Age

- Information and Wisdom
- Intimacy
- Space and Time
- Truth
- Attentiveness
- Disembodiment



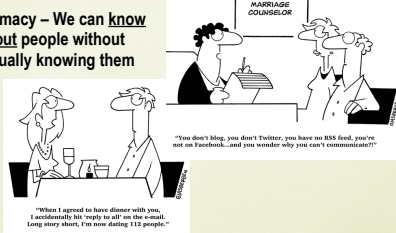
Blurring Effects of the Digital Age

- Information and Wisdom
We can gather data but may not know what to do with it



Blurring Effects of the Digital Age

- Intimacy – We can know about people without actually knowing them



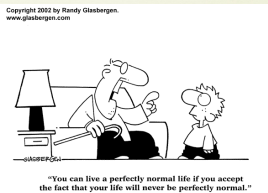
Blurring Effects of the Digital Age

- Space and Time
We can be present in numerous places at the same time



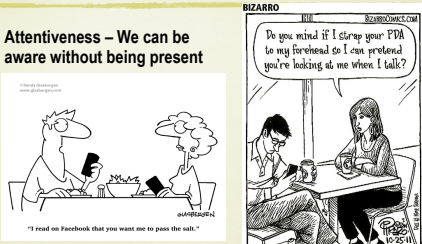
Blurring Effects of the Digital Age

- Truth – Wiki (consensus) vs. Search Engine (relevance)



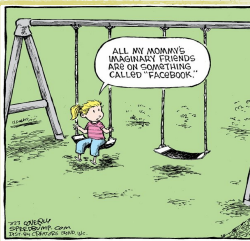
Blurring Effects of the Digital Age

- Attentiveness – We can be aware without being present



Blurring Effects of the Digital Age

- Disembodiment – Decreasing separation between “physical” and “virtual”



Virtual Small-Groups?

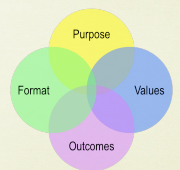
- What is the relationship between the virtual and physical and how do they interact?
- Rather than recreating physical small groups virtually, how could or should we develop new expressions and experiences?

Virtual Small-Groups?

- What physical experiences can be replaced with virtual ones?
- What physical experiences should never become virtual? Why?
- How will people transition from physical to virtual groups and vice-versa?
- Others?

Leading a Virtual Small Group

- Clarifying Purpose
- Clarifying Values
- Clarifying Outcomes
- Clarifying Format



Clarifying Purpose

- What purpose are we prayerfully discerning?
- What people, cause, problem, or situation are we passionate about – Our “holy discontent”
- Others?

Clarifying Values for Our Small Group

- Rather than recreating physical small groups virtually, how could or should we develop new expressions and experiences?
- How will our group reflect the overall vision and purpose of our church?
- What kind of support and accountability from church leadership will our group pursue?
- What culture or DNA will we seek to build together?
- Others?



Clarify Outcomes

- What outcomes will we pursue as a group?
- Examples:
 - Spiritual formation
 - Outreach
 - Care
 - Community
 - Service
 - Equipping
 - Multiplication
- Others?



Clarify Format

- What technology makes the most sense for us?
- Do we know how to use it and troubleshoot it?
- What practices will we do virtually and how, e.g. communion?
- What will our gatherings consist of?
- How will we deal with conflict productively?
- How will we transition people from virtual to physical groups and vice-versa?
- At what point do we want to multiply the group and how?
- Others?



Discussion

- How do we lead virtual small groups toward biblical community?
- What is the relationship between the virtual and physical?
- Rather than recreating physical small groups virtually, how could or should we develop new expressions?
- What physical experiences can be replaced with virtual ones? What experiences should never become virtual? Why?
- How will people transition from physical to virtual groups and vice-versa?
- Others?

