

Retreat based on The Church

Leader's opening remarks and welcome to participants

Arrange in Small Groups

Go over the Logistics of the Day

Pray for the day and begin the retreat

Titles of the Talks given on this retreat:

1. How We View the Church
2. Why We Withdraw from Others
3. Ways That We Build Walls
4. Afraid to Let Go of Our Isolation
5. God's Answer to Our Isolation
6. What is the Church?
7. "Being" the Church
8. Christian Community

TALK # 1 How We View the Church

Talk is based on the scriptures:

Philippians 4:10-20 (TEV)

In my life in union with the Lord it is a great joy to me that after so long a time you once more had the chance of showing that you care for me. I don't mean that you had stopped caring for me – you just had no chance to show it. And I am not saying this because I feel neglected, for I have learned to be satisfied with what I have. I know what it is to be in need and what it is to have more than enough. I have learned this secret, so that anywhere, at any time, I am content, whether I am full or hungry, whether I have too much or too little. I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me.

But it was very good of you to help me in my troubles. You Philippians know very well that when I left Macedonia in the early days of preaching the Good News, you were the only church to help me; you were the only ones who shared my profits and losses. More than once when I needed help in Thessalonica, you sent it to me. It is not that I just want to receive gifts; rather, I want to see profit added to your account. Here, then, is my receipt for everything you have given me – and it has been more than enough! I have all I need now that Epaphroditus has brought me all your gifts. They are like a sweet-smelling offering to God, a sacrifice which is acceptable and pleasing to him. And with all his abundant wealth through Christ Jesus, my God will supply all your needs. To our God and Father be the glory forever and ever! Amen.

During this retreat we will look at the Church.

God calls each of us to relationship in two ways

 With Him through prayer and study (described in the Discovery talk)

 With our brothers and sisters through community

The Greek word which is translated as the church is “ekklesia” (eck - lay - see - uh)

 Refers to an assembly or gathering

Some of us have had bad experiences in the Church

 Mark Twain once said that Jesus knew many ‘good people’ and that’s why he spent most of his time with tax collectors and sinners

 The church is not perfect because – Who is the Church?

 The Church is people and people are not perfect

Some of us have had good experiences in the Church

 Paul had both good and bad experiences with the churches that he had started

Notice that Paul gives God the glory for the work that the church does

Personal witness: The speaker should describe a time when his life has been greatly impacted (preferably in a positive way) by the work of the church.

Discussion Questions

Describe a time when your life has been affected, either positively or negatively, by the church?

How do you feel about that experience today?

TALK # 2 Why We Withdraw from Others

Talk is based on these scriptures:

Proverbs 29:25 (TEV) – “It is dangerous to be concerned with what others think of you, but if you trust the Lord, you are safe.”

Isaiah 43:1-2,5 (TEV) – “Do not be afraid – I will save you. I have called you by name – you are mine. When you pass through deep waters, I will be with you; your troubles will not overwhelm you. When you pass through fire, you will not be burned; the hard trials that come will not hurt you. Do not be afraid – I am with you.”

There are some good reasons why we withdraw from others and build walls around ourselves:

Fear of what others will think

Fear that others will find out our weaknesses

Memories of betrayed confidences

Memories of old hurts

Inability to trust others

Fear of being used by others

Fear of loss of power, of control of turf

Need for privacy

Personal witness: The speaker should describe a time when he has withdrawn from others because of fear or painful memories.

Discussion Question

What feelings of fear or painful memories cause me to withdraw from others?

TALK # 3 Ways That We Build Walls

Talk is based on these scriptures:

Luke 18:9-14 (TEV) – Jesus also told this parable to people who were sure of their own goodness and despised everybody else. “Once there were two men who went up to the Temple to pray: one was a Pharisee, the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood apart by himself and prayed, ‘I thank you, God, that I am not greedy, dishonest, or an adulterer, like everybody else. I thank you that I am not like that tax collector over there. I fast two days a week, and I give you one tenth of all my income.’ But the tax collector stood at a distance and would not even raise his face to heaven, but beat on his breast and said, ‘God, have pity on me, a sinner!’ I tell you,” said Jesus, “the tax collector, and not the Pharisee, was in the right with God when he went home. For those who make themselves great will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be made great.”

Some of the ways in which we build walls to hide behind are:

The acquisition of material possessions

Attaining physical superiority over others

Threatening others

Faking ... conniving

Collecting friends with power or influence

By knowledge – “The know-it-all”

 Law

 Institutional regulations

 Scripture

 “The system”

By withdrawal

 The lone wolf avoids any real intimacy with others

 “I don’t need anybody”

Personal Witness: The speaker should describe how he has built a wall around himself to keep others from finding out who he really is.

Discussion Question

What kinds of walls have I built around myself to keep others from finding out who I really am?

TALK #4 Afraid to Let Go of Our Isolation

Talk is based on these scriptures:

Psalm 51:1-4a (TEV) – “Be merciful to me, O God, because of your constant love. Because of your great mercy wipe away my sins! Wash away all my evil and make me clean from my sin! I recognize my faults; I am always conscious of my sins. I have sinned against you – only against you – and done what you consider evil.”

We know ourselves better than others (but not better than God!)

We may not like who we are, but we have learned to live with it

We are comfortable with who we are

We are uncomfortable with who we might be if we changed

We would rather be alone than face that change

If this isolation hurts but we're still afraid to let go of it, what do we do about it?

Kairos is here because we believe God offers His people the answer to this question.

Paul writes in Romans 7:24-25

“What an unhappy man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is taking me to death? Thanks be to God who does this through our Lord Jesus Christ!”

We can't really change ourselves, but we can **be changed** by God

(Just mention this since it is the subject of later talks.)

Personal Witness: The speaker should describe a time when he has isolated himself from God and/or the church.

Discussion Question

When have I separated myself from God and was reluctant to ask for forgiveness?

TALK # 5 God's Answer to Our Isolation

Talk is based on these scriptures:

Matthew 11:19a (TEV) – “When the Son of Man came, he ate and drank and everyone said, ‘Look at this man! He is a glutton and a wine drinker, a friend of tax collectors and other outcasts!’

Matthew 12:48-50 (TEV) – Jesus answered, “Who is my mother? Where are my brothers?” Then he pointed to his disciples and said, “Look! Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does what my Father in heaven wants is my brother, my sister, and my mother.”

God offers us a relationship with Him that we can trust.

Remember the “Friendship with God” talk from the 3-day weekend.

God wants to be our friend.

He wants the very best for us

He doesn't give up on us when we make a mess of things

God has provided us with natural families hoping that we could find trusting relationships there.

Genesis 2:18 -- The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

Then He created woman, thus beginning the first “natural” family

But even members of natural families often fail to provide the security we need

For example, Cain and Abel

God sent His Son, Jesus, the Christ, to make a way for us to be adopted as brothers and sisters of Jesus, thus making us part of the family of God

We call this family “the Church”

Personal Witness: The speaker should describe a time when:

1) he was especially aware of the trusting relationship with another person(s) in the family of God

-- OR --

2) he was especially aware of God's friendship

Discussion Question

Has there been a time when I have felt especially aware of God's desire to be my friend?

TALK # 6 What is the Church

Talk is based on these scriptures:

1 Corinthians 12:12-21 (TEV) – Christ is like a single body, which has many parts; it is still one body, even though it is made up of different parts. In the same way, all of us, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether slaves or free, have been baptized into the one body by the same Spirit, and we have all been given the one Spirit to drink.

For the body itself is not made up of only one part, but of many parts. If the foot were to say, “Because I am not a hand, I don’t belong to the body,” that would not keep it from being a part of the body. And if the ear were to say, “Because I am not an eye, I don’t belong to the body,” that would not keep it from being a part of the body. If the whole body were just an eye, how could it hear? And if it were only an ear, how could it smell? As it is, however, God put every part in the body just as he wanted it to be. There would not be a body if it were all only one part! As it is, there are many parts but one body.

So then, the eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” Nor can the head say to the feet, “Well, I don’t need you!”

The Church is the “Body of Christ”

No one is to be excluded, no matter how different or untalented

“The eye cannot say to the hand”

All parts of the body are needed and have been placed there by God

Sharing our gifts with others in the church builds community

Gifts are useless if not shared

The Church consists of God’s people

It is not organizations, denominations, buildings, creeds

The Church is the Christian community that has arisen in response to Jesus’ commandment in John 13:34-35

“And now I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples.”

It is obvious to everyone, even non-believers, perhaps especially non-believers, who is a part of the church

Who is the Church?

Personal Witness: The speaker should describe his place in the Church, the Body of Christ.

Discussion Question

How am I using my gifts to build up the Church?

TALK # 7 *“Being” the Church*

Scripture:

Galatians 5:22-23 (TEV) – “But the Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control. There is no law against such things as these.”

How do we get out from behind the walls to **BE** the Church?

God, through His Holy Spirit, changes us so that we are able to begin to trust others
First with little things, then with bigger things later on

When God changes us, we receive the gift of the fruit of the Spirit

As God changes us we begin to become persons that others can trust

The love of Jesus draws us together in a group where we can share ourselves and our gifts in spite of our differences

We need to be connected. If we’re not connected, it is like having all the spare parts to make a car sitting at the factory with no one to put them together. We can never drive the car unless they are connected.

When we say, “**We are the Church**”, we are talking about us as a community

More than a crowd

More than individuals professing faith in God

Who is the Church?

Personal Witness: The speaker describes how his love for Jesus has drawn him into community with other believers and enabled him to share his gifts.

Question: What prevents me from getting out from behind the walls that I have built in order to share myself and my gifts with the Church?

TALK # 8 Christian Community

Talk is based on these scriptures:

Luke 10:25-37 (TEV) – A teacher of the Law came up and tried to trap Jesus.

“Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to receive eternal life?”

Jesus answered him, “What do the Scriptures say? How do you interpret them?”

The man answered, “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind’; and ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

“You are right,” Jesus replied; “do this and you will live.”

But the teacher of the Law wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?”

Jesus answered, “There was once a man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when robbers attacked him, stripped him, beat him up, leaving him half dead. It so happened that a priest was going down that road; but when he saw the man, he walked on by on the other side. In the same way a Levite also came there, went over and looked at the man, and then walked on by on the other side. But a Samaritan who was traveling that way came upon the man, and when he saw him, his heart was filled with pity. He went over to him, poured oil and wine on his wounds and bandaged them; then he put the man on his own animal and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Take care of him,’ he told the innkeeper, ‘and when I come back this way, I will pay you whatever else you spend on him.’”

And Jesus concluded, “In your opinion, which one of these three acted like a neighbor toward the man attacked by the robbers?”

The teacher of the Law answered, “The one who was kind to him.”

Jesus replied, “You go, then, and do the same.”

God **wills** community

Jesus modeled life in community for us

In a small group with Peter, James, and John

In a larger group with all 12 disciples

When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, He did not say “My Father, who art in heaven ...”, he said, “Our Father ...”

Jesus promised His disciples that “Where two or three come together in my name, I am there with them.”

Christian life is triangular: God, ourselves, and others

There is a vertical relationship – between a Christian and God

There is a horizontal relationship – between a Christian and his brothers and sisters

Personal Witness: The speaker should describe how his life of faith in community includes both a vertical and a horizontal relationship.

Discussion Question

In what ways does my life of faith include both a relationship with God and a relationship with my brothers? What changes can I make to include both kinds of relationships?