

Perhaps It's Time to Throw a Party

"We don't trust one another," the leader told me, somewhat embarrassed.

"Why do you suppose that is?" I asked.

The leader started to describe the symptoms: "We're not talking to one another . . ."

I interrupted, "Why is that?"

"Well, everyone is so busy . . . we can't find time for all of us to meet . . . and when we do finally meet together, we stumble over the same disagreements. We can't make decisions because we don't trust."

I listened to the leader describe her situation. She felt disoriented, broken, fragmented.

"When was the last time you had dinner together?"

The question surprised her, "You mean held a meeting over dinner?"

"No, not a meeting. When was the last time you gathered together just to be with one another, to break bread and welcome Jesus' presence? to tell stories about what you love; the people you love? When was the last time you invited your team to table fellowship?"

She sat quietly, thinking.

The absence of trust is a symptom of fragmentation. A person, organization or process becomes fragmented when it's essential wholeness breaks apart, disintegrates, or collapses into separate, often competing entities. If a leader is not discerning and intentional, all social systems will break down, fall apart. That's how fallen nature works: desire, control, disruption, competition.

In contrast, Jesus' prayer for the church, "for all who will believe, is that we might "be one."¹ The Greek word of church, *ecclesia*, refers to a called out, called together people living under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. So, the Apostle Paul calls the church a "body" and exhorts the Ephesian church to live worthy of this calling, bearing with one another in love and making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in "one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."² One. One. One

These are warnings against fragmentation.

The Salvation Army: May 2019 Article
From Fragmentation to Integration

By Jim Van Yperen

The disciples faced fragmentation during their time with Jesus. Fragmentation came in the form of doubts and disappointments; from rivalries within and from threats outside their circle.

One day, the mother of the Zebedee boys asked Jesus to favor her two sons in the kingdom. When the other ten disciples heard about this they were indignant. Fragmentation came creeping at the door.

So, Jesus tells a story about Gentile rulers acting high and mighty, using power to gain advantage for themselves and without regard for others. Then Jesus stops and says, “Not so with you.” Jesus’ Kingdom rules by service. “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”³

Perhaps the greatest time of unity and learning for the disciples came around Jesus seeking a quiet place for fellowship, to tell stories and to break bread. These were intentional breaks in routine for personal rest, healing and restoration of relationship. Sometimes the effort to be alone could not escape the crowds, so Jesus turned the gathering into a feast for thousands. More often, though, Jesus and his disciples are found at weddings and sharing table fellowship with sinners, tax-collectors and Pharisees. Each year, for three years, Jesus celebrated Passover with his disciples, culminating in the last meal when Jesus took “bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’” We recall how, after his resurrection Jesus reveals himself in Emmaus and on the shores of Galilee when he “broke the bread.”⁴ Pentecost tells the story of the Spirit-filled church gathering regularly to break “bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people.”⁵ (Of course, this was a foretaste of a coming great wedding Supper of the Lamb when all things are put right.)⁶

Are you experiencing fragmentation in your life personally, or on your team? One simple step you can take is to have dinner together. Break bread, invite people to tell stories about their life, what gives them joy, or causes sorrow; asking how, together, we might see Jesus’ presence with us and for us; for hope and healing.

Fragmentation is the result of fallen nature. In Jesus, we are new creation, made one and whole. Perhaps it’s time to throw a party.

¹ John 17:15-19

² Ephesians 4:1-8

³ Matthew 20:20-27

⁴ Luke 22:19

⁵ Acts 2:46-47

⁶ Revelation 19:9