

Missional Community is all about caring: caring for people. We care for those who have found their way into our MC and we care for those that we are on mission to.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer says: "He who loves community destroys community; he who loves the brethren builds community." -*Called Together*

"A community is not an abstract ideal. We are not striving for perfect community. Community is not an ideal; it is people. It is you and I. In community we are called to love people just as they are with their wounds and their gifts, not as we would want them to be. Community means giving them space, helping them to grow. It means also receiving from them so that we too can grow. It is giving each other freedom; it is giving each other trust; it is confirming but also challenging each other. We give dignity to each other by the way we listen to each other, in a spirit of trust and of dying to oneself so that the other may live, grow and give." - Jean Vanier, *From Brokenness to Community*, p 35-36

Unreasonable/Unbiblical Expectations for Missional Community

1. MC will be easy and fun.

"If Jesus's Pastoral work consisted of doing large things famously as fast as he could in the most efficient way possible, I would never have known him."- Zack Eswine, *The imperfect Pastor*

2. MC should fit neatly into my current schedule.

"To the important Pastor doing large and famous things speedily, the brokenness of people actually feels like an intrusion keeping us from getting our important work for God done." - Zack Eswine, *The imperfect Pastor*

3. MC will fix my family of origin issues quickly.

It took years and possibly decades to create our family of origin issues it might take that long to heal them.

4. MC Leaders can fix people's problems.

"My job is not to solve people's problems or make them happy, but to help them see the grace operating in their lives." -Eugene Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor*

5. MC will not require the fruit of the Spirit.

a. Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-Control

Now let me speak to one of these issues that I think is the most difficult for us as leaders. Paul writes to the Ephesian MC's and says,

"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, **with patience, bearing with one another in love**, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (4:1-3)

Paul calls us to walk with one another in community with patience. It seems that one of our greatest problem is hastiness. We want things to change right away. I totally understand that but is that how you changed? Is that how the Father treats you? Is he frustrated with your slowness to change behaviors that have taken 20+ years to develop? Does God walk away from you and resign from relationship because of your slowness to change?

The answer to all those questions is no. When we lose our patience with those in our MC who seem like they are not changing **we are forgetting the gospel**. You are slow to change just like I am. Painfully slow to change, sloth like slow, like, *is he still alive?* type slow.

Our impatience with others is evidence that we are forgetting the incredible amount of patience God has with us. Think about your slowness brother, and remember that God is so patient with you and he is not upset with your slowness to change. He will not resign from you but will stay with you and walk with you no matter what.

Only after meditating on this can you have that type of patience with other slow sinners in your MC.

What if it takes a year? What if it takes 5 or 10? Would it still be worth it to slowly walk with men and women who are struggling on the same journey of faith as you are? I think so.

Have patience, this is a lifetime journey not a one hundred yard dash.

6. I'm here to get something out of this, and not give something to others.

Reasonable/Biblical Expectations for Missional Community

1. To be reminded of the gospel and pointed to Jesus.
2. To walk with other Christians and develop friendships.
3. To be given grace and offered forgiveness when you hurt people.
4. To grow in Christian maturity and accountability. Colossians 1:28

5. To be affirmed and encouraged in your walk with Christ
6. To be challenged to make disciples, be on mission, and forsake your sin.
7. We can also expect to experience failure, weakness, struggle, and sin.

That means that we will be disappointed by our MC's. All of us will. So how do we handle those disappointments?

Four Unhealthy Ways to handle our disappointment.

1. Denial - if you don't acknowledge disappointment, you don't have to forgive or confront.
2. Control - I'm going to do everything for you so I don't have to be disappointed when you do it wrong.
3. Bitterness - when I'm defined by disappointment and become easily offended and keep lists of grievances.
4. Give up - when I fail to handle my disappointments in a healthy way I will eventually lose hope and leave.

What's the answer to our disappointments with our MC's?

1. Remind ourselves of the Reasonable/Biblical Expectations.
2. Remember the Gospel.