

CHURCH AS COMMUNITY

“The Biblical figures of body of Christ, bride of Christ, household, temple or vineyard of God, and so forth, give us the basic idea of the Church....

I believe the most Biblical definition is to say that the Church is the **community of God's people.**”

from 'Community of the King' by Howard Snyder

COMMUNITY UNDER SIEGE

- Focus on individualism and 'my rights'
- 'Epidemic' of loneliness
- Technology isolating people
- Pace of life – stress – lack of time

WHY COMMUNITY?

1. It is **GOD'S PLAN** throughout Scripture:

- God blesses Jacob to become a 'community of peoples' (GEN 28:3, GEN 35:11)
- God's chosen people, Israel, taught how to live as a community
- Jesus initiates a 'new Israel' – the church and teaches us how to live together

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God ...”

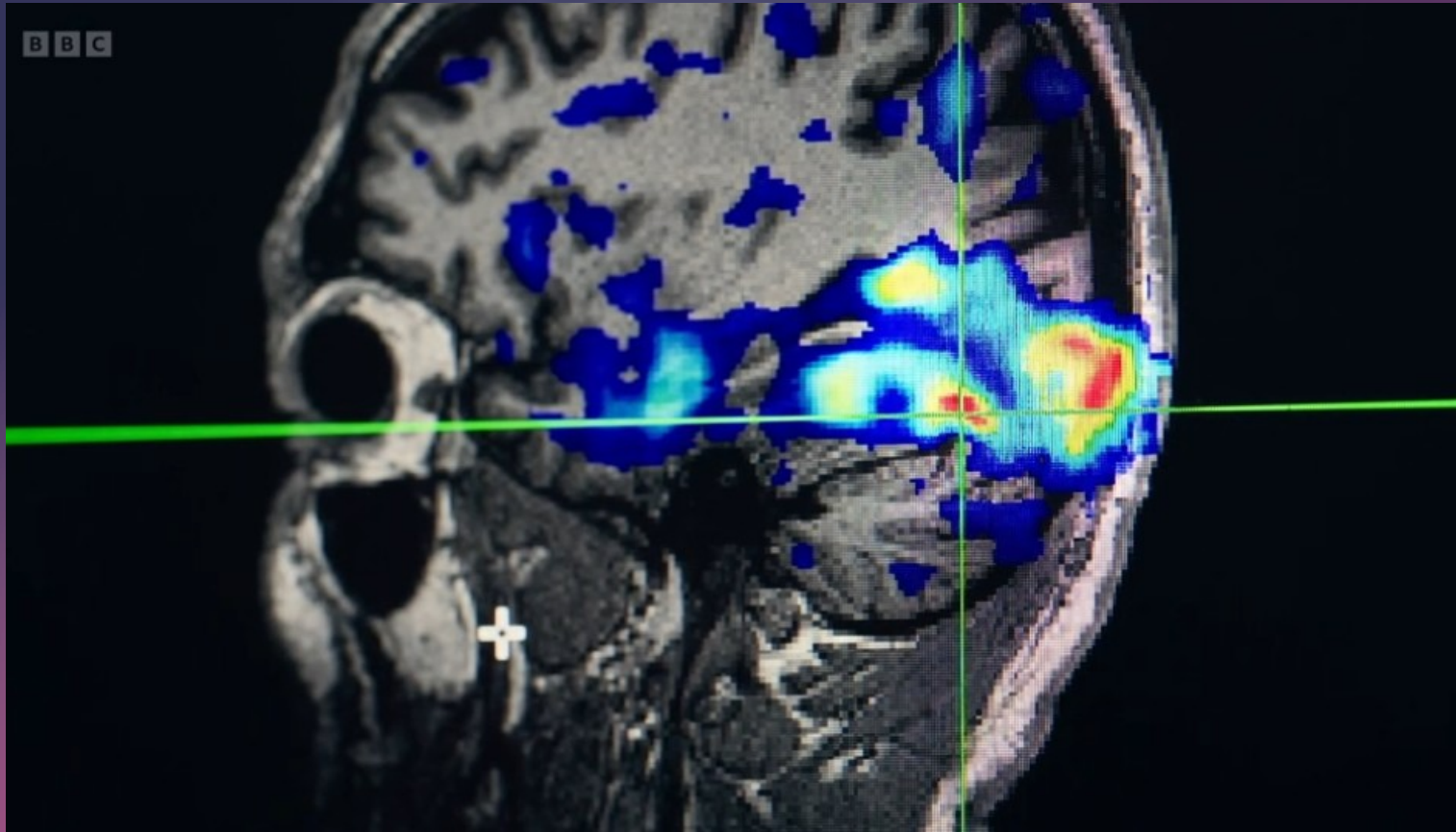
1 PET 2:9,10

WHY COMMUNITY?

2. We are **CREATED** for community:

- God made us to be social beings, not loners
"It is not good for man to be alone" GEN 2:18
- Recent research shows how our brains are designed for social connections
- But we also need time alone – as Jesus did!

THE DYNAMIC SOCIAL PATHWAY



from 'The Secrets of the Brain' – BBC/Open University

WHY COMMUNITY?

3. We **DISPLAY** God's nature and will to the world through our community

- *"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden."* MATT 5:14
- *"As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples."* JOHN 13:35
- *"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."* EPH

WHY COMMUNITY?

4. We are **TRANSFORMED** through community:

- We are shaped and refined by one another.

"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."

PROVERBS 27:17

- We receive encouragement and healing through one another – *e.g. spiritual gifts in ROM 12 & 1 COR 12*
- We discover our identity in community:
God loves pioneers, not lone rangers!

WHY COMMUNITY?

”I am convinced that in this age, people will not listen if we are not exhibiting community. There is no use saying you have community if it does not get down to the tough stuff of life.”

Francis Shaeffer (L’Abri Fellowship)

WHY COMMUNITY?

5. Community is SPIRITUAL WARFARE.

- *“Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”* 1 PET 5:8
i.e. the loners
- God places us into a community to stand together against the enemy’s attacks.
- The church is called to *“display God’s manifold wisdom to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.”* EPH 3:10

WHY COMMUNITY?

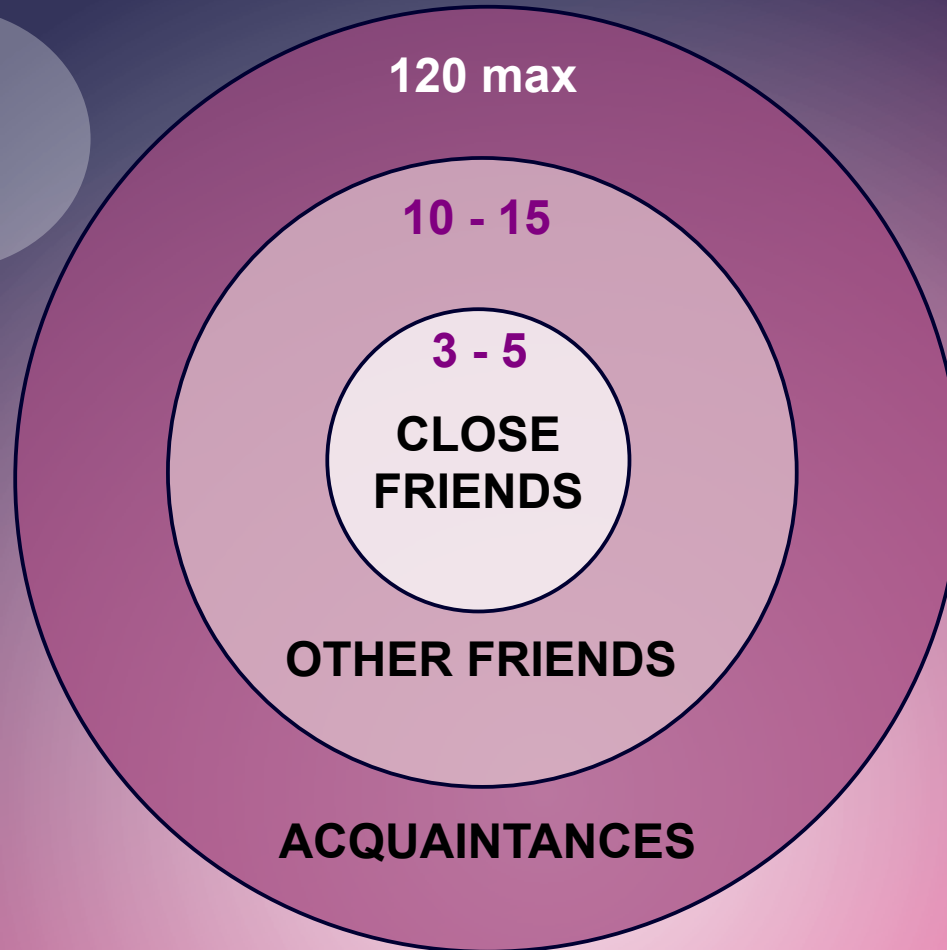
"The church is a colony of heaven planted on the earth; a community that exists as a counter-culture to the world's splintered and hostile collection of individualists."

Robert Bellah (social researcher)

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR ME?

1. Let there be healing in areas that hinder you from engaging with others – past family or relationship hurts.
2. Review your connection with community.
Which relationships are important to you?
3. Be intentional – engage with community.
Find out what your part is in this and wider community.

LAYERS OF CONNECTION



CHURCH AS COMMUNITY

”The very purpose of Christ’s self-giving on the cross was not just to save isolated individuals, and so perpetuate their loneliness, but to create a new community whose members belong to him, love one another and eagerly serve the world.”

John Stott