



EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



From My Window

My wife and I recently toured the Civil War battlefield by Antietam Creek near Sharpsburg, MD. September 17, 1862 is forever known in American history as the bloodiest single-day battle with 23,000 casualties in just 12 hours. As I imagined the gloomy scene before me, I was deeply moved—so many lives lost and good families affected. My mind, however, thought upon Paul's words where he also describes 23,000 casualties who "fell in a single day" (1 Cor. 10:8). This was due to a battle with sexual immorality and many in Israel fell. Paul writes to God's people to encourage us to view Israel's history and do two things: (1) take heed, lest you fall (v. 12), and (2) run to Christ to escape from temptation (v. 13). Unlike the "gloomy scene" of *Israel's war*, we may rejoice as victors over sin through Christ.



Three weeks after graduating from Bible College in 2003, Jordan and Sue were married. Three days after their honeymoon they packed up all their worldly goods and moved to Virginia Beach to attend VBTS. Living by faith was not a new experience for either of them—Jordan's granddad and father are outstanding missionaries, and Sue's dad is a gifted pastor. Through their families' ministries they were taught "to walk by faith and not sight." In 2008, Jordan graduated from VBTS with his M.B.S. and soon joined the pastoral staff of the thriving Cornerstone Bible Church in Virginia Beach. Jordan now serves as the Executive Pastor alongside several elders who are also VBTS graduates. The Heijermans' lives and ministry have been marked by both faith and love for the church. Jordan sums up Cornerstone's passion for the ministry: "We long to see Christ's disciples become biblically literate and grasp the significance of the New Testament Church." Thank you, Jordan and Sue, for your example of faithfulness in pastoral ministry!



Truth for the Agora: Rethinking Community

Guest Author: Pastor Jordan Heijermans

Community. Now here is a term that conjures up various thoughts and emotions among Christians. Whether it is the myriad of books and conferences giving us the inside scoop on how to make community significant again, or the reality of sin wreaking havoc on our idealistic notions of togetherness, “community” as a concept is often met with skepticism. So is community worthy of our pursuit as Christians?

There was a time when the church building sat at the center of the village, and its calendar and liturgies helped establish and govern the rhythms of life in the village around it. Today, the cathedrals of another era have been replaced with sports fields, coffee shops, community centers, and smartphones, all giving input into our collective understanding of what it means to be humans connected to one another. While I am not suggesting a need to return to the trappings of Christendom, I am proposing that the culture in which we live subtly shapes the story of reality in which we believe. Our culture’s take on community, if not redeemed by Scripture’s true revealing of the reason and goal of life together, will more or less shape our beliefs and practices as individuals and as the body of Christ.

It is therefore of utmost importance that we engage in a *wholly biblical* view of community, and not just to save it from a painful decline through social media or to manipulate it as a church growth strategy. It matters because it is an integral component of the creation/fall/redemption/recreation narrative that God has written upon His world and His image bearers. It matters because it characterizes our triune God! To believe and teach a gospel that doesn’t include community is an anemic gospel at best, and for one to say they love Jesus but not His church is to be sorely deceived (1 John 4:20). Let me clearly explain this conclusion.

Genuine community has always been about fellowship with God and with one another. The all-encompassing nature of this vertical-horizontal communion at creation dissolved into separation and enmity when our forebears misstepped into sin and acted upon Satan’s alternate version of “truth.” This produced death—a death of intimacy with our Creator, and the ruin of selfless human relationships, which are now defined by obnoxious self-interests. Were it not for the atoning work of Christ that brought peace with God and thereby killed interpersonal disunity and hostility, community would be a futile endeavor (Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:13–16).

As a redeemed community, we pursue our spiritual brothers and sisters through the sanctifying work of God. We now belong to one another and are committed to a local expression of Christ’s Body (Rom 12:4–5). We gather in mutual submission to the Spirit and His work through the Word and ordinances (James 1:22–25; 1 Cor. 10:16–17). We walk in good works reflecting our new creation status (Eph. 2:8–10). We lovingly serve each other so that we may bear witness of our new identity as disciples of Jesus (John 13:34–35). As a community, we are a “whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly together causing the body to grow so that it builds itself up in love” (Eph. 4:16).

True vertical-horizontal community was a worthy reason for the Son of God to go to the cross (John 17:20–23). It is certainly worthy of our pursuit today as we push each other toward Christ-likeness, anticipating resurrection and recreation, when Christ’s enemies will be crushed and God will dwell with glorified humanity in perfect harmony (Rev. 21:1–4). Come, Lord Jesus!