

Something to Pray About

October 2013 – Cindy Sears

Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. —Acts 4:32 NKJV

Community

Community: “a group with common interests or origins” fellowship, being alike in some way”

Common: “of or affecting the whole community” “belonging to or shared by two or more people or things”

Unity: “the state of being one or a unit” “harmony, agreement in feelings or ideas or aims etc.”

(all definitions from the Oxford American Dictionary, c1980)

In God’s plan, individual rights are trumped by a community’s need for stability and solidarity. This is the essence of the Ten Commandments and most of the rules and regulations based on them in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

The Israelites were called to be a part of a community of believers, a holy nation—called out and separate from the surrounding nations and culture groups. And called also to be a living witness of what obedience to God looked like and how that obedience led to a better, more stable and prosperous existence for all. (See Deuteronomy 7:9-15.)

As Christians, we come to the cross individually, but then we enter the family of God—a community of believers. Christians are not called to be lone rangers, but soldiers of the cross—team members. It is not so much what God has done for me, but what He has done for us. Jesus is our Shepherd; we are His flock. We are much better off travelling with the flock, because a lone sheep is much easier for the wolf (Devil) to pick off—to destroy. (See John 10:16.) We are called to community, and that community is ruled by love for one another. (See 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a.) Therefore, I do not look out for Number One; I look out for the weaker brother or sister. (See Romans, Chapter 14.)

“Therefore, let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or cause to fall in our brother’s way.” —Romans 14:13 NKJV

“We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves.” —Romans 15:1 NKJV

This is why sin is so devastating to the Church, because it affects us all. When I sin, I do not just sin against God; I sin against my fellow believers and weaken them. My sin can be a stumbling block that causes another believer to fall or keeps an unbeliever from opening himself up to God’s call to redemption. Therefore, individual sin does not just hurt me, it hurts the community. The same as adultery in a marriage not only hurts the spouse, but the children, the extended family, and the whole community.

In the book of Exodus, we see how God took a weak, cowardly, and highly diverse set of people and made them into a community of believers in the desert of Sinai. He continues to take weak, cowardly, and diverse persons and mold them into a community of believers. When we obey the first commandment, we all have the same focal point and the same goal—to worship and reverence and

obey the one true God, Who is also our Savior and Redeemer (Jesus Christ); and when we obey all the other commandments, loving my neighbor as myself, we become a community—a common unity.

“Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.” —Acts 4:32 NKJV

(Please note that the individuals still “possessed” things; but they were always ready to share what they possessed. None of us truly owns anything; it is all a gift from God to be used in His kingdom’s work.)

In the Spiritual Gifts training class that I just went through in the latest Lay Servant Training event, we were reminded over and over again that spiritual gifts are not given to individuals for the individual’s sake. The gifts are given to us to edify the body of Christ—the Church—the community of believers. (See Ephesians 4:10-16; 1 Corinthians, Chapter 12.) Using a spiritual gift only to make myself feel better is wrong. Refusing to use a spiritual gift to build up the body of Christ is also wrong.

“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching...” —Romans 12:6-7, et al. NKJV

We are family. We stand together; we fall together. If one link of the chain is broken, the whole chain is weakened. Do not be that weak link by giving in to sin or by refusing to use the gifts that God has given you for the body’s sake. And let those who are strong in the faith refuse to let go of the weaker link. Reach out in love and hang on for Christ’s sake. Build up the body of Christ daily, because our unity is our greatest witness to a lost and dying world.

“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.” —John 17:20-21 NKJV

