

Fighting For All Together

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[0 : 00] Okay, today I'm going to talk about fighting for all together. Fighting for all together. I was reading, Gina stumbled upon a little blog post that she sent to me.

I have no reason to believe this is even written by a Christian, but in this blog post, there was a statement in there that I thought was really interesting. He said, community is not chemistry, it's choreography.

Community is not chemistry, it's choreography. And I think about it in our context, missional community is not chemistry, it's choreography.

And oftentimes that's not the way we think though. We think all kinds of, like true community is all about chemistry, right? Like I got to be with the people that I have the best chemistry with, the best natural inclination towards relationally.

That's the way we think, right? I mean, and that makes sense that we think that way. It's not a horrible way to think, but per se. But I think he makes a really good point that really, true community, and anyone who's married I think knows this, that it's not always chemistry.

[1 : 08] It's choreography. Sometimes the chemistry seems to really be there, maybe on the front end especially. That's what covenant's about, right? You marry and then you got to stay married, which means that sometimes you got to lean a lot more heavily on the choreography than you do on the chemistry.

And it's the same way with the church, right? Maybe even the fact that you're drawn to this church had to do with some sort of chemistry that you felt, maybe with beliefs, maybe with mission, direction, or maybe with the people, right?

But to keep going, to keep being effective on mission and as a church, we're often brought up, you know, we hit that wall where chemistry ends and that intentional choreography begins.

The definition of choreography, to give you a little better picture of this, is choreography is intentional creative planning of movements and actions in coordinated execution.

And what better way to pick the church, really, the church that's a body working together. And so I think for us, this aspect of it I think is really important.

[2 : 22] For church to be healthy, and for church to be really healthy even, there has to be a level of intentionality and creative planning of our actions and movement in a coordinated way, executing in a coordinated way.

And this is where our missional communities, I think, really come together in the sense that this is a small group of people on mission to specific people and places. And I think, especially in a church that's small and new, it's easy for us to bond together more with the whole than to these little kind of platoons of missional communities that we have.

And I think it's actually something that we have to press into a little bit more specifically in regards to really being intentional with our missional communities for the advancement of the gospel and for the kingdom of God to be seen.

And so we'll get into that in a little bit. But first I want to look at some scriptures. As I was thinking about this, I was thinking of the book of Acts. And I just began reading through the first, I don't know, multiple chapters of Acts and started looking at especially the language of togetherness and of all.

Like where there was this all togetherness in the book of Acts. And it's really all over the place. And then it's elsewhere in the New Testament. So I just want to just take a look at some of these little glimpses of that, especially in the book of Acts.

[3 : 42] So I'll be bouncing around in different verses in Acts, mostly starting in Acts chapter 1, verse 14. Here we have kind of the beginning of the book of Acts.

And we have the beginning of really the church. This is on the day of Pentecost. It says, all with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer. Okay, all with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer.

So you have this sense of this allness, like they're all together. And what are they doing? They're praying. Okay. Then in Acts chapter 2, verse 1. I'm sorry, that was before Pentecost.

Acts chapter 2 is Pentecost. When the day of Pentecost arrived, it says they were all together in one place. So here you have that togetherness again. They're all together in one place.

And then in Acts chapter 2, verse 4, three verses later, it says they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. So they're all together in prayer. They're all together in the same building, in the same place, wherever they were at.

[4 : 42] And the upper room. And then they're all filled with the Holy Spirit. Okay? And I think that language of all is not coincidental. It's what we're really going after.

We live in an individualistic culture where the individual is center. Me, myself, and I is what the focus is. And that's totally antithetical. It's totally opposite of what the church says, or what the Bible says the church is supposed to be.

We are to be all together in a corporate way, dependent on one another, mobilized together with one another. And you see, this is how the church began. And I don't think it's coincidental that that's how the church began.

That's how the church should always be. All together, frequently gathered all together in one place. Frequently praying together. Frequently actually physically being in the same places together.

And then being filled with the Spirit together, all of us. And that's a great vision for the church. Later in Acts chapter 2, 42 through 47, you have this quintessential picture of the early church.

[5 : 40] It's the one that the idealist always put in their mission statement or, you know, trumpet. Especially the real, like, small idealists who are aiming for the perfect house church.

You know, you ever been a part of one of those? Maybe some of you have over the years, right? And these are the verses right here, Acts 2, 42 to 47. It says, Verse 44, There's that language again, right?

And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes.

Okay, so the larger gathering and the smaller gathering. They received their food with glad and generous hearts. Praising God and having favor with all the people. So this all togetherness resulted in favor with all the people.

And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. If someone prayed that this morning, that God would add to our number. Well, the context in which God was adding to their number day by day was this all together kind of life that they lived together.

[7 : 04] Okay? And it's important to look at. There was a devotion to these things. There was a, you know, sometimes people balk at the commitment level we ask for in a missional community.

And how often maybe we gather or meet together. And it's interesting when you read the scriptures, it says, day by day, they attended the temple together and breaking bread in their home.

And oftentimes when we balk at the level of commitment that we ask of people, I think we would, there would be a lot more balking if we lived back here in this time.

I mean, they were gathering often. And there was quite a cost to their gathering. I mean, they were giving up everything they had and selling stuff and giving to, they were sharing everything. Okay? We live in a different culture in a different time now. There's so, so much plenty. Something like this isn't required. But nevertheless, this togetherness should be there.

[8 : 03] And when that togetherness was there, there was favor with all the people. When there was favor with all the people, the Lord was adding to their number daily those who were being saved. Later on in Acts chapter 4, you have them gathered together again and they're praying together.

And they pray this prayer, Acts 4 29, now Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness.

While you stretch out your hand to heal and signs and wonders are performed in the name of your holy servant, Jesus. You get this sense of allness when you read the book of Acts. They're all together.

They're all in. Right? And they speak with all boldness. There's favor with all the people. It's this, it's a very, there's a totality there that really spits in the face of our individualistic culture. And our kind of up and down Christianity, really, that's constantly changing. They spoke with all boldness. Well, he said, they're asking to speak with all boldness while you stretch out your hand to heal.

[9 : 05] And signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant, Jesus. When they had frayed, the place in which they were together, gathered together, was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

Now, the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul. And no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own. But they had everything in common. And with great power, the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

And great grace was upon them all. Again, great grace was upon them all. They're all filled with the Spirit. They're all together. You see this, again, all together, all boldness, all filled with the Spirit.

Great grace was upon all of them. There's this constant picture of togetherness. Next chapter, Acts chapter 5, verse 12, it says they were all together in Solomon's portico.

Okay? And this is a regular thing. They would gather in Solomon's portico all together. In Acts chapter 11, verse 23, you have Barnabas exhorting them to all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose.

[10 : 16] And such a great encouragement that Barnabas gives that as we're all together, that we would remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose. So it's one thing to try to be together. It's another thing to be together and to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose.

And sometimes I think it's easy to just aim at the togetherness and lack some of the faithfulness to the steadfast purpose of the Lord. And there's good things that come out of it.

And maybe that's what can actually lull us to sleep is that our togetherness will bear good fruit. But it won't bear the best fruit. It won't bear the ultimate fruit until our togetherness also is combined with faithfulness to the Lord with steadfast purpose.

With steadfast purpose. And that's something I think that we could maybe do a little bit better job of in our missional communities. That I love the level of relationship and fellowship and love that we have for another.

But being more faithful to challenge one another, to encourage one another, to take responsibility with one another for steadfast purpose in our missional communities.

[11 : 26] Of how our life together is to aim towards the lost. To radically reorient ourselves around God's mission to lost people. And to do that together. Not just in the bigger context of the whole church, although that's good and there's going to be things like that.

But in the context of our missional communities saying, hey, God has given these little platoons of people specifically to us. To seek and save those who are lost. And to be faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose in them.

Romans 15:30 continues this similar language. He says, Here they are again, striving together in prayer.

1 Corinthians 12:26, a verse that you're probably familiar with. Talking in the context of body life. Says that if one person suffers, we all suffer together. If one member is honored, we all rejoice together.

Again, this is, we share not only our wins, but we share our losses. When one person suffers, we all suffer. When one person wins, we all win. We all rejoice. And there's a level of togetherness there that, you know, everybody wants to rejoice in when people win.

[12 : 36] But to actually bear with one another and to suffer with someone as if we're suffering as well. There's a new level of togetherness. 2 Corinthians chapter 7. When Paul is laying out how we live open-hearted to one another.

He actually says to them, Make room in your hearts for us. And he says, You're in our hearts to die together and to live together. So he's saying this is life together. This is death and life together in the realm of the heart.

In the realm of the heart. Where you're in our hearts. I'm in your heart. And we're, we're die together and live together. This is high stakes life together.

Okay. Ephesians 2:19-22 paints a similar picture. It says, So then you are no longer strangers and aliens to our fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the

foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. So there you have two kind of together verses. You're being joined together and you're being built together.

[13:50] Okay. So you're being joined together and you're being built together. And God joins us together, but we have to co-labor with him to be built together. All right. We have to work to be co-laborers with Christ, to build those relationships, to build strategic partnership, to be a dwelling place for God by his Spirit.

And that involves a certain level of choreography. It involves a certain level of planning and intentionality and purpose for the execution of God's will together.

Philippians 4.3, Paul says it this way. Okay. I ask you also, true companion, help these women who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers.

Those who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together. Okay. So there he paints that picture of laboring side by side in the gospel together.

And that's where I think as missional communities, we can be a little bit more intentional for fighting for that all togetherness in that. So it's the difference between all church together versus missional community together.

[15:03] I think we have an all church together experience here on multiple levels. Okay. I think we also have an all missional community together experience as well.

But I think our all together missional community experiences could be more homed in, so to speak. More channeled into specific mission to specific people.

Really kind of flowing together, finding, okay, where's the strengths? Where's the weaknesses? How can we partner together? How can we get to know one another in a way where we are, like Paul said, laboring side by side in the gospel together?

I know that there's gospel efforts happening in this church, and I'm really encouraged by them. I'm excited about them. I pray into them. I try to participate in them as much as I can. Okay.

But especially as a new church plant, that has to be where our efforts are at. And just each missional community really focused on being on mission together in the context of a missional community.

[16:02] Not just with an all church together, those who it's easiest with. I think sometimes what happens is the overlap of our missional communities and doing stuff together sometimes happens so often that it takes away the uniqueness and the benefit of the small platoon-like nature of our individual missional communities.

Do you understand what I'm saying with that? I think that there needs to be a strategic partnership and effort to do that in the missional communities, and then that will spill over into sometimes doing that together naturally with the greater church, especially as it's small.

As it gets bigger, that will be less and less practical, right? Right now it's very practical because it's a small group of people. But I think that we have to really direct our attention in each of those missional communities in such a way where we're saying, okay, how can we do this at the micro level?

How can we do that with the people that we call a missional community? Because I think what can end up happening is really the whole church can become our missional community, and then the MCs really just become our community or like a community gathering where those are the places where we do meals together and we hang out and do something.

But the mission is really just kind of with the people that I enjoy doing that with in the broader context of Christ Church and not really homing in together with those people in our missional community to say, hey, how can we specifically get on mission together?

[17:39] And some of that too just really revolves around the difference between helping versus ownership. But you've probably heard me say this before, but I'm going to use the same picture to help us think about it again.

It's like when you think of someone moving from one house to another, or if you think of someone has a project that they're doing on their house, right? Typically what happens is the person who owns the house says, hey, we're doing a move this day.

Got to move next week or a couple weeks here for Jennings coming up, right? And you got something like that. It's like Jennings might say, hey, we got to move this day, right? And then people say, okay, can be there.

And then once that happens, you go to the move. And as the move goes on, depending on how many people you got there, what ends up happening is some people start to just start to dip, right? Some people have to leave early and that's fine, right? And then what you're left with is less and less people. And what could happen, this doesn't happen that much in our context, but it does very often for other people.

[18 : 39] And you've probably experienced this at some point in life. What ends up happening is as people leave, it's not all finished. And who's left? The owners, right? Because they can't go anywhere.

It's like, you're kind of like, okay, I'd like to leave now too. Wait, this is my house. I have to finish this. I wish I had something else I could do right now, but I have to do this.

It's the same thing with a work project, right? It's like, all right, guys, everybody come for this work project. And then you work on it. And then slowly throughout the night or throughout the Saturday, people start leaving throughout the day.

And so the only ones left is the owner. And if it's not done yet, you still are there because you have to finish it because you're the owner. Now, we can all relate to that in one sense, but hopefully some of you, if not all of you, can relate to the other sense in that everybody else, have you ever done a move or a work project where all the people helping you or a bunch of people or some of the people end up acting like owners?

You know what I'm saying? Where they say, because the owner says, I'm going to be at this move until it's done. Kind of have to, right? Or the person whose house is for the work project, they say, I'm going to be on this work project for how long?

[19 : 56] Until it's done. Where someone else can be like, I got to go at three. Got to go at 11. Whatever, you know? The owner says, I'm here till the end. And that's the difference between a helper and an owner, right?

We all love helpers. Helpers are great. If you don't have helpers, you're probably not getting moved and you're probably not going to finish that project. But you know what's even better than helpers? Owners.

People who act like owners. How awesome is it when you do a move and someone's like, you know, when you got to go? When it's done. Well, that's my job as the owner.

No, that's my job too because I'm your friend. Nice. Because I'm your brother. I'm your sister. It's like, but it's late. I know, but you don't have the bed. The beds haven't been made yet. We're going to stay and get these beds made.

Well, don't you have to go? No, we have to get this done. You got to go to sleep tonight. So I'm going to stay till those beds are made. How much does that mean to you when you have those kind of people saying that?

[20 : 53] Have you ever had that before? You're dead tired. You've moved. Everybody hates moving. And then you get to the end of it. And someone's like, I'm not leaving until this is done. And it's just like, oh, I love you.

I really love you today. You know, this is awesome. It's the same thing with a work project. You've been on that work project. I've certainly been on those work projects where I'm just like, this took longer than I thought.

I never saw it coming. My wife never saw it coming. She never sees these projects taking longer than that. I think they're going to. It's amazing. She has no foresight in this. She never tells me. It's like, it's incredible.

That's not true. She always tells me it's going to take longer, but I never believe her. And then it takes really long. And then you're just like, oh my gosh, I'm so tired. And, but it's not done yet. And then you got that friend, you got that worker who stays with you and says, hey, let's finish this. I'm here to the end. Yeah. It took, this is taking a lot longer than we thought it was going to. It's a lot later.

[21 : 53] You know, I got to get up early in the morning a while, but we're going to finish this. I'm going to, I'm not going to let you do it alone. Right? Those are that people who act like owners. That's what we call partners.

That is a partner. Partner is a part owner. That's where that word even comes from. When we talk about partnership with the church, we're talking about the kind of people who say, I don't just attend your missional community gathering.

I want to be a part owner. Like I'm going to stay to the end. I'm going to make sure everything's cleaned up. I'm not just going to wait for you to tell us how we're going to be on mission together in our missional community. I'm a part owner.

So I'm not just going to let you figure that out. I'm going to figure that out too. I'm going to take responsibility too. I'm not just waiting for you to, for that mission to just come trickling down the, the, the pike for me here.

It's like, no, I'm, I'm, I'm actively involved with the ownership of this missional community as well. I'm not going to just sit and give all my complaints about what I want better. I'm going to be an owner and say, well, it's my missional community too.

[22 : 54] So I'm on it. I'm with you. Like let's take responsibility for this together. I'm not going to be someone who, uh, only shows up with when it's convenient while all the rest of the people in the missional community show up when it's inconvenient.

That's not ownership. That's not partnership. A partner says, no, I'm going to, um, I'm doing this to the end. I'm doing it with the same level of buy-in as you.

An owner has the same level of buy-in and we have to do that in our missional communities. And when that's not there, what does it create? Creates distance. Creates lack of, uh, connectiveness. Creates a lack of affection even. You know how the opposite creates affection? Like when someone stays to the end, you just like want to be affectionate towards them. Maybe you've never been affectionate for them.

Maybe you hugged them for the first time because they stayed with you to the end. It's like, why are you so affectionate? Because this is so meaningful to me that you would stay to the end. You know what I'm saying? And so that kind of thing needs to happen in our missional community.

[23 : 59] And I know it does to a certain degree, and that's the strength. But any place where it's not, or any place where we've subtly said, well, I'm just going to be a helper. And this is the temptation throughout all church life.

Anybody who's been a Christian for a long time knows that this is the in and out dance of church life. There's owners and there's helpers. And sometimes we bounce back and forth between the two, right?

Sometimes we're not as much part owners as we should be, even though we have the name of partner. And we start to just become helpers. And what that does is all the people who are owners start to feel overwhelmed and burdened and feel, and maybe even a little resentful at the people who aren't.

Because they're thinking, why am I carrying so much weight and you're not carrying your weight? Why am I invested and you get to just check out? Why do I have to come up with everything and be intentional with everything and you don't?

Why do I always have to be on time but you can be late? Why do I always have to, you know, go down the list? Do you understand what I'm saying? So really it comes down to never turning off mission and intentionality.

[25 : 04] Never turning it off. A helper turns that off when it's convenient. An owner says, no, we are a missional community. So the level of mission and intentionality with each other and with the mission always has to be there.

And I'm going to do my part to make sure that it's there. To make sure it stays there. And if you're wondering, what are we talking about with partnership? This is what we're talking about with partnership. A partner is someone who's never turning off mission and intentionality.

They're keeping that switch on. And that's the difference. A helper, they turn it off sometimes. Just saying, yeah, you know, I don't really feel like it.

An owner says, I don't feel like it, but I'm the owner, so I have to. You know, that's the difference between home ownership and renting, right? I don't feel like it. I'll call the landlord. The owner's like, I don't feel like it.

I am the landlord. You know, like I'm the lord of this land. I got to do something here. That's the difference. It's the same thing with the church. But sometimes we think we can turn it off instead of saying, no, this is my church.

[26 : 06] This is my church. And I need to do my part with responsibility before the Lord and faithfulness before the Lord to see it happen. Which means, in real practicality, that we need to limit our options.

Okay? We have to limit our options. Keeping your options open is not partnership. Keeping your options open is not partnership. And we live in an age right now where the norm of life is keeping your options open.

Like, never fully committing, always leaving open this kind of thing where I can maybe get out of it or I could do something better or maybe I won't feel as good or into it then and I can get out of it. And the phrase, sorry, I have a prior commitment, is like a foreign concept. Like, we need a translator. Wait, is that English you're speaking? Sorry, I have a prior commitment? I don't even know what that means.

A prior commitment? You got to keep your options open. You can't do that. Right? But that should be something we should say often to people and not be embarrassed about or not even, or feel bad about.

[27 : 10] Let me ask you, do you have a hard time saying sometimes when someone asks you to do something and you have a prior commitment or you have a prior church commitment? Are you able to say confidently, sorry, I have a prior commitment?

I can't do that. I can't plan that event. I can't go to that thing. I can't go on this particular trip at that point in time because I have this prior commitment or I can't do this that night because I have a prior commitment or whatever it means.

Like, to say, I can't do that because I have a prior commitment. People don't want to say that nowadays. People don't want to limit their options. Actually, the Latin word that we get the word decide from literally means to cut off.

Literally means to cut off. So a decision is killing off other options to firmly establish a single course of action. That's what decision means. If you make a decision to be a partner in this church, that means you have cut off certain other options.

If you've made a decision to be a part of a missional community, that means you've made a decision to cut off other options. It means you're limited in how much you can give yourself to other relationships, maybe even other relationships in this church, maybe other relationships outside of this church.

[28 : 30] To decide to do something is to decide not to do something else. It's to cut off certain other options. A decision used to mean that. Nowadays, we make decisions flippantly and the Bible says not to do this.

But the Bible says to keep our word even when it hurts. This is the one in Psalm 15 who ascends the hill of the Lord, who keeps their word even when it hurts. It's someone who decides and cuts things off and says, my decision to be in a mission of the community with these people is my decision to hunker down with these group of people and to figure out how to be a community and how to be on mission.

It's figured out how to do family, how to be on mission, and to do it together. Come hell or high water, I'm going to do it. I made a decision. That's what Christians do. That means I'm cutting off these other options.

That means I'm radically reorientating my life around God and his mission. And I'm going to do it with these particular people. That means that's going to involve sacrifice.

If you're trying to do that without sacrifice, think again. It ain't going to happen. There's no way. You're going to do that without discomfort? Think again. There's no way that's going to happen. You will be pressed on your decisions.

[29 : 40] And decisions means cutting things off. There's going to be times that things that you cut off, you're going to be reaching back again. You're going to be trying to glue back together. It's like, I want that back. I want that back in my life.

It's like, no, you made a decision. You limited your options. That's a good thing. That's what God requires. That's what healthy church requires. That's what healthy mission requires.

That's what healthy mission requires. And that's what we need to do. So lastly, I think a good three-fold test for choreographed partnership in missional communities is the mission of our church. It's seeking first the kingdom of God and all of life together. Let's look at these three things kind of practically as a three-fold test for how we're choreographing together in partnership in our MCs.

So the first one is, think about the people in your MC. Think about those people that you're committed to and say, number one, are we seeking first the kingdom of God together? Do we have that shared mission together?

[30 : 43] Jesus taught that we should seek the kingdom first and that our hearts follow what we treasure. When we treasure and seek first the kingdom, our hearts end up in the same place and we share the same priorities.

If you're trying to really go to the same direction with a group of people and either there's not a value for the kingdom of God, meaning there's secret sin, there's not a fear of the Lord, there's not an obedience to Jesus in the big things and the little things, there's no way that's going to happen. You say, man, I'm having a hard time relating to these first people. Ask this question first. Are the people you're having a hard time relating with or getting on mission with, are they seeking first the kingdom of God? And again, seeking the kingdom is not enough.

It has to be sought first. You got some people you're trying to seek the kingdom with and then other people trying to seek the kingdom and some are seeking first. Some are seeking the kingdom, maybe second, third, fourth.

There's no fellowship here. That is a house divided. You might say, oh, I can't relate to them. It just feels like our relationship isn't showing. Yeah, if this isn't here, it's dead on arrival. It's never going to happen.

[31 : 47] That's why Matthew 6, 33 says, seek first the kingdom of God. You can't seek it second. You can't seek it third. You can't seek it fourth. You have to seek it together first. Together first.

And if that's not there, if it's not being sought at all, there's secret sin and not a fear of the Lord. But then if it's not sought first, this is broken, the fellowship. It's just, it's not the way it's supposed to be. The togetherness, the all togetherness is there. If you're going to fight for all togetherness in a missional community, in the church, we have to seek the kingdom first. And if you think we're going to do that without that, there's just no way.

You've got to hit that. So that means sometimes we have to have some conversations. Just like, hey, are you walking in repentance in this particular area? Or maybe there's that one thing, which is often what happened when Jesus would approach people, that one thing that's keeping people from seeking first a kingdom that people don't want to let go of.

Those are the conversations that need to be had. You're not letting go of this. And sometimes maybe you need a couple people to rally around and say, hey, we're seeing that this is not being sought first in your life.

[32 : 55] We're calling to you repentance. And when repentance happens, boom, there's that gelling of the seeking first of the kingdom we've got together. That's that first test. If that's not happening, we're not going to have that kingdom mobilization together.

Secondly, it's got to be in all of life. The Bible says to always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord. 1 Corinthians 15, 58. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord.

When we share a vision for kingdom priorities being fleshed out in all of life, rather than just parts of life, it multiplies our opportunities for ministry by removing the limitations of when and where we can do the Lord's work and takes the pressure off the meetings being our main source of life and church experience.

And this is often the case in a missional community. People feel like the only sense of connectiveness we have is on a Wednesday night. If that's the case, good luck.

You think you're going to gel with a group of people on mission and in a sense of spiritual family together if your only connection is one night a week? Ain't going to happen. Didn't happen in the New Testament.

[34 : 05] It ain't happening now. It won't. It won't happen. It doesn't work that way. There has to be an always of giving ourselves fully to the work of the Lord. There has to be an openness.

If you're saying, well, someone has their heart open, someone has their home open, someone has their schedule open, but then someone else you're trying to partner with, their schedule isn't really that open.

Their heart is kind of open, but not really. Like you don't really get, it's like I've been with this person for a while now and I just never get to know them. Why? Are they voluntarily opening up their heart? Are you seeking to unlock their heart?

And it's a two-way street. That's why Paul said, I've opened wide my heart to you, but you've restricted yours from me. Open wide your heart also as a fair exchange. So if that isn't happening, if you have someone in your missional community, you're just like, this open hearted thing isn't happening, it has to be confronted.

And if you're someone who doesn't voluntarily open your heart, you're part of the problem. You've got to open up your heart, not just when people ask you. You've got to let people in. If you don't let people in, then people won't know you.

[35 : 07] If people don't know you, then there's no fellowship. And this grates against some of us, especially some of us who are older sometimes, because that wasn't the way things were, but it's the way that things need to be, because it's biblical.

And it's 1 Corinthians 6 and 7, if you don't believe me, look it up yourself. This is what Paul's appealing for. But if we're trying to do that, it's like, well, so-and-so's schedule's not open. It's like, we can't even get time together other than a Wednesday night.

Well, yeah. And that puts a lot of undue pressure on Wednesday nights to be something that they can never be. And that is life together. A Wednesday night is not life together.

It's a necessary component of it. It's like a regular gathering is really helpful. But if that's your sole source of life together, it ain't never going to happen. Not possible.

And if your schedule is so taken with other people outside of your mission community that you have no time for the people in the missional community, guess what else isn't going to happen? You're not going to get that life together with those people.

[36 : 09] And you're going to have to say no to things. Sometimes you're going to have to say no to things you want to do. Sometimes you're going to have to say no even to things that are good things, like family stuff, like work stuff, like fun stuff.

We might have to do that sometimes. That's a test. And if that test, if we fail that test, we got to be intentional about that. If we're not seeking the kingdom first, and we're not, it's not an all-life thing. Even when people's hearts, you might say, well, certain people's homes are open, but other people's homes are not open. It's just like, you start to feel like, hey, are we in this together? Like I've been in so-and-so's home.

I've never been in so-and-so's home. Or when I get there, it's kind of cold, or it feels like it's an inconvenience. When there's a warmth, hospitable environment in each other's homes, again, boom, gelling, open homes, open hearts, open schedules, seeking the kingdom first, this stuff's coming together.

Right? And if you pass those two tests, then there's the third test, the test of togetherness and shared responsibility. As we just looked at the New Testament, you see it's littered with the language of togetherness.

[37 : 20] And when we take ownership and responsibility for kingdom priorities being fleshed out in all of life, but specifically in a way that insists on doing things together rather than on our own, specific at the missional community level, not just as a whole church, in a very intentional manner, it maximizes our impact, it increases our joy, and lightens our load because we're carrying it together.

There has to be a commitment to say, hey, we're going to do this together. And that includes mission. Okay? If our missional communities aren't sharing mission together, well, we're missing something pretty big.

Right? We're missing something pretty big. We've got to mobilize together. We've got to figure it out. You might say, I don't know what to do. All right. Figure it out. I'm just not convinced that God doesn't want to give you something to do, even if it's some cold call evangelism together somewhere.

Like, do it somewhere. Like, this is what we do. This is what Christians do. You say, I don't want to do cold call evangelism. Well, do you want to be a Christian? Like, you got to do that sometimes. Or, I don't want to do evangelism. I don't want to, like, Christians evangelize. This is what we have to do. We got to do that together. That's what we do. And so, if there's not this togetherness of just like, okay, this group of people, this missional community, I'm going to do mission together.

[38 : 44] I'm going to do family together. We're going to do discipleship, serving together. We're going to do it together. There's going to be intentionality. And where there's not this natural gelling together and this cohesion, we're going to intentionally choreograph it together by working through stuff.

And we're going to make it happen. We're going to do what it takes. And I'm going to say no to other things so I can make it happen. And if that's not there, you might have to have a conversation like, hey, listen, I don't feel together with you on this aspect of it.

We're not doing mission together. Like, is there something that I could do better? Is there some reason that you're feeling not together with me because I'm limiting it? Like, put the responsibility on yourself.

Say, how can I help with this? What am I doing? But it's got to happen in all three of those areas. If we pass that threefold test, if we're seeking first the kingdom, we're doing it in all life and we're doing it together, there's going to be a depth there.

There's going to be a closest there. And there's going to be fruit that comes out of that for sure. I guarantee it. I guarantee it. Okay? If any of these three break down or if we fail the test in any of these three areas, then we're left by default with whatever natural chemistry we do or don't have with one another.

[39 : 59] Right? And in some cases, that's fine because there's natural chemistry there. But in most cases, it's not because it takes work. We need to fight for the all together in our MCs.

If missional community is truly not just chemistry, but in reality, choreography, then we must fight to be intentional, creatively planning movement and action in coordinated execution.

You see what I'm saying? Again, that's important. So let's do that. Let's be, let's ask those questions. I would challenge you to ask those questions in your missional community.

Start with yourself. Start with yourself and then ask the questions of our missional community. Say, hey, are these, are we passing these three tests so that we can really fight for the all togetherness? And when that's happening, when we're all together, we'll see favor with all people and the Lord will add to our number. I really believe it. This is what you saw in the book of Acts.

[40 : 58] I've seen this in other churches. It happens. It's effective. It's powerful. People begin to look at us and they say, what is the deal with you? You're, there's something, you're an enigma.

You don't make sense. The way you do life together, the way you do family together, the way you suffer together, the way you rejoice together, what is about you? What is the reason for the hope that you have?

Oh, I'm glad that you asked. Glad that you asked. Let me tell you. And then you tell them. Amen? Let's stand.