

Question & Answer on Community

by Art Katz

Art Katz discusses the organic nature of community, emphasizing the importance of prayer, shared life, and the challenges that arise in deep relationships.

Duration: 46:21

Scripture: Acts 2:44

Topics: "Christian Community"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the changes that have occurred in their community over the past twelve years. They discuss how the community has transitioned from a shared common life to a more individualistic mode of living. The speaker emphasizes the importance of community and the need for a refuge where people can come together and support one another. They also mention the concept of remaining in the conditions and situations that one is called to, and the importance of working through challenges and submitting to one another.

Transcript

...social engineering. A classic remark out of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book, *Life Together*, which I commend to you and I have with me, borrowed from their bookshelf, is that any man who comes with the design for community brings the seeds of destruction with him. It has got to be the organic work of God in his time and in his way, and appropriate to the saints and the location and time where it's been formed.

So we want to avoid making something, engineering something. Once we began in northern Minnesota 25 years ago, not knowing how to proceed, the Lord provided the property, then I came with the family, then the Lord added this one and that, and the mode of life that was established was a prayer meeting at the commencement of each weekday. And those two-hour sessions became foundation to our whole life.

The direction came out of communion, out of our time together, and then a kind of an evolving. So it was for us a messy business. It was not a clean kind of thing that might have been formed by man, that would have been efficient, but would have been destructive, but more an organic.

Organic thing is always messy, like birth. And so we had, this is our 25th anniversary, praise God. So you begin by beginning with the kindred souls the Lord has joined, and out of prayer and fellowship and fasting and seeking the Lord, the direction began unfolding.

How's that for point of commencement? Well, you had the property first. Yeah, the Lord called me to the property, but the very first words were dominion, end-time teaching center, community, refuge. That's the exact words, the exact order of the words.

So I'm very fond of saying there's no refuge without community. Only a community can bear the stress and the impact of Jews coming in the condition that we anticipate. So the Lord gave the word, but not the reality.

And then souls began to come. Not the ones you would have chosen as the likeliest candidates, but those whom the Lord assembled and fitted. This may be kind of inappropriate, but can you define, as the Lord would give you, an understanding of the word community? Yeah, one mistake that I find in making is that community is the intensification of all of life.

Maybe the difference between fellowship and community, fellowship has still a casual air about it. It's the once a week gathering of saints for the purpose of fellowship or Bible study or whatever. Community is the intensification of that thing on a daily basis, a more frequent basis, and a more of a shared basis where the issues are more than just an interest in Bible study, but a reality of something that's being shared together.

Good. I think that its form will be appropriate to the situation, the souls, the time. It's like all I have is our experience, but it's not the definitive, the norm for all.

We are on a farm. Other communities have other locations. In fact, I think the great task for people living in a city is how to meet with the frequency that we have had as an advantage being together on the same property.

Now, the Jews in Brooklyn, a Hasidic, ultra-Orthodox community there has been established by Jews leaving their Long Island and other suburban homes and properties to move into a black ghetto in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, because they cannot ride or drive to their synagogues on the Shabbat. They have to walk. So they had to find a location where they could be housed in proximity to the central building, which is the synagogue.

And the ideal location was a black ghetto where the rents were cheap or the buildings were cheap. So they forfeited a more luxurious urban lifestyle, willing for the sacrifice, in order to move into a congested inner city situation where they could buy up the brownstone houses and then walk to the central synagogue. Today, it's outstanding to be there on a Friday, say at 5 p.m., and watch them beginning to stream out of their houses and move toward the ceremonial bath, what is it called, the mikvah.

I don't know what a mikvah is. And into the synagogue in their black clothing with their children is a site that would move any Christian to envy. They were willing for the sacrifice to obtain proximity to one another and the central institution called the synagogue.

And that could be a pattern for us. Frequency of relationship and intensity of relationship is at the heart of whatever community it is. Now in terms of enmeshment, in terms of shared lives and blending of everything, including commitment outside the community, these are some issues that have been brought up.

Can you comment on any of those? There are different models. Our model for the first ten years was a shared common purse. We had all things common.

So whatever income came in had to provide for the needs of all the families and individuals that were there. And it was a struggle. That's why we lived beneath the poverty level for the first ten years.

The income was never adequate. And there was always a tension on what little income we had would indeed be spent. Would it go for a trip to East Europe, for example, where the doors had opened at a time when they could again close? Should we use the money for that, the thousands of dollars needed for transportation when you're going to a place where they're not going to take offerings? Or should the money go for insulation or for housing in this cold location where we were? Or food? We had pregnant women.

We had very vital immediate needs. So there was always a tension of how it was to be spent, which brought up the whole issue of government. We were three elders.

I was the first and another brother, then we added a third. And it wasn't democracy where you take a vote. It was democracy in the sense that every issue was discussed with the community because their lives were vitally affected.

But in the end, the elders had to make the decision. If we made a decision contrary to the self-interest or the immediate practical interest of others, you would hear it. And then they would raise the question, well, how responsible were those making the decision? And were they really qualified? How about arts marriage? How about this? How about that? So really what it did was to lift the sewer cap and bring up from the surface deep-seated rebellion, self-will, opposition to authority itself.

We had a lot of Jesus freaks. This was the early 1970s. So the conditions of our life revealed the truth of our life.

And there's a lot of very painful struggle in resolving issues of that kind. One of the principles that we operated on was that the elders themselves had to agree. There had to be a unanimity among the elders.

It wasn't two out of three. It was three out of three. And that made it put the premium on God to make clear his will with three men of totally different personalities, backgrounds, and so on.

And even then, there was often vexing conflict or one would be dragging his feet. He couldn't see the point or the necessity or whatever. I mean, we had great struggles, but out of it came remarkable things.

So just to give you a quickie, it was over the issue of an overseas trip to Eastern Europe. Two of the elders, myself and another brother, were going to go, and the third was the youngest of the three elders. He was to remain.

And he's the one who had a check in his spirit that this was not of God. I had complete confidence it was God. And I'm the senior citizen, the senior member with the greatest experience in history, and I had a complete witness, yes, this is it and this is the time.

And the other brother with me equally, but the youngest, Shelly, no, he had a check in his spirit. Well, we met again and prayed. No, he still had a check.

Met again and again and prayed. We were getting close to the deadline of put up or shut up. And one final last time, the issues were, these are life and death and eternal issues.

You don't make a trip of that kind in the timing of God. So how is it that we could be divided and not have the same witness? And yet this third brother was absolutely persuaded that he had a check in his spirit. He couldn't explain it.

And what are you going to do? And we were agreed on the principle of unanimity. We had one final meeting. No, he still had a check in his spirit.

We talked about it. We prayed about it. We examined it from this angle, from that.

No, still a check. The meeting broke up. I went to the phone to send a telegram to the people that were not going to come.

And while I'm fiddling around trying to find the phone connections, Shelly, who had left, it was really like 50 yards down the road, came back. His face was as white as a sheet. He said, the Lord spoke to me that that check was not his check in my spirit, but my own human fear and insecurity that I would not be able to govern and oversee the community in your absence.

It was not the check of the spirit. It was my own human fear. The Lord told me.

So you have radical apprehensions and revelations of God because the issues are so very real that never come up in our normative church experience. You're in something together and you're trusting together and the Lord has radically to demonstrate something. So for Shelly, it was a confrontation with God.

Then we could pray with him. Then we could bolster him. Then we could encourage his heart.

And we did make the trip. Shelly survived being the lone elder in our absence. So things like that were happening frequently.

So intensification. So more takes place in a month of that kind of daily living reality than 10 years of Sunday attendance. If in fact Sunday attendance will ever attain to that kind of reality.

I think it's for that reason that the Lord promotes it. And I believe that is God's definitive intention. That church always in his intention was the community.

The fact that it's for us now an option as an alternative of one mode or another is really more a revelation of the world and the alternatives that we think available to us. But I think from the beginning, the people of God were in this kind of intensity of relationship. They went from house to house daily breaking bread.

So the social pattern of that time was not great megalopolises where you had to travel 15-20 miles across the distance to get to a place of meeting. Evidently they were small. Though they were cities, you could walk and be in that proximity going from house to house daily.

Now we have just recently, and we're presently now in Ben Israel reviewing our entire situation. We are not now on the pattern of a shared common life. I don't want to take all the time to give you our entire history.

After 10 years of this shared common life, and we were very poor, at the time when the church was enjoying its prosperity message, the Lord brought the entire thing down to death. It was not a dissolution or an implosion from internal failure. Actually the Lord ended us at a time when we were coming through and were on the better side.

But it was clear that he was calling for an end. And he had us vacate the entire property. The one elder who did not see that or see the necessity for it, the Lord told him, if you'll not go I'll kill you.

He left. That's how important it was to God that the entire thing be brought to death. Not at the point of its failure, at the point of its success.

Something like what will be happening to Israel. And for three years the property was completely abandoned. We were open to vandals, to the deterioration of weather.

We lost some buildings that we've never regained. But essentially the Lord preserved it. We didn't know we'd be away three years.

Three years for 30. He didn't say how long, but the fact of the matter is it worked out to a three year thing. That's when he enrolled me in a Lutheran seminary, which was a death for me.

And that's when he began to open the mystery of Israel. Of the kinds of things that I'm now sharing came out of a season of death. There are reasons for that.

Now we're back again for a dozen years since that three year thing. Not the same people. But this is a change of this one, that one, and a change in the whole moral of life.

It's as if we are now on a resurrection side, where instead of a shared common life, every family and individual is responsible for his own sustenance. It's not the ministry's baby. Because what happened is that we became a bent Israel welfare society.

I saw this socialistic thing where that ministry was paying and sustaining the life of the people. So of course they have to pray when art goes out on a trip or this takes place. That's where their bread is buttered.

Now people who are living with us voluntarily, as families choosing to live voluntarily in relationship to each other around a central figure and call of the prophetic kind, are free to give themselves an identification and prayer. And I much prefer that. Inga was always vexed in the first ten years because her husband was the principal breadwinner, so to speak.

What income we obtained was from my ministry. And yet it was being distributed among many, which meant that her kids were not getting what she thought they ought to get. And Inga loves to be a lavish hostess.

Well, we were so reduced that the only thing that we could feed people, and even that was a premium, was a hamburger. Well, there are only so many things you could do with that. What I found out later was that Inga opened up a secret account at the supermarket to supplement.

And when she left, I found out we had a \$1,500 bill that had to be paid. But she didn't want anything. So her memory was painful.

People would borrow her pots and pans. They would come back dented and not come back at all. Inga threatened never to return.

That's how painful. My kids have threatened never to return. There's trauma, there's issues, there's crises that if we had lived privately would never have emerged.

But those kids were the recipient of something that though they cannot identify, it will come back to them to serve them in good stead. And as for myself, it was a great saving grace. I mean literally a saving grace from deception, from falling away, from the kinds of things to which men in public ministry, particularly prophetic men, are most susceptible.

A community is a great provision to sustain, to pray, to correct. That's why I warned other men to quote the good prophets. If you're not false, you'll become it, unless you're in an associative relationship where you can receive the correction of others.

And you're not such an exalted personality that they don't dare approach you, or that you're not the boss who's paying their salaries, excuse me. But now so is we have families living voluntarily. The only one who receives income directly from the ministry is Simon, and that's only a part-time thing.

He works also in the local supermarket because he's the bookkeeper that attends to the finance, the secretary of work, and things of that kind. So I'm enjoying this thing. Do you think it's possible, if we are humble and teachable, that we could sidestep a lot of the problems that you went through? Probably.

And you could receive the benefit of the agony of things to which we passed, that we could, just like the scriptures, we can learn vicariously and receive wisdom, and we can expend something of our experience. But you're not going to be saved from the kinds of things to which community itself was calculated, namely to flush and to bring to the surface the depth of our inward condition, unknown even to us, that is brought to crisis by the intensity of relationship with one another. It becomes abrasive.

For example, communion that we had today. When I came to community, I had had a gutful of assemblies of God-type communions with a plastic cup. I thought, enough of this.

But as we went on, I felt, and we all felt, a necessity for communion, because after two weeks we ran out of being nice guys. I could be a nice guy for two weeks, but after that, the tension that came even from the best of saints, it's inadvertent, it's not intended, it's there. We knew we had to draw on something more than our humanity, and it had to do something with what comes to us through communion.

We came to a place where we were taking daily communion as a community in our meetings. Of course, we were too poor for wine and even for grape juice, and we used water. So it shows you the demand.

But that's the purpose of it. That's why I say that a month of community is the equivalent of ten years of a conventional church. And so you're not going to be safe from it.

God's intention through it is crisis, is revelation. And the most painful are the kinds that come about oneself. It's painful to see the failure of others, but the most painful is your own.

And it never would have been revealed, except you had been in that kind of relationship. So I intuited that when God called this community that I was going to have to eat this, taste this death. No humiliation.

And it has come to pass with a bang, especially with Inger. We never thought, I never got that call. I never heard that God was saying, you know.

So my own wife was resistant to the whole enterprise, and I'm the founder. And my wife was not one to conceal her view. She was shot from the rooftops.

So all of these tensions. Well, Mike and I and ourselves, we've been in a community setting, but the Lord laid it low. He had to deal with us.

But I think for us, I don't think there's really any problem, except that we did look at a property just recently. We kind of pushed that ourselves. And we did that.

And we do think we should be meeting every week to seek the Lord's direction. But should we keep looking for property? Or is everybody... Well, as you're meeting, you know, the Lord can click on something and say, so you spotted it. Well, the rest go out with you.

Well, we do. Go on it. Yeah.

I've received a number of witnesses for others just being invited to walk on their property. So the Lord can often communicate that, and you'll just have a consensus. We have stood hand in hand in a property outside of Lausanne, in Neuchâtel, in French-speaking Switzerland.

It was a city on a hill. It had been a Mennonite... It had never been a Mennonite town. Town what? Town Zinzendorf.

What do they call it? Oh, Marrakech. Huh? Marrakech. Marrakech.

It had been a Moravian community. Now it had become a posh private girls' school. And that the social situation had changed.

That kind of school is no longer as popular as it once was. It was up for sale. And they wanted me to see it, knowing that I come from a situational community.

We came on the property and walked it over. I was greatly impressed. And then we took hands and prayed.

And as we prayed on the property, hand in hand, the Lord made something very clear. And that this was his intention. And they said, Art, you need to go into the office of the director of the property and let him know that God has an intention with this property.

It's up for sale. They can sell it to anyone. I said, what? Really? An American? You know the way the French will dismiss us? And some guy coming in with some fanciful idea that God has an intention? Art, OK, I'm not going to build a door open for you.

And I come in with two or three of his people. And on the table, on the man's desk, is Ben Israel and reality in French. He had just finished reading it with his wife.

Here comes the author. And so that I could say the things I did with credibility. And he went right to the point.

He said, let me put you in touch with the Moravian pastor who's the head of the committee for the sale of the property. And we set up an appointment and I met with him and shared with him the divine intention. And something was set in motion.

So God will confirm. So God, don't spurn the property, but wait and seek the witness of those with whom you're joined above God's selection of it. I didn't finish saying that.

Now that we're in a situation, God is adding some new families to us. We're reviewing Chapa. Maybe we need to go back to a shared common life.

Robert, who just came to us, he said, I went to the supermarket and worked for minimum wages. I came to give my life to Ben Israel. I want to be on the property, but then how's he going to support it? Should we think again of going back to that old mode? We had a recent Bible study.

We went back to the book of Acts. And we began to explore every single statement of the inception of the apostolic church from its beginning. No one thought that the thing which he had was his own.

They had all things common. They went from house to house. We went right into that.

And we realized that if you look at the scriptures intensively, it is not a common purse. That's a misconception. No man thought that the thing which he had was his own.

That is to say, he still had it, but his thought about it had radically been altered. They still possessed personally and privately, but they did not possess their possessions as they had only been possessed by them before they received the kingdom spirit of God that affected their whole attitude toward property and relationship. Now what they had was available to others.

So there was not one among them that had need, but those who had lands and properties stole them and laid the proceeds at the feet of the apostles who were distributing them. So it shows a recognition of authority, a confidence in the apostles who will not stuff their own pockets by the proceeds that had come. They could have formed a committee to make distribution.

No, the apostles made it. And that they could with confidence give them the proceeds of their sales. But not everybody had those properties.

So those who had them sold. And so we have the example of Ananias and Sapphira. They didn't sell everything.

They sold a portion of what they had that was maybe something in reserve for a rainy day for the future. But remember that from the beginning this was an eschatologically minded community. Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost has come out from among this untoward generation.

Call upon the name of the Lord and be saved. For these signs that are coming are in keeping with the prophecy of Joel. They'll speak with other tongues and then the moon will be darkened and they're expecting judgment and they're coming over wood.

And so you can with that attitude not hold something for the rainy day for the future. The end of the age was at hand. Which is very instructive for us because we are closer to that truth than they were.

We need to be cautious. So to get back to the point. And this is what we're talking about.

And yet they were of one mind and one soul and one heart. They were in agreement. And so when we had a Bible study it was just terrific.

We finally realized that the issue was not the economic arrangement or the particular structure but being of one mind and one heart and one soul. And how do you come to that? That's what needs to be sought. And in fact we realized we are coming to that.

One of the evidences is that the gifts of the Spirit are beginning to function in our community. For the first time in years Robert's wife gave an utterance in tongues at one of our Bible studies Sunday service. The first time she'd ever done it.

Didn't know how to do it and she gave the interpretation. And then that next Sunday Pearl, the black lady from Mobile, Alabama gave two prophecies in one Sunday service. Because I brought a radical word.

And then the Lord confirmed it with a prophecy that came from her. This is my word. I'm not.

And so what is happening is that there's an atmosphere that is convivial to the Holy Spirit that he's now beginning to express himself in a very precious way. We're beginning to enjoy a fruit that has taken 25 years to attain. We don't know.

I don't say it's going to take you 25 years. A proper attitude of the teachable spirit. An attitude of agreement.

And when we came out of that Bible study Reggie, one of the other elders, said to me he went like this. And he said, you know, at any other time earlier this would have been loaded. The tensions would have been so thick you would have cut it with a knife.

You didn't dare express yourself for fear of getting shot down. But there wasn't a moment like that in the whole evening long conversation. It was sweet.

So what we saw was we are already coming to a place of agreement of a kind where we can discuss questions like that without becoming reactive or vehement. In terms of agreement and unity maybe you can comment on this. With some of us in other churches that's still coming together as if we are the church here and then also talking about community what do we have to let go of in terms of allegiances or can you be in another church study committed to another church and be doing this? OK, great question.

This is your church. Church is where you take communion. Why? It's not because you have bread and wine available.

It's because you have a quality of relationship that's authentic. Whereas had you taken it in your other so-called church it would have been an impersonal thing that would have mediated nothing. This is where you take communion.

This is where God breaks the Word. This is where He opens. This is where God deals.

This is where you receive correction. This is where you are prayed for. When you really need prayer, this is where you go.

What is the other place then? If it exists at all, it's more likely to be your place of mission. Your place of witness for some historic or other reasons. But this is your church in the sense of the true communion with the saints.

This is your vital life center. And because you have this, then you can go there without loss. But this is your allegiance, your loyalty, and your submission.

This is where you're directed. Where if you feel you're receiving something from the Lord, you want it confirmed. You don't say, well, I think the Lord's telling me to move.

Well, has He told the others? For example, in Denmark, I'll always remember this, I came to a Sunday service where they were sending one of the elders. He had been promoted in his business, and he was being sent to another part of Denmark. And they were rejoicing, and I was sorrowing.

Not a sorrowing, I was grieving. And when I got up, did the Lord ever lower the boom? How dare you celebrate and send a man to another location and rip the fabric of your relationship in the removal of an elder because she has received a worldly promotion. You see what I mean? They allowed the world to dictate and to determine the movement of its sins, not the Holy Spirit.

They did not cherish the fact that the man was an elder, because for them it was only a positional thing rather than an organic thing. So if we think that we have a leading for something, we will not act on it without confirming it, and finding confirmation in that body. That's because we're in the relationship like that.

And as the Lord will indicate authority within that body, we want the eldership to have that confirmation, and God will give it to them because of the earnestness and the truth of the submitted relationships. That means that your fears need to be put aside, you have to be confident that God can confirm, and you'll not act unless there's not a bondage with a security that you should not follow the vagaries of your own will or the promotion that comes in the world of some other factor, that you're trusting the operation of God in the authentic governmental structure of your body. That's your church.

So it sounds like we should be focusing more on the organic raising up of a church, a fellowship, before we focus on community. You're already in it. That is community.

Waiting to graduate, you're already in it. It's just for the increasing definition, and the Lord indicating the particular form as you go along, adding others, indicating the property, and how He'll do it. That's exactly what I feel like right now.

It's community. But we have an additional, put it in a whole different thing, where we're thinking about land, maybe in a similar situation to an angel, not in the same pattern, but maybe purchasing some land and growing food there, maybe one at a time, maybe two may go out there and live, and then go with trepidation, because we realize it's not so easy yet, having heard some of the stories. We have an issue in the group at the moment about whether to pursue that or to pursue the home fellowship more, which, I don't know, that's the issue, right? Home fellowship or what? Home church.

So coming out of denominations, people are in denominations, and concentrating on meeting together for a while before looking for property. Yeah, I think that sounds like good sense. Get your relationships established, mutuality, trust, things that will be coming out in the wash in your own discussion, in the scripture, things that will arise for which you'll pray, and so on and so forth.

And then the Lord will direct. But this is not a proper context in the beginning. Then you'll find the home is not expansive enough.

In that sort of financial process, there is a necessity, a recognizing of the gifts that God has set within you, and that will become more defined in that. Yeah, that will be a later, in time. No, I'm not talking about gifts and so on.

I'm talking about gifts and people. Talent. No, I'm not talking about faith and sports.

I'm talking about people in your midst, who would be like people who would... I mean, like in your community, in Israel, it's been essentially, you know, the prophetic ministry in the person who's been there. Right. And there needs to be leadership within the thing of the right kind.

And people need to be comfortable with the leadership that exists. I mean, the big problem that I observe with people that have left BI in disarray have been where they have become disillusioned with art. And their perception of their trust in its leadership has dissolved.

And that... I mean, I understand that there's lots of issues about the way we lead, and, you know, obviously, the whole issue of the way we lead is that, you know, we're not to be likely, you know, to be even lording it over them, and all of those issues. And I understand there's lots of issues that, you know, we should look at in terms of that. But essentially, if we don't actually trust the people... See, I don't think you can work it out if it's two altogether, except there would be a great... I don't think... If we don't actually trust the people who are... who God has granted in the midst, in terms of the leading type of things, then we're all losers before we start.

And I just think those are issues that need to be clear, and need to become clear. If they're not clear, they need to become clear so that we know where we stand, because otherwise we can get ourselves in trouble. Actually... Go ahead, Mike.

I was just going to say, it seems clear. I don't know if I understand that correctly, but that he's saying, in coming together in community and seeking God on a daily basis, that leadership will arise out of that? Is that... Am I clear on that? Well, Paul established, through his own evangelistic labors, a body of believers who would stay with him for a short time, in many instances, and then leave him. And then come back a year or two later, and set in the elders, which is to say, he didn't just arbitrarily say, you and you.

He recognized what God had already established, and just made it public, so to speak, before the body. So it'll be something like that. I don't think it's an immediate issue where you need to identify from the beginning who the elders, who the leaders are.

That will become apparent as you go on. It's the man who's willing to take the responsibility, and to bear the weight of it, and the insult, and the various other kinds of things. He'll have an anointing.

So this is what is different from institutional churches. In the institutional church, leadership and authority has to do with ordination, being credentialed, being established in a political way, as office. In the body of Christ, in the kingdom of God, it's the recognition of the anointing, which is God's witness of whom he has appointed.

He'll have an anointing for leadership. Usually he will be an elder. That is to say, a man with a longer history in God, or in the responsibility of God.

And it'll become apparent. In a sense, that's servanthood, isn't it? Yes. Because one of the things that I hear for people who come out of the mainline churches, in some sort of hurt or pain or whatever, is we don't want no... And I was there myself at one time.

I don't want no leader. I want to get into a group that's totally leaderless, being my little Jesus box. You'll have a very short history.

It'll go up like a puff. I serve the Lord in that, not be accountable to anybody but to him. Oh, that's a... And I can be honest with myself, probably three years ago, I thought exactly that.

God has changed my mind since then. And I now know, for me, not only do I need to be accountable to him, I need to be accountable to you or Mike or whomever. And I think part of my process, if you will, is my accountability this way.

Because for me, I can only speak for me, but I definitely need that accountability. I need people to speak into my life and be open to that. I need to understand where to let go of something here.

You talked about this is our church, this is our raison d'etre right here. And then the other institutional setting, if we're still plugged in there, is our mission. I think the conflict I feel is if I have a sense, say in the case of Manuel, who is now a deacon, that term is going to last for three years.

I'm getting specific here. I might as well. I find myself becoming restless and impatient at waiting for this thing to go on for three years, yet we're committed to community.

And my question is, why should I commit to community when a brother feels to hang around in the denominational system as a deacon for three years? Now my question is, do I need to let go of that and just let God work that out? And just say, that'll work out? Or do we need to put pressure on each other at times and say, hey, why are you doing this? Like, where is the line drawn? The only way that I can reconcile a brother being a deacon in another fellowship and still be a participant in the authentic thing that we're talking, is that as being a deacon there is only a nominal position. It's more a superficial thing accorded to men, but it's not really governmental. I can see that you could perform governmentally there and be related governmentally here.

And that would be a witness. That would be a mission that you're received in that other place as deacon, but the issue is not government, but witness. It's your mission.

It's a place there. And the body knows it and witnesses it and encourages you and blesses you in it. That would be a possibility.

But if it came to a place where there were competing allegiances, loyalties and requirements, I couldn't see how that could be. So the question is, what does that mean to be a deacon in another place? Is it kind of a ceremonial office which affords you a greater witness and mission into that church and God is in that and the rest of the body witnesses that? Or is it a divided world? You need to drive somewhere and Chuck doesn't drive there. I just want to get Chuck involved.

I don't want to have to bring his wife back. An important issue that needs to be resolved. If I can comment? Yes, you need to.

That's exactly how I see it as a missionary. Nothing more, nothing less. You know, and I'm not restless.

Actually, before even being approached to consider joining the deacon board, we were getting restless. We were seeking God more than this, because things were shutting down. It's very difficult in that setting.

And we were seriously considering could it be, Lord, your seven years seems to be a pattern with us. Seven years, you know, then the Lord moves us on. Could it be the time that you're moving that restlessness to do something, to move on? And it was then that I was approached to pray and consider

joining the deacon.

And I told the pastor, give me a week to pray. And I did. I prayed, I sought the Lord.

And we had some women from the Caribbean came over to minister. And these ladies, they gave a very powerful challenge in words. In fact, are you willing to serve the body of Christ? Are you willing to, speaking to the whole church, but I know the Lord was just, because I was praying, Lord, what do you do with it? And she was saying, are you willing to serve the body of Christ, to serve your brothers and sisters, to be aligned with where the Lord has put you and she gave another call.

She invited the people to come forward and it was quite a response. And so I went forward and they had seven, seven or eight, these seven precious black women from the Caribbean that came and they are all lined up and approached one of them and this lady just embraced me, began to pray over me and boy, the spirit of the Lord just came upon us and I just began to weep and I knew that the Lord wanted, it just confronted me, just wanted me to be there. So, but I feel it, just like you said, just as a mission.

As you go on, you would find in others here that it's becoming increasingly unfeasible and it's becoming an issue of the vital loyalties that the Lord might require you to surrender that position. But if it's a witness and it can go on without any distraction or subtraction from the involvement with others here, fine. But you'll know and they'll know if it comes to the point where you'll have to make another decision with regard to it.

I think, as you describe it, it could go, you know, it doesn't necessarily threaten what's taking place. Shelly did something like that with the Full Gospel Businessmen for a number of years, didn't he? Who? Shelly did something like that with the Full Gospel Businessmen. Yeah, he was the president of the Full Gospel Businessmen while he was yet an elder and I was older.

There was never a point of conflict. In fact, it was a door opening for us. Yeah, at the time.

Yeah. There may be a door opening for you guys into that body or whatever that is. Yeah.

I don't see any conflict, actually. I don't see any conflict. If there will be, it will surface.

Yeah. Yeah. The only conflict I see is between you two.

Well, that would be my problem, too. See, I'm willing to admit it. And then, through a certain set of circumstances, we just find everything shut down, completely.

For me, I'm out of it. But it's okay. I don't... Some of it was my own choice.

Do you have a position also? Well, no. No, it's just that I was involved. Well, we sang more.

We led worship sometimes. While I taught Sunday school, I facilitated the dance a bit, and I helped to start a prayer group to pray for the spirit to move. And that went on for about four years, and then something came in to wreck it.

And then, you know, so it's all kind of shut down for me. And some of it was my own decision that I felt that I was doing things that ultimately weren't for the glory of God. It was just more of a presentation in a service and something added that would make it look nice.

And I want nothing to do with that. And I'm sure people wonder about that, but I've just drawn back, and Manuel's kind of gone in more as far as being a deacon, and I'm supporting him in prayer, but I do at times. I'm concerned with time, so I can't enjoy the lectures given in all the detail.

In fact, I should be... I know. As long as you're going to find... Is it a five-minute? James just says, in whatsoever condition you're called, therein remain. God doesn't abruptly care.

A saint out of the conditions. You're called now to this, but remain in the things, and the Lord will be... where you are, in what you are, and that's the point of the beginning. It's not ideal, but what situation in reality is ideal in the kingdom of God? You begin with where you are, with what you are in the conditions and backgrounds, histories, and work it out.

And then be willing to submit the situation one to another. But you have the advantage of the witness of God, the wisdom of God, and the counsel of the many. What a privilege in an age as rich as ours with perception.

Nice to meet you. Appreciate that. Do we need to go to Cathy? I don't know.

I think we can just go. Should I tell Cathy we're on...

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