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LEARNING IN COMMUNITY

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INTRODUCTION

COMMUNITY

What is “community” and how can we form it in the context of schooling so that it is an integral part of education? I define community as “any group people in an intentional relationship who agree to participate together in achieving common purposes.” God designed people to live in community (Genesis 2:18). Paul, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, explains that before the world was created, God’s purpose was to create “a people” for himself who would live to the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:6). He explained that the mystery now revealed is that the fulfilment of God’s promise was not through Israel but that the Gentiles through faith in Christ would also be incorporated into His people. Peter also emphasised the corporate nature of our calling when he said. But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light(1 Peter 2:9).

Living as God’s People

As God’s people, Paul urges Christians to live a life worthy of the calling they have received (Ephesians 4:1). According to Ephesians this involves living in humility, love and unity (Ephesians 4:1-6) living a different lifestyle (Ephesians 4:17-19), thinking differently (Ephesians 4:20-24), holy living as befits God’s children (Ephesians 4:25-5:20), and having Godly relationships (Ephesians 5:21-6:9)

Since it is our responsibility to live worthily, a proper aim of Christian education should be to assist children to live lives that are worthy of their calling and to equip them to serve the Ord as part of his Body.

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people

for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up (Ephesians 4:11-12).

The Bible is not a textbook on education and it does not aim to instruct teachers on their teaching methods. However, it does tell all people need to know about their purposes for living and thus provides the only adequate framework for true education. In Ephesians, Paul sets out God's wonderful purpose:

And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfilment - to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. (Ephesians 1:9-10 - See also verses 22-23 and compare Ephesians 3:6, 10-11)

Christ is Lord of all, which means He must be Lord of all areas of our life; He is our Head and He is Lord of the whole world, which was made through Him.

In Ephesians (4:1), Paul challenges God's people to lead lives worthy of their calling. There is much here that should inform Christian teachers as they seek to teach christianly. However, there are a couple of important points to note. Firstly, teachers must demonstrate the values that they wish to teach in their living and in the relationships formed at school. To teach christianly teachers must firstly live Christianly; they must live worthy lives themselves and seek to establish Godly relationships in the school and classroom. Only thus will an environment be created in which growth can occur in teachers and in the students they teach.

Secondly, it is important to note that Ephesians was written to adult Christians and thus teachers must apply its truths carefully to children if they are not to expect from them a maturity, which their age and development would preclude and which may lead to a kind of 'stillborn' maturity.

HOW DO CHRISTIANS GROW?

Paul teaches in Ephesians that growth occurs when people are in a Christ-centred community or "in Christ". This is beautifully and succinctly explained in Ephesians 4:1-16. The key verse in understanding this is verse 15 which states in the "*Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.*" The phrase "*speaking the truth in love*" is inadequately translated in most translations because of the difficulty in translating the Greek word ἀληθευοντες (*aletheuontes* which literally means "truthing"). It would be probably better translated as "practicing or doing the truth" in love- it certainly implies more than just speaking truthfully. Too often Christian education has been seen more in terms of teaching propositional truth or doctrinal truth rather than "truthing in love". In genuine Christian teaching, actions express the truth as much as the words and the relationship is formative rather than the content of the teaching. In the Bible, truth is more than data, information and knowledge. Truth is found in the person of Jesus Christ, who said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

The modernist view of truth as empirical evidence that is verifiable by scientific investigation is only one a limited form of truth. Similarly, the post-modernist view of truth as a human construct is only a facet of "truth". Jesus said, "you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32) This truth is found in a relationship to Jesus. It is a far cry from the legalistic and rationalistic "truth" taught in some

Churches and Christian schools where children are “battered” with truth but never experience it in relationship. Equally it is a long way from the relativistic and personal truth taught in many secular schools that is so destructive of any meaning or purpose outside the individual or his society and leaves the individual without Godly values or purpose and often without any meaning to life. In a Christian community where truth is learnt in relationship, people will grow up “into Christ the Head of the Body” in all things.

Parker Palmer (1993) perhaps better than any other writer picks up this concept in his definition of teaching as, “creating space in which obedience to the community of truth is practiced.” His definition acknowledges that schools today have over crowded curricula, they are dominated by a teaching/learning paradigm that is teacher centred and outcome oriented and that as a consequence has little time for anything to be added. His definition calls for a new paradigm that will make space for what is important namely real teaching which involves creating the space for a community of truth based on a genuine relationship of love to develop and in which community members, teachers and students, put into practice the truth they are learning.

Paul teaches that we need to grow up in all things into Christ. But what does this mean. To “grow into Christ” only makes sense when we understand it in the light of we are the body of which Christ is the “head” meaning the leader or the chief. We grow into Christ we become effective and committed members of his community.

When I helped to start Christian Community High School in Sydney I accepted the role as its founding principal. We adopted Ephesians 4:15 as our motto. For short we decided to have the words “Grow up into Christ” at the words on our school crest. When we sent our first set of school jackets to have the crests embroidered they came back with the wrong words. The supplier had changed the “into Christ” to “with Christ”. When questioned about it he said that he thought we had made a mistake since growing up “into” Christ did not make sense. Of course from a secular viewpoint he was right. It only makes sense if we understand that God wants more from us than growing up “with” Christ but he actually wants us to grow into Him by growing into His Body. When he speaks of his Body he does not refer to the institutional and organised church but to the community of his believers wherever they meet and work together. (Mat 18:20 NIV) *For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.*

The other radical point made by Paul is that the growing involves “all things” There is no place here for a dichotomy in education between the religious and the secular. Christ’s Lordship over all things demands we grow up in **all things** into Christ.

The Importance of Unity

The book of Ephesians explains the how and why of this growth. But of particular importance is the teaching that is found in the first 16 verses of Ephesians 4. We will turn our attention now to that.

A central concept in community is the unity we find in Christ. A proper understanding of the unity we have in Christ is essential for growth towards maturity. Paul establishes very clearly through out the whole of Ephesians that there is one body to which we are called. He elaborates this theme in Chapter 4:

There is one body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to one hope when you were called-- one Lord, one faith, one baptism (Ephesians 4:4-5).

This unity we have in Christ must be evident in the way we teach - in the relationships that exist in the class room and above all in the attitudes which we have towards our students, our fellow teachers, the principal and the parents and board members.

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:2-3

As the students see these qualities in their teacher, they will model them. As the teacher encourages such relationships among the students, a sense of true Christian community will grow in the classroom and the classroom will become a nurturing community which will build up its members in love.

However, this matter of building true unity cannot be simply an "added on" component to our teaching it must be central to all we do. In these 16 verses there are three key concepts of growth. Paul uses the Greek word *μετρον* (metron or measure) to describe each. If we are to encourage the growth into Christ he describes we must be aware of each of these measures.

BUILDING COMMUNITY - KEY CONCEPT ONE

The first concept might be called the concept of 'GRACED STUDENTS. Or to use Paul's words *the measure of the gift of Christ* (Ephesians 4: 7-11). In the first six verses of Ephesians 4 Paul emphasised the unity that Christians have in Christ because there is "one body". Christians are called to live humbly and in love and unity. This is a message powerfully needed today when individualism is so rank and powerful. If carried to extremes it leads to "communism" or "cultism" where the good of the individual is subsumed by the good of the community. Paul here establishes a balance there is one body **but to each** GRACE has been given.

Teachers should see their class as individual members of the body- gifted with grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Too often teachers categorise their students and label them as "the good or the bad students", "the problem child", "the Asian child", or "the thief, the lazy or the liar". God looks at children as people he has gifted with grace. Crabb (1999 P.34) writes about,

"our mad determination to pin labels on each other, our tendency to identify people by their problems. "Did you know he's divorced?" "I just heard she's taking Prozac." "They're the couple with the son in a wheelchair." "Someone told me she's a lesbian." "He's the guy who gets so angry."

We are not our problems. We are not our wounds. We are not our sins. We are persons of radical worth and unrevealed beauty. If we face ourselves fully, we will be broken by what we see, by the selfishness and fear and rage and lust that cover our spiritual beauty like tarnish on silver. But the silver is there. Something brilliant and intact gleams through the stain of our brokenness.

Labelling each other makes the shine of the silver hard to see. It directs attention to the tarnish. Labels encourage us to believe that our problems define us.

Paul tells us it was because the ascended Christ gives gifts to men that the Scriptures record, "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men (Ephesians 4:8 KJV). The KJV preserves the literal meaning of the Greek that

Christ took captivity captive. This helps us to understand why we must look at our fellow teachers and our students not as those defined by their captivity or their faults for “captivity has been taken captive” by Christ who gave grace to each of us according to Christ’s own measure.

This call for a new way of looking at our students or our fellow staff members as recipients of God’s grace. In Ephesians 3:2 Paul talks of his administration of the grace given to him to serve others. This is how each should look at this grace that has been given. It is given that each might give of it to others as their servants. (See 3:7) the power to do this resides not in ourselves but in God exceeding great power that can enable us to serve in this way. We are not defined by our giftedness but by the grace we have received. If we can accept people according to the “***But to each***” concept our love and acceptance has the power to change them.

I remember once I had a very difficult little boy Kevin to deal with. He threw terrible tantrums. I would often have to restrain him for minutes at a time. But I held him to help him and control him not because I loved him. That was 54 years ago- I wish I knew then what I know now. With all his limitations and problems my love and acceptance could have touched him and perhaps helped him. Instead I saw him as a problem child who I had to deal with. Sure I can make excuses, for Kevin was one of 49 other children who tried the patience of a very young and inexperienced teacher. However I still should have known better. Out of the failure of that experience I started to learn what it meant to love a child.

The measure of the Gift of Christ,

This different way of looking at children will help teachers to measure their students, not primarily in worldly standards of their talent, intelligence, sporting and social abilities but more importantly as recipients of God’s grace. Each child is gift to the community and teachers and other students can learn from the interactions with them. Teachers need discernment as they deal with a child who lies to them, patience as they handle a rebellious child, compassion as they see a child whose emotions has been damaged by neglect or abused. They still have to deal with the lies and the rebellion and bad behaviour can’t be overlooked because some one has been abused- to do this would be to add negligence to the abuse. But teachers can deal with these students with problems with compassion and patience and see them as valued and loveable despite their problems. They can refuse to label them or to judge their motives. All of us are broken people we minister best out of our brokenness not our strength.

We are the gift.

As teachers, we look at children as having various gifts but the Bible here speaks of us as being the gifts given to the Body to build it up

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up (Ephesians 4:11-12). The various categories of gifts given here are broad categories that summarise all the ministries into which teachers may be called in their roles as teachers and leaders.

Leadership (apostles) discernment (prophets) proclamation (evangelists)
caring pastors) and teaching (teachers).

These categories are not discrete many have overlapping areas. But we can see that they are all given for one purpose to build up the Body of Christ.

This first Key Concept highlights the key difference between Christian schools that function as learning communities and those that conform to the schooling-instructional paradigm. From a biblical perspective education's prime purpose is communal rather than individual, its focus is individual growth but its purpose is strengthening the whole community. (Ephesians 4:16). In this it stands in the strongest contrast to the secular humanistic ideals that underpin the schooling-instructional paradigm by which most schools, including most Christian schools operate.

The Lord has given gifts to each person for the common good. Teachers need to accept that the differences in individuals are important and each person has a contribution for the growth of all that will lead to the growth of the whole Body, the community of God's people.

All people are made in God's image. The huge variety found in people is a dim reflection of the immensity and magnitude of God's greatness. Thinking about children only in terms of "norms" or "averages", or viewing them in set stereotypes, may be an implicit denial of the individual differences and to that extent a denial of the fact that they are made in His image. We must accept and encourage the individuality of children. However, the purpose for their individuality is their expected functioning together as a body.

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12).

Thus, the rampant individualism of our age is wrong and is a perversion of the biblical teaching on the value of the individual. In the same way self-esteem teaching is misguided, since it emphasises the (self) importance of the individual rather than on the value of the individual as part of the body and as a wonderful creation of God (Romans 12:5-8). In his parables (Matthew 15:15-30, Luke 19:12-27), Jesus told the importance of people using all their gifts. He tells us people are accountable, not for how many abilities they have but for how well they use the abilities he has given. Teachers need to realise that if they encourage those with few gifts to despise their one talent they failing to carry out their role as good stewards.

Teachers are responsible to value the individual. Jesus said that even the hairs of our head are numbered (Matthew 10:30) - each one individually. If God knows each one individually, Christian teachers should imitate Him and seek to know their students as individuals, to know their different needs and strengths, their abilities and their gifts. They also have a responsibility to receive each child as she or he is, because in doing so they receive Christ. They also have a responsibility to make sure the student is not hindered in his or her growth. (Matthew 18:5-6)

The emphasis is not on the individual for his or her own sake so much as on each individual because each is important to God and each has an important role to play in God's holy community.

Until all children learn, the teacher has not taught.

The challenge of this lecture is the challenge to accept that all children can learn if only teachers can better understand how each learns and what interests and motivates

each. To successfully teach each child in the class, the teacher needs an understanding of what makes each unique; of the differences in background, temperament and of the way that each learns. One significant difference is the differences in learning styles.

The fact that children have different ways of learning (or learning styles) has been long recognised. There are a number of different studies of these styles. Harro Van Brummelen, (1988) in his book "Walking with God in the Classroom" uses a simplified classification based on work done by Bernice McCarthy based on how people perceive and how they process experiences as they learn. According to this study, there are two broad ways that people perceive reality about them. That is there are two broad ways that they receive information:

- Some perceive new situations more intuitively, by sensing and feeling them concretely
- Others analyse their experiences more abstractly, thinking and reasoning about them.

The learning process also involves the processing this refers to the way people process or internalise experiences either by

- Actively getting involved by jumping in with a "hands on" approach to trying things out,
- While others "stand back" and sort things out reflectively

Schools have tended to favour abstract perception and reflective processing, yet other forms of perceiving and processing are just as important. People appear to think in different ways. Van Brummelen goes on to distinguish four different ways of thinking based on the different ways that people perceive information and process it.

Coping With Individual Differences

There are a number of different ways that teachers have attempted to cope with individual differences. Streaming (or tracking), accelerating or curriculum compacting for bright children, grouping, individualising, (eg. Computer assisted learning or programmed learning), self-directed learning, and cooperative learning are just some of the techniques currently being used. With increasingly complex technologies available new ways of coping with the gifted and talented, in particular will be opened up.

BUILDING COMMUNITY - KEY CONCEPT TWO

The second concept might be called the concept of ALL MATURING or *the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*. (Ephesians 4: 12-15) This challenges teachers to help ALL students to grow to maturity in Christ which involves growth in ALL areas of their lives (Ephesians 4:13). *Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.* (Ephesians 4:15) It specifically involves grounding students in the truth in a relationship of love so that they grow up into Christ. Christian schools are to be Christ centred and not merely Bible centred. The Bible is God's revealed Word and it bears testimony to Christ but Christ is to be the focus of our growth it is into His Body we are to grow, it must be in relationship. The knowledge that is important is that which is learnt in community.

Information can be passed on to children in many ways - books, video, lectures, audiotapes computer etc. However, the Bible talks of a higher knowledge, knowledge of the Son of God that leads to maturity.

Teachers who have gifts entrusted by God should use them to build up the students to grow towards maturity in Christ, which is the measure of the fullness of Christ. This is the responsibility of Christians who have been given the ministry of teaching. We have to administer the grace that has been given to us (Ephesians 3:2).

Unity in the faith

The aim of our teaching should be that all students attain to the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God. When Paul speaks of unity of faith, the faith he speaks of is more than belief it is commitment to Jesus. Faith is a gift. (Ephesians 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God)

Many Christians mistake unity for uniformity. Uniformity can be imposed on students by indoctrination but true unity can only come about in community as people learn together and find out what their faith means and in whom they have faith. Christian teaching thus must be Christ focussed. Teachers should have a vision to love and serve Him above all other –To love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and mind. (Matthew 22:37)

If teachers are to lead students to unity in the faith, it must be mediated to them through an experience of Jesus in the community of faith. Faith will be evident in the classroom and in the example of the teacher, who can thus say, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ”. (1 Corinthians 11:1)

Faith in the Son of God

Students need to learn what Jesus taught, what he did and how he thought. Teachers are to share in the story of the Bible, which must become the story of the Christian community. Teachers need to help students sense the excitement and the wonder of the Biblical account both Old and New Testaments. As they share this together, they will grow in the knowledge of the Son of God. Teachers need to have a sound grasp on the message of the four gospels (possibly what is meant in Acts 2:42 by the Apostle’s teaching). Particularly important are passages such as the Sermon on the Mount and some of the passages in John. The miracles of Jesus came out of his compassion for people but they were also intended as a sign of his authority.

The Mind of Christ

The mind of Christ refers to way God’s people are to think and act. The great Pauline passages help us here:

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:1-5)

This thinking should characterise our classrooms.

True Wisdom

We need a heavenly wisdom and not the earthly wisdom that characterises our age. James in talking of Wisdom contrasts earthly and heavenly wisdom

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbour bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. (James 3: 13-17)

We need the Wisdom of God not the wisdom of this age As Paul says, *"For Christ did not send me to baptise, but to preach the gospel--not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe"* (1 Corinthians 1:17-21).

The Truth That Is in Jesus

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ (Ephesians 4:15).

We must speak the truth that is in Jesus who said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me". (John 14:6). Jesus was against all forms of legalism. When we make our school rules they may be valuable but we need to see them expressions of our culture not essentially Christian in themselves. Jesus said that the truth will set you free not enslave in a new legalism. "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32)

Unity in the Knowledge of the Son Of God

In Ephesians(Ephesians 4:13), knowledge is a personal knowledge - learnt in relationship with each other and with the Son of God - This has important implications for the way that we teach all knowledge but most especially biblical knowledge. Our lessons need to be Christ focussed so that as children learn they understand how Christ is Lord of all and of all His creation. They must come to understand that the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline (Proverbs 1:7).

The knowledge of God

The knowledge of God or Christ includes knowing Him as:

Creator and Sustainer, the One who instituted the laws and processes by which the universe operates and which govern the way we function as persons and relate to other persons.

Redeemer, the One whose death saved us. Without him, the universe is subject to futility through the Fall.

Sovereign Lord of History, the One who started, maintains, gives direction to and will one day end human history.

The big danger for Christian teachers is that they only teach cognitive knowledge of God, i.e. correct doctrine. Jesus tells a parable of the Christian teacher who, he says is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old (Matthew 13:52). Bringing out the old treasures is not enough, we must disclose the new treasures that we are currently discovering about God and share these with our students.

Jesus himself made great use of concrete material of story telling and parables in order to reach his hearers. Part of the task of equipping people is to communicate to them in ways that brings real understanding - knowledge of the Son of God and unity of faith. In doing this, we must realise that each student is different and so our teaching must enable us to reach a wide spectrum of the children and encourage each student to assist other students in the learning process.

Paul talks of "speaking (or teaching) the truth in love so that we will grow up in all things into Christ". Ephesians 4:15 There is an incredible richness in these concepts that cannot be fully explored here. Teachers, are not only to be concerned with truth and righteousness but also with love and mercy. While teachers are concerned with revealed truth - the absolutes that God has revealed and the truth that man has discovered through his scientific endeavour are important there must be a balance - it must be taught, and experienced and practised "in love". This is vital.

The dimension of the growth envisaged -is "in all things". There must be no dichotomy between the sacred and the secular. Christ is Lord of all. All are to grow up in all; ways into Christ. This implies that as people grow in relationship with Jesus the head of the Body they grow in relationship with each other.

What God requires of His people is "to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God". - Micah 6:8. Justice - love and a humble walk - this balance between justice - that is what is right, and love and mercy should be characteristic of a Christian community and therefore of the Christian class room. Schools should be careful not to stress one side of the nature of God; neither his righteousness nor his love. Both must be held together in tension. The proper response to God's love and justice is a humble walk with God and this is true worship.

Teachers need to maintain a balance between justice, righteousness and truth on the one hand, love, mercy and forgiveness on the other and respond in true worship which involves both obedience and faithful service and also love and praise to God and a relationship of love to other people.

A Triadic Balance

Because a Christian community must reflect the nature of its Creator and its Saviour, there will be a triadic tension between justice (righteousness) and mercy (love) and action. Just as God's justice and mercy met at the cross of Jesus Christ, so in the Christian community we must hold to justice and mercy and respond to His love in self-sacrificial service to our God. It is only in our worship of the crucified Son of God that we can resolve the apparent conflict between justice and mercy. The prophet Micah makes this clear, "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does

the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).

Too often Christians want to reverse this and to love justice and do mercy. However, we are called to a threefold task that should be central to the existence of any Christian community. This is expressed in the diagram below.

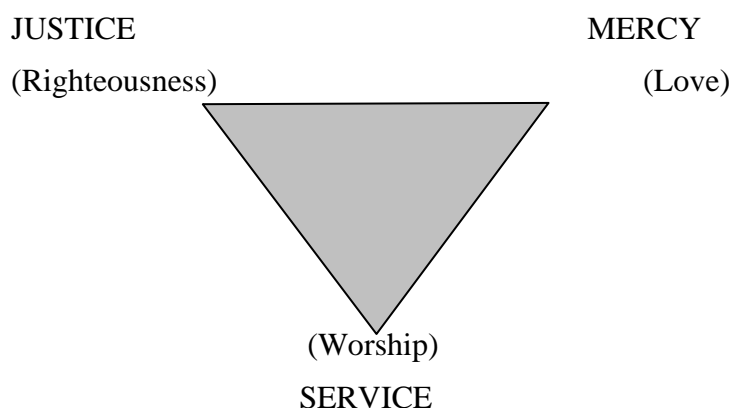


Figure 1

Over emphasis of any one of these points will cause a severe distortion to the community and therefore make it ineffective in leading to growth.

BUILDING COMMUNITY - KEY CONCEPT THREE

The third concept may be called “WORKING TOGETHER” or *the measure of the effective working together of the parts.*

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.
(Ephesians 4:16 NIV)

True growth only occurs as students apply what is learnt - and this is best applied in our working together with others. This is why Parker Palmer (1993) talks of “the community of truth being **practised**. Education is more than preparation for the future. It involves learning and applying what is learnt during the process of education which, in the long run is more important than the product. . Students can learn much in theory but the test of true education if it leads to relating theory to practice and to applying what has been learnt in relationships with others and in applications to life situations and work demands.. Christians have a special responsibility to help and encourage cooperative service together.

Teachers often look at their class as a group and judge the effectiveness of their teaching by criteria such as: “Have most children understood a concept or passed a test?” It is not that this is unimportant but a more important question to ask is whether the whole body, as a body, is growing and developing, whether there is an increase in cooperation in working together in seeking to understand each other and support each other. This sort of growth in community will in turn build up the individual. The growth of the whole depends on each part doing its work.

This clearly means that people have to understand their particular calling or ministry within the body. The Bible tells us that grace is given to each according to the measure of the gift of Christ (Ephesians 4:7). He has given each of us a specific task to do; he has gifted each to undertake his role. Schools should be places where

students apply what they have learnt in meaningful ways to areas of service that God has given to them. This service involves all of our life not just our so-called spiritual service. For example, a Christian on a committee ought to bring goodness and wholeness to that committee work regardless of whether all the other members are Christians or not or whether the purpose of the committee is secular or sacred.

This has particular importance in all group work - the measure of the success of group work is if each does his part - if each uses his individual gifts. This implies for teachers a leadership role not just an instructional role. Our job is not to merely design good lessons but to encourage each to grow by using their individual gifts for the common good. This involves helping students not to despise their gifts or to ignore those who seem to have only limited function

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable (1 Corinthians 12:21-22).

Finally, we need to look at our role as teachers - we are not mere facilitators of individual growth - we are not fountains of knowledge and information we are not even knowledge navigators; we are there to prepare a people for God.

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up (Ephesians 4:11-12).

Our task as teachers is to prepare the young saints for works of service - in the world in which they live as well as in the church fellowship in which they worship. The goal however, is not individual gain as such it is that the body of Christ may be built up.

Effective Learning Needs To Be Applied

Most people learn best when they can apply what they learn. School education is sometimes more theoretical than practical especially at the high school level. The material is studied as a discipline and students have too few connecting or integrating links. This is a challenge for teachers teaching in community.

TEACHING IN A LEARNING COMMUNITY

God has called us to be his community. The images of the Church used by the Bible are corporate images

- The Body of Christ
- The Bride
- The Vine and branches
- The flock with its Shepherd
- The people of God;
- Household of faith and so on.

If the school is to be truly Christian it must be a learning community where each person has a valid role and function. The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12 and see also 1 Corinthians 12 13-27).

Secondly, it is in community that individual growth can occur (Ephesians 4:15,16). It is when we speak the truth in relationship, in love, that the individual grows into Christ not only with the Head but also with the members of the Body. The Body builds itself up as each part works effectively.

Thirdly, fellowship and community life are necessary within the church to equip Christians for their various avenues of service. As the Christian experiences the enabling of the community life within the church, he can be equipped to witness and to serve. Much of the weakness of the church comes from the fact that there is little common life and therefore little enabling and consequential ineffective witness and service to a needy world.

Fourthly, it is in community that Christians demonstrate the reality of Christ's life in them as they minister to a needy world as the Body of Christ. The individualism of modern Christianity is not biblical at all.

The Nature of a Christian Community School

A Christian school is a Christian learning community in which students and teachers together contribute to the growth of each other. Teachers have an office of equipping and educating students so that they can undertake the work of ministry. It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up (Ephesians 4:11-12). The aim is that they will grow to true maturity in Christ. It is a community where the love and mutual acceptance of the members provide the proper environment for growth to maturity to happen.

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