

Life Together - Jesus at the Center // September 4, 2022
Foester

Pastor Terry

Over the Rhine

When journalists began asking Over the Rhine's Karin Bergquist and Linford Detweiler what kind of music their band played, they came up with an answer they've yet to live down.

*Their music, they told the press back then, was **post-nuclear, pseudo-alternative, folk-tinged, art-pop.**"*

While the description was meant to be tongue-in-cheek, it still turns up in album reviews and articles, more than two decades later.

*In an interview, Linford Detweiler was being asked about how **he deals with comparison in the music industry...***

*We don't really take it all that seriously," Detweiler says. I think people need a touchstone and sometimes writers will need a reference to give people some idea of what their music sounds like. But my wife has something tattooed on her arm. And that is: **Comparison is the thief of joy.**¹*

Comparison is the Thief of Joy (usually attributed to Theodore Roosevelt) has been a helpful phrase in my life. At times, fall into the trap of comparative living in unhealthy ways.

When it comes to the question of how we define Christian Community, our Life Together, how helpful is worldly comparison?

As we define the community *inside* the church, how does it compare with community we experience *outside* the church?

We have Small groups//the world has book clubs; we share meals together, we go to each others houses, we engage in social causes and community service, we gather in restaurants and sporting events, we help each other with projects on our houses; we deliver meals to a friend, we visit each other at the hospital, we go on vacation together, we work out together...we babysit each other's kids...and so does the world.

Our tendency is to say we'll just do it better. We'll be more loving. We'll try harder and we'll get this thing called Life Together right.

That doesn't feel honest...in defining our life together we must move beyond comparison.

The Challenge: To practice 'Life Together' in a way that doesn't take its cues from the world; but instead leans courageously into Jesus-centered community.

¹<https://lovinlife.com/comparison-is-the-thief-of-joy/>; Linford Detweiler quoted in 'Comparison is the Thief of Joy' Article by Bill Forman

Hebrews is our Backdrop: Hebrews (*In light of Jesus... "see to it that"...*) - Hebrews is not meant to be read individualistically.

Allow this overview of the first 3 chapters to create a picture that describes the Quality & Attributes of our Life Together.

Scripture Reading

Hebrews 1:1-2

1 In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, **2** but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.

Hebrews 2:1

1 We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away

Hebrews 2:10-11

10 In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. **11** Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.

Hebrews 2:17-18

17 For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. **18** Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Hebrews 3:1, 6

1 Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest.

6 But Christ is faithful as the Son over God's house. And we are his house, if indeed we hold firmly to our confidence and the hope in which we glory.

Hebrews 3:7-8

So, as the Holy Spirit says:

"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the wilderness,

Hebrews 3:12-13

12 See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Hebrews 3:15

15 As has just been said:

"Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts
as you did in the rebellion."

Exposition

The context for these first three chapters is **the biblical past**. How Moses led the people of God through the wilderness, very quickly - they forgot what God had done, they slipped into hard heartedness.

But Jesus is a better Moses. Jesus is superior and at the center of all of life.

Here's the interesting aspect - while Jesus is a better leader than Moses, the opportunity for hard heartedness still exists!

Life Together according to Hebrews:

1 - Jesus is *the Pioneer & Perfecter of our Life Together*

2 - *Life Together is marked by our relationship as Holy Siblings*

3 - *Life Together is practiced through Daily Encouragement*

Part 1 - Jesus is the Pioneer & Perfecter of our Life Together

Through his suffering he became like us to ultimately make a way for us to enter his family, and the rest of his Father.

As a **Pioneer** He is our **Apostle** (sent one)

As our **Perfecter** He is our **High Priest** (*there's one mediator between God & Man, the man Jesus Christ - 1 Timothy 2:5*)

Part 2 - Life Together is marked by our relationship as Holy Siblings

We are Holy Siblings

- Holy Brothers & Sisters = hagios adelphos = 'the most holy ones from the same womb'

- Attaching the concept of Holiness to our sisterhood and brotherhood is not an earthly concept

Earthly Siblings are Amazing! (Pan through Pictures)

Eli & Peyton Manning, The Property Brothers, Partridge Family, Phineous & Ferb, Venus & Serina Williams

One of the beautiful aspects of Jesus's humanity is that he becomes our older brother, and paves the way as older brothers should.

In speaking about his Humanity, Thomas Schreiner writes, "The full humanity of Jesus leaps out to readers...for Jesus lived a flesh-and-blood life...Jesus is our elder brother, and his victory over death and sin means we have conquered death and sin through him."²

And CS Lewis so poignantly captures this in his classic - Mere Christianity — "The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God."³

Our capacity to live out life as Holy Siblings is not that we are really good at loving one another, it's that this sibling-hood has been established by our older brother, Jesus.

Part 3 - Life Together is practiced through Daily Encouragement

Hebrews 3:12-13; 15

12 See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. **13** But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

15 As has just been said:

"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion."

*The primary call to action here is simple - **encourage one another every day!** Really, it's that simple? A daily practice of mutual encouragement?*

Think about it though...what do other believers do that you find the most helpful?

When have I seen this daily encouragement at work in a radical way?

² Hebrews Evangelical Biblical Theology Commentary, Thomas Schreiner, p. 111

³ CS Lewis, Mere Christianity, p178

An example... *We have a family that's in need of daily physical help during a bed-time routine. A small window of time where there's no outside aid available, yet basic physical support is needed = literally a shoulder to lean on.*

*We need to be very specific on **the purpose of encouragement:***

: away from a **hard heart** of unbelief, deceived by sin

: toward a **soft heart** that is ready to hear the voice of God today

*Jackie Hill Perry, **Holier Than Thou:** "A stony heart is what prevents us from being like God. It's called that because a stone is a familiar object above ground. A stone is unfeeling, unresponsive, immovable if a mountain, hard always."⁴*

The heart is the moral center and the place from which all of our actions have a root.

Where is your heart? If you're struggling, you're not alone.

Sin's deceitfulness has a way of wearing us down, making us grow cold to the ways of God. We are overcome by a shadow of discouragement. And we say, "*Maybe I'll give up on this pursuit.*"

*As a **Holy Sibling Community** we help one another stay in that tender place of the present moment, ready to hear his voice today.*

Application: Encourage Someone Daily:

Point them *Away* from Unbelief

Point them *Toward* Jesus

- Young to old, seeker to believer, attender to member, call to mind those you need to encourage.
- But How?

(1) Take Initiation

(2) Make it Holy; Scripture is Powerful

(3) Be empathetic to the Holy Spirit

(4) Seek out someone new in our fellowship (Friendship Circle Slide)

⁴ Jackie Hill Perry, *Holier Than Thou*, p. 132

So we come to the Table. This Table is a reminder that we do Life Together. We don't do this alone. This table is for believers, and we share in this together.

Communion

The Bread

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took the bread, and *after he had given thanks*, he broke it and said, "This is my body, given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

The Cup

In the same way, after supper Jesus took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes!

Benediction

Hebrews 12:1-3

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, **2** fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. **3** Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.