

Alleluia

Dove

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Be an Alternate Society

Do Not Avoid the Gathering of the Brethren

By Kevin King



A few years before we came to community, my family and I lived in Charlotte. I would work with one team of people during the day, talk with others on the phone, ride an overpacked commuter bus home, and perhaps meet a few neighbors on the weekend, finally attending church with another complete different set of people. I was exiting one world and entering the next with no connections between the people on the bus or those at work or those at church. I had encountered hundreds of people daily, yet none really knew the "real me" that existed in all these places. Any connections I had with people were superficial at best. I didn't really know it yet, but I was lonely. Yes, lonely, even as I was surrounded by a city of people. It is this multitude of diluted relationships that prevents us from knowing others so much so that a Gallup poll a few years ago stated that "Americans are among the loneliest people in the world." The detached lifestyle costs us. John Ortberg, in *Everybody's Normal*, indicates, "Researchers found that the most isolated people were three times more like-

ly to die than those with strong relational connections. People who had bad health habits (such as smoking, poor eating habits, obesity, or alcohol use) but strong social ties lived significantly longer than people who had great health habits but were isolated. In other words, it is better to eat Twinkies with good friends than to eat broccoli alone." God has never intended for us to live isolated.

In contrast, here in community we see people of all ages and stages of life flowing in and out of each other's lives. We work, play, and live our spiritual life in one place, so that instead of hundreds of shallow relationships, we have fewer, but deeper relationships with people that know the real us. Support Groups are just an extension of this. Andy Stanley talks about groups in a church having different focuses. He likens the large group meeting to the foyer, where relationships are many and superficial, but the talk moves to the living room with fewer people but deeper relationships, until finally you are around the kitchen table with your immediate family. Support Groups are intended

to be our immediate family-away-from-family. Solomon says in Proverbs 27:10, "Do not go to your brother's house when disaster strikes you – better a neighbor nearby than a brother far away." We live in a community where everyone is "no more than a cup of sugar away."

On the other hand, small groups can feel contrived if we only meet together because it is on the calendar. As one author wrote, it may only serve to "provide occasions for individuals to focus on themselves in the presence of others. The social contract binding members together asserts only the weakest of obligations. Come if you have time. Talk if you feel like it. Respect everyone's opinions. Never criticize. Leave quietly if you become dissatisfied." Obviously our goal is not to simply fulfill our covenant, but to experience the authentic community we've all signed up for.

Hebrews 10:24-25 says, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but

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Becoming an Awesome Small Group

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encouraging one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” The word that Hebrews uses to mean “spur one another on”, is the same Greek word to describe the heated disagreement Paul and Barnabas had that split this famous group of missionaries. It was used by physicians of the time to describe a fever that shook a person violently. This isn’t a gentle spurring one another on, but a forceful one. If you have ever ridden with someone driving late at night and you caught them about to nod off at the wheel, would you wake them with a whisper? You would probably “spur” them awake “as you see the Day approaching” – the Day of your death by car crash instead of Jesus’ returning. In the same way, God has called us to take the command to meet seriously, not so much for our sakes as for the spiritual lives of our brothers and sisters. After all, we are not called to “consider how to love and do good deeds”, but how to spur this on in others. We are to spur on our neighbors and they are to spur us on. This can only happen as we deepen these relationships and spend a lot of time together.

A small group where authentic community is happening will look more like an episode of Seinfeld where a group of great friends spent a lot of spontaneous time, talking about everyday stuff and loving every minute of it. When I first met Carolyn in 1993, we were attending a singles group in our church. We would often be at each other’s house, eating meals, talking about the Bible or just stuff, or worshipping together. These weren’t the scheduled meetings, but the ad-hoc meetings that happened between meetings. If we sensed one person was lonely or in need of a pick-me-up, we did a Zac-

chaeus, and said, “We are eating at your house today.” We filled their house with people, and ate spaghetti together, and it was a wonderful time. When someone needed support for their move to college, we all packed in the cars and went up to bless the new dorm. Even without the weekly meeting, it was an awesome small group.

What will help us to be an authentic small group?

Be real.

Hiding the “real self” will not draw anyone closer. Sharing our dark side with someone, although scary especially for those of us who have been hurt, will help in the long run.

Give of ourselves.

The adage that we get back what we put into something is true in community. If we attend nothing, we are no closer to the people in our group. So, the more we attend, the closer we should be.

Be spontaneous.

Just show up at someone’s house.... Without calling... Some of us that like to plan ahead may have to be a real rebel to try this, but it pays off. Bring some cookies to someone and watch them check the calendar to see if it’s their birthday. Send an encouraging text or invite them for dinner.

Look for opportunities.

Every person has something that would make their day. It takes a little active listening to ferret out what it would be. The first time I met Ross, I talked with him about this bed that we were looking to give to Hannah. He offered to make the bed. I wasn’t asking for that, but he did it. This was

no small task. It took about two months, but that investment created a friendship.

Say “yes” more.

For one season in my life, the Lord challenged me to always say “yes” to the needs of others – no excuses. I say this with some disclaimers. It’s important to have protected family time, but it is also easy to make an excuse about lack of time or lack of abilities. Thankfully, we can’t use lack of calling as an excuse... we are all called to build community.

Create margin in your life.

Who has time for one more meeting? Even fewer people have time to be spontaneous between meetings. Like a piece of paper filled with notes has white space on the edges to write comments, draw pictures, or doodle, we need margins for our life to give more time with others.

So the questions to ask myself are:

1. Do I stay in the foyer with my brothers and sisters, maintaining a safe, surface relationship?

2. Have I moved into the living room with fewer people where I can have deeper conversations with a few?

3. Am I finally in the kitchen with my Alleluia family — the real me, comfortable and at home?

4. Am I willing to spur others on and be spurred on myself?

It’s good to be here -- in the kitchen with my brothers and sisters.

Kevin King serves on the Pastoral Team for the Alleluia Community and leads the children’s prayer meetings. He and his wife Carolyn have been Full Covenant members of Alleluia since 2011. They have two children and attend Burns Memorial United Methodist Church in Augusta.

No Voice... No Choice

Ania Hatfield
10th Grader



The following essay is the winner by a 9th or 10th grader in the Augusta Chapter of the Georgia Right to Life's Essay and Oratory Contest that was held in May.

Would it be any different if they used a gun? Over one million lives are taken away yearly through unnecessary medical procedures that are performed solely to terminate life at its most vulnerable stage. These lives have no say in whether they live or die. They are the lives of the next generation. They are our children.

When young girls are thinking about getting an abortion, what do they search for? They search for things to comfort them and support them in this crisis. The most popular web sites belong to abortion clinics. Planned Parenthood is only one of them. These sites give step by step details of what girls will go through during the abortion process. Well, all the details except the bloody ones. They make everything look and sound so easy. They reveal only what teenage girls want to hear. Girls do not want to hear that the child in their womb is being completely destroyed, writhing and screaming in pain as it is literally being sucked out of the warmth and comfort of its home. They want to hear that it will be a quick and easy process in which they will feel little to no pain. So that is what they are told.

These sites also give reassurance. They say that most women feel relieved after an abortion. They say girls should feel good, not upset or guilty. Taking a look at other sites would prove beneficial. Looking at and reading about other women's experiences would show that most women feel very guilty about their abortions and regret ever having them. Many were put up to the abortion by parents or boyfriends' families. The mothers mourn the child that they could have

had and the life they would have brought into the world. These women carry this in their hearts and live through the rest of their lives, unable to forgive themselves.

Abortion comes in many shapes and sizes. There is medication abortion, aspiration, and dilation and evacuation abortion. Medication abortion is for nine weeks gestation or earlier and it opens the cervix and empties the uterus with only two pills. Taking the second pill at home sends the mother's body into contractions. Aspiration is used up to sixteen weeks after the beginning of pregnancy. Using a vacuum, it sucks the fetus out of the womb piece by piece. A D&E abortion is used after sixteen weeks and is similar to an aspiration, cutting and sucking the child out piece by piece. The mother is put on pain medication while the child receives no such attention. This is sheer torture--the ultimate murder. The child can feel because the nervous system is one of the earliest organs developed after conception.

Every year in the United States, about thirty thousand people are killed by guns. Out of this astonishing number, 55% are self-inflicted deaths. Alcohol has been known to cause at least thirty-five thousand deaths each year. 71% of these deaths are self-inflicted. Cigarettes have caused more than four hundred and forty thousand deaths and 91% of these deaths are self-inflicted. Since Roe v Wade in 1973, over fifty-four million innocent children have been aborted. One child gets aborted every twenty-six seconds. That's one hundred and thirty-seven children sentenced to death every hour. Less

than 0.000001% of these deaths are self-inflicted. Abortion kills more innocent people than guns, alcohol, and cigarettes combined. Abortion is the ultimate child abuse.

If the world could hear their tiny voices scream out in horror as the lives they would have had are sucked away and the dreams and hopes that they would have had are snuffed out, then everything would change. But the world cannot hear these innocent cries, so it goes on and kills. This is wrong. Why is it okay to kill an innocent child within its mother, yet it is wrong to kill anyone out of their mother's womb? "A person is a person no matter how small." Everyone knows this famous quote from Doctor Seuss. It states the most obvious and simple fact in the world. Why can this not be seen? How can the people today miss this small and simple truth? The Bible says, "The truth will set you free." The truth will set free all those lives that will never see the light of day, if only those who have seen the light will let it.

President Barack Obama, who is pro-choice, after the Sandy Hook Shooting in Connecticut, said this: "With their very first cry, this most precious, vital part of ourselves--our child--is suddenly exposed to the world, to possible mishap or malice. And every parent knows there is nothing we will not do to shield our children from harm."

He then stated, "This is our first task--caring for our children. It's our first job. If we don't get that right,

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Be the Voice for Life

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we don't get anything right. That's how, as a society, we will be judged. We need to keep our children—all of them—safe from harm...Can we truly say we are doing enough to give all the children of this country the chance they deserve to live out their lives in happiness and with purpose?... the answer is no. We're not doing enough. And we will have to change."

Denton Boone, a freshman in college and a pro-life activist, said, "It will not be our generation's protests and prayers that end abortion, but it will be the generation that we save by being a witness to this cause that will end abortion." There was a sign at this year's March for Life. It read,

"Is This the Only Pro-Life Thing You Will Do This Year?" The abortion rates have fallen since 1990 but are still above one million abortions per year. This generation needs to stand up for life for the next generation and live. The little that is done can save so many lives. Only God can give life; only God should take it. These children have no choice because they have no voice. Be that voice and shout out for life.

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Ania Hatfield is the daughter of Full Covenant members Andy and Janet Hatfield and will be in the 11th grade at Alleluia Community School this fall.

You are cordially invited to attend:

A SOUTHERN EVENING FOR LIFE 2014

Saturday, August 16, 2014

St. Mary on the Hill Catholic School Dining Hall

Featured Speaker: Mrs. Rita Marker, JD, Executive Director of the Patients Rights Council
"Doctor Prescribed Suicide, Euthanasia & Health Care Decisions, How to Protect Yourself and Your Loved Ones"

Mr. Daniel Becker, President of Georgia Right to Life, will discuss "Being Pro-Life without Exception"

Authentic Southern Music by Erin Eubanks and the Family Fold

Down Home Southern Cooking by Terry Wick

\$50 per ticket

Table reservations for groups of eight are available for \$400

Sponsored by: The Greater Augusta Chapter of Georgia Right to Life

All proceeds will be used to support Pro-life activities in the CSRA

Please contact Dr. Gene Binet at 706-855-0906 (gorabinet@aol.com)

Sponsorship Tables are available for \$500