**Virtual Church: creating biblical communities online**
Blake Wagner & Ron Toews

www.leaders2learners.ca

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**Virtual Church: Creating Biblical Communities Online**

*first* ... what is biblical community?

*then* ... is virtual community biblical?

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**What is biblical community?**

*Koinonia* → *community*

fellowship
intimacy
association
communion
joint participation

**Acts 2:42-47
depicts
how
*koinonia*
functioned**

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**Acts 2:42-47 (NIV)**

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship *[koinonia]*, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

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**What is biblical community?**

*koinonia* revolved around belief

but it was primarily an intimate behavior

**Essential features of NT Christian community**

- centered in Jesus Christ and his love

- this fellowship was a gift of the Holy Spirit

- the community was missional

*Authentic Fellowship, Howard Snyder (2003)*

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**Aspects of biblical community:**

*Ro 12.5* - each member belongs to all the others

*Ro 12.10* - be devoted to one another in brotherly love

*Ro 12.10* - honor one another above yourselves

*Ro 15.5* - enjoy a spirit of unity among yourselves

*Ro 15.7* - accept one another

*Ro 15.14* - instruct one another

*Ro 16.3-6,16* - greet one another

*Gal 5.13* - serve one another in love

*Gal 6.2* - carry one another's burdens

*Eph 4.2* - bear with one another in love

*Eph 4.32* - forgive each other

*Eph 5.21* - submit to one another out of reverence for Christ

*1 Thes 5.11* - encourage one another & build each other up

*Heb 10.25* - meet for habitual worship to encourage one another

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**Pan to Blake …**
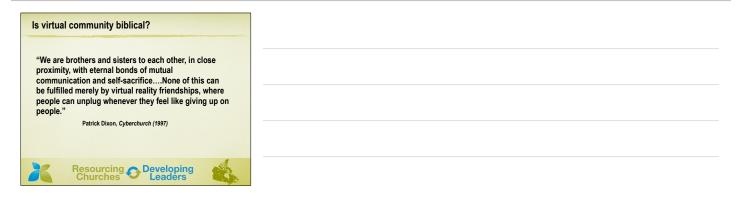
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**Discussion**

- Based on the biblical framework established earlier, to what degree do you think Blake's virtual community is biblical?

- Can you think of anything that is missing?

- What's been your own experience in building biblical community in the virtual arena?

- What tech questions do you have for Blake?

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**Is virtual community biblical?**

- **Many religious groups use the internet to further their interests**

- **Not everyone agrees that virtual community is, or can be, biblical**

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**Is virtual community biblical?**

**"We are brothers and sisters to each other, in close proximity, with eternal bonds of mutual communication and self-sacrifice....None of this can be fulfilled merely by virtual reality friendships, where people can unplug whenever they feel like giving up on people."**

**Patrick Dixon, *Cyberchurch (1997)***

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**Is virtual community biblical?**

**"The anonymity of the Internet will cause irresponsibility in community."**

**David Clough, *Unweaving the web: Beginning to think theologically about the internet* (2002)**

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**Is virtual community biblical?**

**"The fundamental question is how the Internet may be made a technology that enables human living, rather than threatening it."**

**David Clough (2002)**

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**Is virtual community biblical?**

**"The Internet encourages people to opt out of the kind of flesh-and-blood relationships that are the indispensable condition of shared religious meanings."**

**Chris McGillion (2000)**

**Is virtual community biblical?**

Through technology we are trying to harness nature by constructing an artificial world that turns out to constrain, limit, and dominate us.

Jacques Ellul

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**Is virtual community biblical?**

"The father of technological determinism  Marshall McLuhan would probably argue that  trying to keep the medium from becoming the message is an exercise in futility. McLuhan argued that changes in modes of  communication shape human existence. These changes influence the way people think, feel, and act."

Em Griffin, *A First Look at Communication Theory* (2001)

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**Is virtual community biblical?**

McLuhan insisted that the instant communication made possible by the internet would 'retribalize' the human race, building a new 'global village' in which concepts of individualism and privacy would be replaced by an over-all-awareness of a mosaic world in which space and time are overcome…a simultaneous, 'all-at-once' world in which everything resonates with everything else as in a total electrical field.

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**Is virtual community biblical?**

The church advanced the Gospel by means of the cultural and physical assets that were available

i.e.,  Roman roads, jurisprudence

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**We can't see the God we worship…but we worship anyhow**

Our inability to see Jesus or touch Jesus does not prevent us from experiencing Jesus.

- John 1.18  "No-one has ever seen God, but God the One and [the] Only [Son], who is at the Father's side, has made him known."

- John 14.16-19  "… Before long, the world will not see me any more, but you will see me."

- John 20.28  "Thomas said to him, ``My Lord and my God!" 29  Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

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