

HOW COMMUNITY BRINGS HEALING – 4/20-21/2024

Aloha! Good evening (morning)! Great to see everyone. So we are going through our “ONE” series exploring what it means to “come in unity” and be in community with each other. Over the past couple of weeks we shared how being a part of authentic community is God’s plan A to transform our lives. We need God and while many of us shy away from it, we also need authentic community.

It’s like the woman who locked her keys in the car. She needed help so she prayed for someone to help her. Just then, a man stopped she asked him to help get her keys out of her car and he got her keys out in no time flat. She threw up her hands and said thank you, Lord for sending me this nice man to help. He said, “I’m not nice, I just got out of jail for grand theft auto.” The woman exclaimed, “Praise Jesus, you even sent me a professional!”

God will transform our lives through authentic community. Say it, I need authentic community. Why? Because we can’t do life by ourselves. We simply can’t and we weren’t made to do it by ourselves.

Matthew 5:3 – “Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven”

Poor in Spirit is not about someone who is poor financially, or physically. It is a realization that we cannot do anything by ourselves. We realize our brokenness. We need Jesus and others to do life with. Together we encourage each other toward Jesus. So that as we rely on Jesus and others, we see God’s goodness and experience the Kingdom of Heaven (as the verse says)? Amen! One of the good things of God is healing.

That’s what we are discussing today. How healing comes through authentic community. Oh, but pastor, isn’t healing up to God? We just sang, healing is in His hands, right? That’s correct. So, how’s that work? If healing is in His hands, we get to be His extensions to each other and the world. We work in tandem with him – abide in him. He transforms and heals through us. God allows us to be a part of it and in the process, we are also healed and transformed – God’s Plan “A”. Amen!

I firmly believe this. That folks can be healed amid authentic community (small groups, if you will). Because I’ve seen it. All kinds of crazy healing – spiritual, physical, emotional. Signed, sealed, delivered. They cry to Jesus,” I’m yours!”

Not to mention, but I will, it’s in God’s Word.

James 5:16

“Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” (James 5:16)

What that says to me is, “get together in these authentic communities, small groups. Share (you need not share with the entire church), earnestly pray, and watch what GOD can do.”

We see an example of how healing takes place in authentic community in **Luke 5:17-26 / Mark 2:3-11**, there’s a story that we need to look at. It was so good, the Lord saw fit to share it twice. (GPS joke?) I know it’s coming up, no need call for instructions, just keep driving.

The story goes that Jesus is teaching in someone’s home. The place is packed out with folks who had heard about His teachings and healings. Pharisees were there because they were suspicious of his teachings, and they were also checking out whom they thought was their competition (I’m paraphrasing). Anyway, crazy thing happens. While all these folks are gathered standing room only, a group of men come to the home carrying their friend on a mat. Their friend is paralyzed. But like everyone else, they have heard of Jesus, His teachings, and healings and figure, our friend can get healed. Of course, he is also onboard. Literally, get it, onboard. Because he is being carried, anyway ... Their compassion for their friend has them walking from Waipahu to Launani Valley to get ‘em to Jesus, the place is packed out and they can’t get in. So, they go back home. NO! You would think P. Earl was leading the charge, they get to the roof, remove the tile of the home (Mark’s version says they had to dig through the roof), and lower their friend right in front of Jesus.

Picture this, Jesus sees him, duh, everyone sees him. It’s what in the world. Everyone knows Jesus has gotta heal him. Right? The story goes on and results in everyone being in awe as the man is told, “Get up, pick up your mat, and go home.’

Praise God! This man had ??? friends, authentic community. The reality is without them, he would not be able to even get there. An Uber might get him there but not on the roof. P. Earl calls them “mat friends.” Goza story – mats. We see this emphasized in verse 20 where it says, “When Jesus saw their faith, he ... it wasn’t his faith alone. It was their faith collectively. Let’s press in a little bit further because while I wasn’t there, I bet the faith of the entire room after that was through the roof. AMEN! The faith of a few in authentic community can increase the faith of an entire community.

KURT ABAS – last night

Spiritual and emotional healing and transformation can be found in authentic community.

Let’s continue through the story. Because there are so many cool things in this story. Recall, Jesus sees their faith, and says, “Your sins are forgiven.” Hah? Interesting. I was expecting you to be healed. But he says, your sins are forgiven. It wasn’t a physical healing that happened at the get-go. It was a spiritual healing and perhaps emotional healing that was needed first.

What do I mean by that? Back in those days, folks believed physical ailments were a sign of unrepented sin. Sometimes, but not all the time. We don't know what caused his ailment but based on history and practice, we can know folks probably talked about him causing separation from people. He may have been shunned. Some may have even seen him as being untouchable for fear that his being unclean might spread to them. Whatever the origins of his ailments might be, he would not have lived without hearing and feeling the lies that the enemy tried to work on him through folks to detach him from society. But, for the compassion of his friends.

KIRA COLLINS

We need to be in small groups or authentic community to grow and experience God's grace because it is there that we see as in Kira's case, we can experience supernatural grace extended through the youth to love her just as and where she is. The same is true for our small groups. Because we know each other, we know the hearts, and there is a supernatural grace extended through and to each person to love immeasurably, without judgment. There is greater transparency and revelation. It's deep and amazing stuff. When you think about it, in crisis, the grace of the group will help by absorbing some of the shocks of the emotions, and situation to help an individual remain grounded and lead them back to Jesus.

It is only in authentic community that we can do life on life and see our faith grow, What I want us to see, is that in community, there's a whole lot more than just the healing that we expect to happen or are praying for.

Through it we gain courage and confidence; knowing we are accepted; and boldness rises to share and speak truth in love honoring each other as the Lord would have us. So that God's power is in the midst to heal. There is an increased level of faith and openness to transformation.

SHAYNA & WAYDEN CHU

Transition to coffee story – MAKING COFFEE

- God the power
- Water our belief – what makes it coffee / keeps it coffee / helps coffee be coffee
- Is coffee grinds – YOU!

Today I am contending for each of us to be in authentic community. To join a small group, a ministry, a Christ-based group at your workplace or school where you can do life on life. Don't wait for crisis, when the storms hit to get into an authentic small group or community. Don't wait until you cannot walk. Folks who weather storms best are the ones who are rock solid in God's goodness. He is their foundation and a

part of their subfloor includes good authentic community. It's not an "if" it is "when."

Then, be ready to transform and be amazed – get into a small group and watch what God will do.

Testimonies to share:

Saturday evening: Kira Collins / Shayna & Wayden Chu / Kurt Abas

Sunday morning: Kira Collins / Shayna & Wayden Chu

Both P. Mark and P. Earl spoke about the lie that the enemy would like us to believe to keep us siloed from others. It has to do with stewardship of time and pride. We have no time for community and these groups where folks get touchy-feely, it's for those who cannot do things on their own. Just to make the urge to stay away stick, he will remind us of past hurts. Oh, the enemy will also play the blame and shame game. Shamed into not sharing our struggles, we are left to face our challenges alone. All the while enemy is saying, "GOT YOU!"

I know, I've been there. That "none" group that P. Mark spoke about. I spent some time there. I was ashamed and prideful. I sat in my silo. I thought I had the enemy by the tail, but he had me with his tales, and he was taking me everywhere believing his lies. By God's grace and community, I began to return. Long story short, we started to attend NHM. Then, one Pidgin speaking, Japanese, Pastor named Earl, started to call Guy and me to come to join his ohana group. What did we do? Uh, no, we're good. We'd love to, but our schedules are so crazy. For two years, we were stubborn, we resisted. We were proud of it, too. But God had other ideas. We decided to go ... the first couple of times it felt uncomfortable, but then, relationships were built and to this day, we remain friends with that group. Some have moved on to other churches, others have moved states, but our connections remain.

Questions for Groups or reflection:

- What does it mean to be in authentic community?
- What are "mat friends?"
- How does God work through our "mat friends" to bring about healing?
- What distinguishes mat friends from any other group of folks you might gather with?
- What does Matthew 5:3 look like to you?
- What might keep someone from being a part of a small group community in Christ?