

Building Intimate Communities

The church is described in the New Testament in community terms. It is a family of brothers and sisters, a body with Christ as the head and a called-out people. Despite this, many churches lack that sense of togetherness and consequently fall short of what Christ expects from his church. Moreover, this distance between church members actually detracts from the effectiveness of church life. This session will do an initial analysis of the cause of this distance and explore remedies to the problem. Thought will be given to how we build and develop small groups, how they are led, and what their purpose should be. There will also be a focus on how to build longevity into these groups and how to keep members engaged in them.

Stephen McQuoid grew up in Ethiopia where his parents were missionaries. He then lived in Ireland where he qualified as a nurse before going on to study theology, gaining a variety of degrees including an MTh and PhD in theology. He is the author of 16 books on subjects such as discipleship, evangelism, apologetics, and church discipline. Stephen is the General Director of Gospel Literature Outreach, a missionary organisation based in Europe. He is married to Debbie, and they along with their three children. Stephen and Debbie attend Clyde Valley Community Church in Motherwell. His interests include motorbikes, football, boxing, MMA, and Politics.

1. What we battle with

- Spiritual nominalism
- Consumerism
- A false view of church
- Formality and church culture

2. Danger of Discipleship at a distance

3. Being a family

The hardest value of all because the church contains such diversity.

4. The early days

Acts 2:41 3,000 people ushered into church.

Acts 2:44-46:

- they continued to meet together.
- they opened up their homes to each other.

5. Building Intimate Communities?

- Starts with culture:
 - Teaching programme
 - Encourage attendance
 - Induction of new members
 - Prioritise connection times in church programme
 - Make church life social orientated
- Small group participation
 - Fellowship
 - Trust
 - Supportive prayer
 - Regular interaction (social media)
 - Dealing with issues
 - Mutual pastoral care
 - Training
 - Mentoring

Remember the number of relationships that need to be kept healthy

6. Encourage an open home policy:

This is the biggest challenge

Clearly kind quality fellowship early church committed to.

- What holds us back?
 - Too busy
 - Too private
 - Too concerned about our reputation
 - Too lazy
 - Too guarded

- Experience of hospitality. Hasn't always been pleasure:
 - The formal frumps
 - Friendly chaos
 - The posh & perfect set
 - Lavish luxury
- Dealing with reality
 - Bring people into your private space
 - Can't hide when people are in your home
 - People see your lifestyle
 - Inherently draining
 - Can be expensive
 - Aspects home life can suffer
 - Show the good with the bad

7. Develop personal partnerships