

Episode 105

"In Lystra, there was a young disciple named Timothy. His mother was a Jewish believer, but his father was a Greek. Timothy was well thought of by the believers in Lystra and Iconium, so Paul wanted him to join them on their journey."

- Acts 16.1-3

In our self-centred, independent, western worldview, we can often overlook the importance of a verse like this. We frame it simply as Paul seeing potential in a young man and inviting him along to show him a thing or two, while in actual fact, the value of community in the ancient near east was so strong, Paul wouldn't go if he was going alone.

In fact, when writing to the Corinthians, Paul mentions a time when God had opened a door for him to preach the gospel in Troas, but because he didn't find Titus there, he left and went on to Macedonia. Let that sink in a little. God opened a door for him to preach the gospel. In other words, he had the opportunity to see people saved, lives changed, towns and cities turn to Jesus, but he left because his mate wasn't there! Sometimes I don't even know where to file that?!

Our dissonance with such a decision is purely because we don't have a true grasp of the biblical value of community.

The growth of the early church is the most remarkable sociological movement in world history. In AD 40 there were roughly 1000 Christians in the Roman empire, by AD 330, there were almost 30 million. That accounted for roughly 53% of the world's population. How is it possible for this seemingly obscure sect to become the greatest movement in the world? The early Christians didn't have what we now consider essential to our faith - church buildings, bands, lighting, good coffee, social media, youtube, etc. They didn't even have the completed New Testament. Yet by continually loving one another, serving those in need, praying together, blessing and building each other up, slowly over the years, they brought the Roman empire to its knees. How did they do this? They did this through loving community.

A few weeks back I tried to gently encourage those who were lagging in the shadows to press in, but today I am going to lean like a shepherd. If you are staying away because of health issues, please, by all means, stay safe. But if you are staying away because of habit, realise the extremely precarious position you have put yourself and your family in, and make the necessary changes.

ONE33