

Jason Shepperd

DIVERSITY IN COMMUNITY

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A church is more than a group. A church is diverse. A church has different age groups, different ethnicities, different marital status, different places in their spiritual maturity, different socio economic status, different spiritual gifting and ministries. In a church there are married and single, rich and poor, unbeliever, new believer, immature believer, mature believer, different color and culture.

Groups can be homogenous, but not a church. No church is, or should be, monolithic. Can you imagine a whole church of people just like one another?

Yet, within most churches, most groups and classes are homogenous. This certain age, this life stage, these specific similarities, this certain ministry, that unite us together. Most people gather in community with people who are similar to them. Most people have close friends in their church community who are in their same life stage, same socio-economic bracket, same color skin, and same spiritual maturity level. And, have little to no community beyond my similarities.

Diversity deepens discipleship. Diversity reflects the early church. Diversity represents the gospel. The gospel destroys divisions.

Diversity.

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Having friends in church is awesome. We should. I have them. My kids have them. In fact, my best friends come from within the church.

But, when Scripture uses identifiers for the church, it speaks primarily of family. We are a spiritual family. But most people in church only live in true community with similar friends, and not in diverse family. We may be in the same auditorium with people who are different than us, but most often not in deep diverse relationships.

It's harder to make family in a church community than it is to make friends. Again, assuming that we don't define community as sitting in the same large room with people, but living life together in living rooms and kitchens and conversations and connected in closeness.

Most churches are pretty good at creating friendships, but not as great at creating family. We create homogenous groups in Sunday School, homogenous groups in Small Groups. This is where our closest community is. It's not bad. I'm grateful for so much of what this accomplishes. It's just not the fullness of what God designed in His church.

We may sit in a big room with people who are different than us. But, we're not really in community with people who aren't like us. We say the church should be diverse. But we don't sit in diverse

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community. We may be in an auditorium with people not like us, but we're not on a couch with people not like us.

The church has propagated homogenous community, when the Scriptures teach us all about diversity in the church community. We have insufficiently taught that community is who you're in a big room with occasionally. When actually, your church community would be people who you live life with closely.

Diversity is multi-layered. Diversity includes, but is much more than, racial diversity. To live in actual community with someone unlike you is not only unusual, it is unique, rare, and difficult.

Community is difficult, but crucial. Diversity is community is even more difficult if we have a church structured toward life-stage affinity.

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The church should have Generational Diversity.

"Teach the older women to...then they can urge the younger women to..." *Titus 2:3-4*

The church should have Socioeconomic Diversity.

"Do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing?" *I Corinthians 11:22*

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The church should have Ethnic Diversity.

“There is neither Jew nor Gentile...for you are all one in Christ Jesus” *Galatians 3:28*

The church should have Diversity of Spiritual Maturity.

“...Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” *Ephesians 4:13*

The church should have Diversity of Spiritual Gifting.

“If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body.” *I Corinthians 12:19-20*

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GET BACK TO GOD'S ORIGINAL DESIGN FOR PASTORING HIS CHURCH

Let's begin by **rethinking** and **returning**.

A biblically articulated and applied ecclesiology is happening in churches at a growing rate. Together we are walking out leading in Jesus' plans for His church, and encouraging each other along the way.

Jason Shepperd planted Church Project, a Church of House Churches, in 2010 in The Woodlands, TX. With no people, no place, no money, and no outside support, Church Project started as nothing more than an idea. Since 2010, thousands now gather weekly in local "House Church" communities, and millions of dollars have been directed to gospel-centered ministries.

Jason has also started and oversees Church Project Network, House Church Network, Good City and START WITH 7.

RESOURCES FOR CHURCH LEADERS & CHURCHES

CHURCH PROJECT NETWORK

HOUSE CHURCH NETWORK

CHURCH PROJECT (THE WOODLANDS, TX)

GOOD CITY

START WITH 7 AUDIO DEVOTIONALS