

Talk It Over

Centrifugal (Week 1) A Centripetal Community

SMALL TALK

1. When was the last time you stepped out of your comfort zone in order to get into the endzone? What was the positive result?

VIEWPOINT

2. What are the definitions of “Centripetal” and “Centrifugal”?
3. **READ John 15:1-17.** What “Centripetal” activity does Jesus describe, with what “Centrifugal” results?
4. How important are the “centripetal” habits and activities? (John 15:5)

GETTING PERSONAL

5. During the pandemic have you become more isolated, or more mission focused, looking at it as an opportunity to shine?
6. If centripetal is the pull toward being Christ-centered, and centrifugal is the outward force of being fruitful in Christ’s mission, and we need both, are you experiencing both, none, or only one? Elaborate.
7. Brainstorm some doable helps to “improve your serve”?

PRACTICE!

8. Devote Daily, Pursue Relationally, Guide Biblically, Live Authentically, Engage Missionally (3 Qs to help):

September 26, 2021

Centrifugal (Week 1) A Centripetal Community

[Week 2] With Centrifugal Force.

The 2 titles read together: We are a centripetal community with centrifugal force.

- Definitions are helpful here.

Centripetal means moving or tending to move toward a center.
Centrifugal means moving or tending to move from that center with ever widening power.

- We are a Christ Centered Community. That's a centripetal community, moving to the center.
- AND We are Christ's Church, on mission. (That's a centripetal community with centrifugal force).

We are a centripetal community with centrifugal force.

We are drawn to the center, and that center, Jesus Christ, compels us and propels us outward with power!

This is what I see when I look into God's word. But there is something else I see when I look into the mirror of God's Word. I see myself and where I fall short. More than ever in my experience I face a new danger. It is a danger born out of pain and amplified by the pandemic, but me. The real problem this mirror is showing me is my tendency to yield to the temptation to withdraw too long. Let me put it another way, I, like many others find myself finding solace, comfort, and security in centripetal activities, too much so, to the neglect of the centrifugal calling upon my life as a follower of Jesus. I go solo too much. Just me and God. Or just me, God, and my family. Or just me, God, and my church family. But what about the community?

I fail in this question:

Are you far too far away from those who are far away from God?

The kind of people that fail here are usually, like me, people who have been believers for a long time. It isn't intentional. As we are functioning in many good centripetal ways, if we are not careful, we get further and further away from the welcoming open door relationships with people who are on the outside.

We are a centripetal community with centrifugal force. We function inside and outside. We are like sheep who are led by a shepherd in and out of the sheepfold. We are a community in him, but a centripetal community with centrifugal force. We gather and we scatter. We pray and we work.

Here's another way to put it. We Abide and we Abound. Let me explain.

I **ABIDE** in Jesus.

*John 15:4–5 (ESV) **Abide** in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, **he it is that bears much fruit**, for apart from me you can do nothing.*

- What is “abiding”? Remain in Jesus. Make your life all about Jesus and Jesus' mission. Remain in and stay connected with Jesus. Connect and make your home in him.
- Abiding is a well developed rhythm of centripetal centering activity.
- We need not only the correct center, but also a developed habit of centering activities that are transforming us to be more like Jesus.

II **ABOUND** in good fruit.

For this rhythm we have a pattern of disengaging from the world then reengaging the world, the same pattern we see in Jesus.

He was on the move, yes, but only as His Father directed him. His compassion flowed from His love for his Father in Heaven.

He then taught his disciples this pattern, only, he taught that he himself was to be our center.

*John 15:6-8 (ESV) “If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, **that you bear much fruit** and so prove to be my disciples.”*

We must ABIDE & ABOUND!

*2 Corinthians 9:8 (ESV) And God is able to make all grace **abound** to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may **abound** in every good work.*

If we are dominated by the centripetal, we end up removing ourselves from the world, which is a situation Jesus specifically prayed would not be the case (John 17:15).

John 17:15 (ESV) I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.

We are not to live a monk-like life of the monastery, continuously disconnected from the world and Christ’s mission.

As a community of believers we need to be both centripetal and centrifugal, abiding and abounding!

III Everyone needs a CENTER; what’s yours?

Maybe a really good question to ask yourself is this one. When you are not “abiding” in Jesus, where are you “abiding”? When you are not “at home with Jesus” what are you making your comfortable place?

***John 15:7 (The Message)** But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon.*

Do you think Jesus would say something like this to you? *"I have made my home in you, but you still keep your home in other places. To make me your abiding place, you need to learn to find your comfort and fulfillment in me."*

So we need to ask ourselves, Where do I abide when I am stressed? What is my go to comfort place, space, activity, or thought habit? What becomes my center during stress, or hurt? How can I change that?

Everyone rotates around a center. What's your abiding place? Is your center, off center?

For many, self-indulgence is their comfort, and Self is their center.

But we all know self-centeredness doesn't bode well for relationships, or for community or for society.

POLITICS, LAW, AND RELIGION attempt to solve this by creating BOUNDARIES.

- OT was primarily Centripetal.
- Jesus was dynamically both Centripetal and Centrifugal.
- Centered to reach beyond the boundaries.

We become whole and healthy through a relationship centered on God. Yet, a relationship centered on God is not boundary focused but relationship focused.

***John 13:35 (ESV)** By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

- Jesus created a beautiful and compelling centripetal community that is observable.
- How does it happen: by being centered, by “abiding”, and because we are loved, we love. We become outwardly focused, “abounding”.
- If we are not “abounding” with fruitfulness, it is not centered the way Jesus describes.
- We are a centripetal community with centrifugal force.

Another powerful description of Jesus as the CENTER is this one:

Colossians 1:17 (ESV) And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

I believe this is literally true at the physics level, or the level of the elements themselves. Everything holds together because Christ holds it together.

Then we read in **2 Peter 3** about when the elements are not held together anymore. The earth and heavens as we know it are burned with fire, then replaced by a new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.

If you want security and hope in uncertain times make Christ your center. HOW? Come to Christ to have him restore your relationship to God through His blood, shed on the cross. Then trust Jesus who now lives in you. Make him your home, and center. Allow his Spirit to love others through you. Jesus is the central joy you have always been longing for!

I love how the conclusion of Revelation talks about Jesus as the center.

Revelation 7:17 (CSB) For the Lamb who is at the center of the throne will shepherd them; he will guide them to springs of the waters of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.