

## Tilling the Soil of the Heart #4

- Ron Stullenbarger -

One of the gifts God has given us for making our hearts receptive to Him is each other. The church is both a beautiful and broken group of people. It is beautiful because of the grace of God working in each of us making us more like Jesus. It is broken because we have yet to walk in the fullness of what Christ did for us on the cross. Some of us have felt anger, frustration, or annoyance with a fellow believer. But if we are to walk in the fullness of what God intends for us here on earth, we must continually forgive and ask forgiveness from each other and share life with believers in accordance with God's word.

The Bible is clear that the best place for us to thrive is in community with fellow believers. Romans 12:5 teaches us that we are all *"one body in Christ, and individually members of one another."* Hebrews 10:24-25 says, *"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."* And Ephesians 4:15-16 teaches us that *"speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."* We need each other. We're joined together as the body of Christ made to function as one — both for our edification and the fulfillment of God's eternal purposes in the world.

In order to make the soil of our heart soft and receptive to God, we must have help from those God has placed around us. We are created to worship with the body of Christ for all eternity, and that includes right now! The church is not perfect, but it is God's Bride. His desire is for His people, and He loves to pour out His presence in unique ways when we gather together. ***There is edification we need that can only take place in the presence of fellow believers.*** There is blessing that can only be received when we open our heart to the family of God. We all have wounds; we all need grace; we all need each other. The very person who most annoys you might need you the most!

God asks us to humble ourselves before Him and each other. Philippians 2:3 teaches us to *"do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves."* When we humble ourselves, we will find a peace that is never available in living for our own ambitions. When we submit ourselves to imperfect people, we give away our sense of entitlement and find the grace of God that's poured out on those who truly count others as more significant than themselves. It's in the submission to others and giving away of our own rights that the soil of our heart is made soft and receptive to God. It's in spending time with fellow imperfect people that we become edified and are spurred on toward spending more time with God.