

WHATEVER IT TAKES  
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Would you like to be part of a community where you could see the extraordinary in the ordinary? Would you like to be part of the extraordinary that God so desires to bring out of the ordinary?

Would you like to be part of this community - Whatever it takes?

A vibrant family - Whatever it takes?

We will be real as we care for one another and work together.

A question - Are we a community with an attitude of "Whatever it takes?"

When people are prepared to do whatever it takes - you get an idea of what they are really passionate about, and what people are passionate about they think is VERY important.

They'd seen him do it before

Sometimes he'd done it alone

But sometimes he'd done it with them

They'd even asked him to teach them how to do it

But this time it was different

It had been quite a week

It had begun with cheering and waving crowds

Then he had surprised everyone by turning the tables upside down in the temple courts

People were stunned - some really angry

They they'd share the meal together

An ordinary meal in one way they they'd shared before

They were reclining - chatting together

When Jesus suddenly does something extraordinary

He prayed

But this time, in the middle of the meal, he prayed like he' never prayed before

And he prays as if he's completely oblivious to those around

But he prays with a passion that they haven't witnessed before

And he prays from his heart - this really means something - this is really important

John 17 v 1-26 Jesus' longest recorded prayer

He looked towards heaven and prayed:

"Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. " I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours,

and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name - the name you gave me - so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified. " My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. " Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you and they know that you have sent me. I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

There is an urgency and a passion in this prayer that reveals his heart, this is what it's all about.

This is the reason for Jesus birth, life, and coming death the resurrection, and what does he pray so passionately for?

It isn't evangelism

It isn't church growth

It isn't revival

It is unity - unity among his people, and unity is about relationships - harmonious relationships.

Jesus' prayer reflects what is on his Father's heart, look at the words used in the prayer, I, you, me, them, they, your, mine, we and us. There are 168 pronouns in 26 verses - 6 per verse!

It is full of intimacy and fellowship, 42 times Jesus links himself with the Father and 42 times he links us with the Father or the Son.

I/you/those they/yours you/me/them

Look at verses 1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 21, 22, 23

This prayer breathes relationship and we are being invited to participate in the relationship with the Father. It is Jesus' passion that we might know and experience this quality of relationship with the Father and that we might enjoy it with one another, this is extraordinary. The ordinary relationships that we have - can be transformed into the extraordinary and that is God's greatest desire, this is his dream -always has been always will be.

That we can experience the extraordinary kind of relationship that God himself enjoys

that we can enjoy it with the Father and that we can enjoy it with one another. This is the kind of relationship Jesus prays for us - one full of love, devotion, loyalty, affection, support, integrity, co-operation, honesty, commitment, honour, trust, transparency, interdependence, joy, security and unity. When Jesus lived he still lived in this kind of relationship - it was a continuation of the intimacy of eternity, and he is our example. The relationship between Father and Son is the model for all our relationships: marriage & family, church & inter-church, small groups, leaders. Jesus prayer reveals that relationships are the goal of creation, the prayer spans eternity ; "you loved me before the creation of the world" (v24), from eternity past.

- "I pray for those you've given me,  
- I pray for those who will believe,  
- It is worked out in time,  
- I want those you have given me to be with me where I am" (v24)

It looks forward to an eternal future God created so that we might share with him in relationship. Imagine God's delight as he says "let us make men and women in our image", his delight as he walks in the garden with those he has created - keeping the dream alive, and then imagine the hurt when he goes to walk with Adam & Eve and he can't find them. This must have been a new experience for him, never has the Father hidden from the Son, or the Son from the Spirit or the Spirit from the Father. Imagine the emotion in the cry "where are you?" Then God asks "What have you done?" I didn't create you for this ..... broken relationships. Can you hear God's pain, anguish, agony, distress, heartbreak, grief, hurt?

Sin shatters relationships, destroys intimacy, annihilates trust and wrecks unity. Where there is unity - there God bestows his blessing. Can you feel the ache of God's heart through history? The Crusades, Hitler, The Jews, Famine in Africa, Aids, Iraq, Israel, Northern Ireland? Children abused, wives beaten, families broken, marriages falling apart, people tortured, children and women trafficked, slavery. And much of it is in the church. How about today? In this church? What does God see here, now, today in this community? Over what might his heart ache?

I didn't create you for this - but for intimacy, fellowship, security, joy. Jesus was so passionate about relationships that he was prepared to do whatever it took to restore them. What did his whatever it takes attitude cost him?

Extract from 'Living Below with the Saints we know' by Brian Hattaway; Published by Eagle 1996.

The cost of restoration  
And the cost of this restoration of relationships for Jesus? Incredible! Ponder these steps:

The frailty of becoming a human baby.  
The shame of illegitimacy.  
The terror of being a refugee.  
The experience of an oppressive occupying power.  
The learning of a trade.

The grief and the loss of an earthly father.  
The direct confrontation with Satan.  
The hunger from fasting.  
The disappointment of unbelief in his home town.  
The humility of washing dusty feet.  
The weariness of constant ministry.  
The frustration with this disciples.  
The misappropriation of money by a follower.  
The scorn and criticism as he:  
befriended prostitutes  
chose terrorists as disciples  
had meals with corrupt businessmen  
cared for lepers  
did good on the Sabbath  
ministered to non-Jews  
The hatred and opposition of the religious leaders.  
The fickle nature of the masses.  
The ingratitude of so many he ministered to .  
The treachery of the betrayal by Judas.  
The agony in the garden.  
The temptation to avoid the cross.  
The loneliness as his followers desert him.  
The heartbreak of denial by his key leader.  
The injustice of an illegal trial.  
The lies and slander in front of Pilate.  
The mockery of Herod.  
The manipulation of the mob at his trial.  
The physical pain as hair was pulled from his face.  
The agony of the beating.  
The disgrace of human spittle tricking down his face.  
The anguish and shame of crucifixion.  
The curses of the soldiers.  
The insults of the onlookers.  
The gloating of his enemies.  
The revulsion of being made sin.  
The horror of death.  
The forsaking by his Father - the shattering of the Trinity.  
The permanent alteration to the Trinity now - Christ has a resurrected body in heaven.

On the cross the ultimate price was paid because restored relationships are of ultimate value to God. As Christ hung on the cross, there was no voice of commendation; no descending doves; no cheering and applauding crowd. There was only the silence of eternity, the rumbling of an earthquake, the tearing of the temple curtain. But the fellowship, the intimacy, the love, devotion, the security and unity between Father and Son from all eternity was broken. In it's place, emptiness, desolation and the horror of a shattered relationship.

Whatever it takes - for you and me.

But we can so easily turn our back, throw it away, ignore the sacrifice.

Examples:

- the cheap shot
- the critical spirit
- the jabs and jibes to those who disagree with us
- the proud heart
- the refusal to be reconciled
- the gossip we share
- the grudges we choose to hold onto
- the unforgiveness we harbour
- the resentment we allow to become resentment and bitterness
- the people we refuse to engage with
- the competitiveness we employ

And this is as true in church and between churches as anywhere else in life. It seems to me Jesus' passion was not for :

- the business of our life together - our programmes or grand ideas
- our building - however nice we have come to believe it is
- for this church over and against any other church
- for denomination and theology.

The passion he died for was unity "that they may be one as we are one". We think this kind of relationship is unattainable, we think it's unrealistic - totally impossible but, friends, what does that say about God and what Christ did on the cross? Haven't we begun to see that God is quite capable of taking the ordinary and transforming it into something extraordinary. God himself has bridged the biggest imaginable gap - that between himself and us! All other divides can be bridged because he has done that. Friends, we need to see with Jesus' eyes, to have his passion for relationships to understand John 17 in the way Jesus prayed it. Friends, do you want to be part of a community where you could see the extraordinary in the ordinary? The lets make the passion of Jesus our passion and we will need a whatever it takes attitude like that of Jesus. And maybe we will see the extraordinary in the ordinary in our relationships that will, in turn, draw others in the relationship that God so longs, desires and dreams about.