

## Book Review: “Created for Christian Community”

By Carrie Cavanaugh

Through our years of research we have identified six “C”s that are common to all of our highly successful survey takers. One of these “C”s is Christian Community, one of the primary reasons people choose to work at Christian organizations. Christian Community is also a key factor in becoming one of the best, most effective workplaces in the world.

There are very few books available addressing the subject of Christian Community as such. However, Stanley Grenz’s “Created for Christian Community” may serve as a great starting place for any discussion of Christian Community, including at the workplace. This prominent theologian of the last couple of decades utilizes 300 pages to give an overview of the essentials of Christian theology with the point that theology is what shapes how we live and is therefore vital for everyone to know. Furthermore, community is the goal of God’s creative and redemptive work as revealed throughout theology. In fact these two affirmations are one and the same when seen from the perspective of Christians living out what they believe, which must take place within the community of faith.

The book is divided into 12 chapters which systematically cover who God is, who we are, who Christ is, who the Holy Spirit is, the corporate aspect of our faith and finally eschatology. For more controversial subjects, Grenz tries to present the major sides of each argument and then moves on by affirming the things all sides can agree upon. His overview includes scripture references as well as historic perspective.

Although his intended audience seems to be new believers who hold to a post-modern worldview, his explanations can be a fresh and relevant approach to theology for those who are very familiar with the Bible. This, along with the thought-provoking application questions at the end of each chapter, could easily lead into great discussion of what Christian community is and how it should be lived out.

Grenz explains that community is not only the “goal of history”, but it is “also the present – albeit partial – experience of each person who has come to know God.” He clarifies how this is so by explaining that we find our identity by associating with a group of people who believe as we do and have similar “stories”. Thus, as a person allies themselves with Christ, they likewise identify themselves with his chosen people – the church.

One of Grenz’s most convincing and elucidating arguments for our call to community comes as he describes the Trinity: “Because God is a plurality-in-unity, the ideal for humankind does not focus on the solitary person, but on persons-in-community.” He explicates this by pointing out that we are made in the image of God and as such should be like Him in this communal aspect.



Although Grenz does not focus on application, he does hint at what Christian community should look like. He explains that “because God loves each human being, God demands that we act justly. And God calls us to be instruments in bringing about the divine vision of love, justice, and righteousness for all humankind.” What better foundation is there for benefits packages that recognize the whole person, fair promoting practices and accountability programs?!

Grenz is also careful to explain what Christian Community is not. Unlike other religions where the ideal state is assimilation into the deity at the loss of your own individuality, the Biblical model is one of unique personhood. Thus, Christian community is a unified group of diverse peoples. Again, this has great implications for the workplace.

“The Christian life is not merely an individual struggle for perfection,” Grenz argues. Instead believers are to come along side of each other with “sympathy, compassion, and empathy for each other.” Part of this building up of each other is holding each other accountable. Beyond that we are also to be proactive teachers of the truth to each other. This argument is relevant to Christian organizations to utilize books like Grenz’s to instruct their staff in not only the basis for Christian Community, but also something of what it looks like.

Although “Created for Christian Community” isn’t a “How-To for Christian Organizations”, it would be a beneficial read for any Christian Administrator who is looking to create an environment of genuine community at his workplace.