

# Chronicles of Diversity

*Your leadership weekly*



*Future Home of  
Posada Wonder Springs?*

## Fifties revisited

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Now the Bible talks about the organization of peoples into groups of fifties for one of two reasons. 1. God had a purpose for including this grouping in the text of the Bible. 2. Fifties were just some quaint idea that the writers of the Bible conspired to perpetuate a myth to lead millions to mass organizational destruction.

Since number 2 has not taken place, we must assume that number 1 must be the right answer. If that is the case, since fifties are not mentioned in the Bible as often as tens, hundreds, and thousands, we must again wonder why they were not as popular as the other organizational structures. Again reasons for this slighting of fifties could be for a couple of reasons.

1. Tens, hundreds, and thousands sort of evolve out of man's sinfulness. Or put another way, it doesn't take any direction, or management control to live in these groupings because they are too vague to be of any use. 2. Fifties are important for the forming of dynamic human communities, but because again of our slothfulness, they are tried only at times when energetic human communities are needed. It is not that they will not work at other times, it is just that other things are more important, like the many phases of doing our own thing. By doing our own thing, we are accountable to no one, and hence it follows that, "Hey, its not my fault, what can one person do on their own?"

This whole community thing became important to me some years ago when I was returning from a time of refreshing at my property up on the Kettle River. I purchased in a cheap book place a book written by a Catholic Priest working with the poor in the Philippines. The focus of the book was ways they had tried to get these people to work together to overcome their poverty.

As I read his description of the methods they developed, I was struck with the similarity between his organizational structure and the framework of the military. The major difference being in the mission of the groups. The military has to fight a war against a visible enemy, these people were fighting a war against the invisible but real enemy of their poverty.

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What he found was that groups of 25-30 people were the most productive in raising their community standards, but if the group's size fell much below that level, the community development work could not be sustained. Therefore, the organizational method was to let the group grow to about fifty individuals and then split it in half and let the growth continue.

Another similarity with the military was that the power to overcome the problems, or accomplish the mission had to rest in the group itself. The priests, while they had to be present in a command and control, or leadership sense, had to allow solutions to be created by the people within the group. Because of that hands off problem solving, the groups needed to be at least 25 people to contain enough diversity of skills to make the whole organization work and therefore the people were able to be the owners of their destiny. The priests were the facilitators only, providing materials and expertise as the situation demanded. This is similar to the military platoon and its commanding officer, the Lieutenant.

Physical poverty in third world countries is a solvable problem. With technology appropriate to the local community, the lives of local people can be greatly enhanced. The problem is that it can not be dictated from the outside and be effective. Outside influences either economic, political, or religious, even if they are well established in the local communities, are most of the time the greatest hindrance to the personal growth of these communities. To replace one oppressive influence with another only leads to despair. This is why many western methods don't work in developing countries, for we are only replacing one bankrupt ideology with another.

In the developed world the problem of physical poverty is not as apparent. However, the problem of spiritual poverty is much more common than in the developing world. The amazing thing about the developed society is because of their physical affluence, they tend to dismiss spiritual poverty as an illusion, or bad karma.

People need to be accountable to other people for their actions. Just because sometimes that accountability takes place as tough love, or rebuke, only points to its necessity. If you don't have those people in your life, how are you supposed to find them?

I have heard that Martin Luther remarked, "I would like to throw Jimmy into the fire!" This refers to the concept of good works contained in the Epistle of James. John Calvin is said to have developed the concept of "Guilt, Grace, Gratitude," as the defining principles of the Christian life. In a way these efforts lead to an emphasis on the redemption of fallen man at the expense of his transformation as a redeemed child into the image of Christ, because gratitude is always an individual response.

In this process we make grace cheap and discipleship an option. If no one is telling us to develop our chunky mind or move our fat behind, rest assured few of us have the ability to continually keep at it. Even if we are good in certain areas, we cleverly hide other areas of slothfulness from ourselves and others. Over the years we can develop this to a pure art form.

Discipleship is developed through community. There is no other way. True worship can not take place by music alone, even though that is what much of contemporary evangelicalism teaches. While the voices may sound in unison, (or in harmony), unison and harmony can not take place if you don't know what instrument you are, or where you fit in the orchestra. You can't have an orchestra if no one can read music, little lone play the instruments. And even with the music and the instruments, the sounds are all off key unless everyone practices.

I had a professor in college who walked into our Invertebrate Zoology class the first day of the quarter stating, in a somewhat humorous passing remark, as he described the requirements of the course, "This is the only class you are taking this quarter, isn't it?" I was more proud of that "B" I got in that course than many "A's."

Whether you know the identity of some bug, probably won't change your life, but knowing Who created the bug, and how He can help you understand your life in the complexity of an infinitely complex universe, is life changing.

I have never heard a pastor step behind his pulpit on a Sunday morning and state, "This is the only course you are taking in your life, listen up, and be prepared for some difficult homework."

While the words may be different, the concept is still the same. Something is worthless, if it costs you nothing. In many churches, the Jesus preached is worthless, because it costs the congregation nothing.

But just as important as the life changing requirements of the true gospel message, is to provide the community atmosphere to pay the price. It is just that the price to ask people to follow Jesus is a lot simpler than providing the infrastructure to actually allow them to do the following. It is similar to overcoming physical poverty, all you do is replace tractors and implements, with instruments and visual effects. Then pat yourself on the back and say to yourself, "Well done good and faithful servant."

The infrastructure for the body of Christ to be the Body of Christ requires people to really know people better than some trite conversations after service. It requires people to know other people in some sense of ministry and destiny. And it requires the ability to have groups of 25-50 people to perform some ministry task, if the groups are not that big, they will die either physically, or spiritually.

Groups this size require someone trained in leadership by the church to provide doctrinal and real world guidance. These leaders must be seeded with authority only to accomplish the goals established by the senior pastor for the church. The power must come from the group itself. It is simply as one advances in the organization they do not so much supervise, but learn to coach different and larger groups of people, knowing that these small groups will contain ideally 5- 7 people, unified in purpose to comprise the community of more than 25 personalities.

So the question remains, is the status of using Jimmy as firewood adequate to achieve the reward, "Well done good and faithful servant," when actually received from Jesus Christ, or does He have another comment to make about your good works? Again something about being burned in the fire.

Reformation, revival, or whatever re-word you might like to use, takes place when enough of the church community in conjunction with a few leaders decide that the present status quo, is not satisfactory. No one ever finds out if God is in any endeavor unless you step out in faith that God will complete it for His glory and not for your own. I for one think it is time for a significant change in the way things are done on a regular basis. Would you like to join this community?

### *Seeds for Prayer*

My trip over to look at my mother's abandoned house in Reardan, yielded at least a month of work that was not on my schedule, which has thrown my summer plans into a complexity that I have not experienced in many a year. In that light, as I traveled back to Seattle I was about ready to flip the deal on the missions house. When I returned however, I learned that two of the three criteria that I had established for obtaining the house had been met and only one remains. That is a means of financing for a couple of years until I can get the development of our mining and environmental clean-up equipment operational.

What has happened in these last few weeks is that the time frame of that equipment development work has shrunk to the point where I really only need to do it. But right now the time and the place to perform that work is not readily apparent.

As much as I hate to admit it, what I have felt is that my initial concept of what God wanted to do was too easy, or too small for God to do in my timing. What remains is to get a better vision of that bigger picture, which I now can barely grasp, and for God to provide more people and finances consistent with achieving His goals. Please intercede for those requests.