

This week Pastor Andy brings us Part 3 of the six-part series "40 Days of Community" with the message entitled "Winning the Relationship War."

As we enter week 3 of our study and campaign to grow as a community of believers in our connectedness both inside and outside the church, it is a good time to consider how we as Christ followers are all part of the same body. Just as our human bodies need all their parts to function properly and be productive, you and I need each other in order to function as a body of believers so we can serve God effectively and show others His love. As an individual, however, you need to be aware that there are things that can undermine and weaken your sense of community. Four negative character traits are enemies of community.

The first is selfishness. Selfishness destroys relationships by getting you to see things only in terms of your own needs and desires with little or no thought for others involved. The antidote for selfishness is selflessness, that quality of character where you "look out for one another's interest, not just your own" (Phil. 2:4)—in other words, a "less of me and more of you" attitude toward God and others. One way you can demonstrate selflessness is by being a good listener.

The second enemy of community is pride. Pride tears down relationships by getting you to think too highly of yourself. When you let your pride and ego come into play, you tend to become angry with anyone or anything that contradicts your own view of things. Pride can cause you to become picky, stubborn, unable to apologize, overly competitive, and prone to give unsolicited advice. What's the cure? Humility dissolves the hurt left by pride and allows you to give and receive healing and reconciliation.

The third enemy is insecurity. Insecurity hurts relationships. In Proverbs, it says, "The fear of human opinion disables..." (Prov. 29:25). When you worry too much about what others think, you lose the peace that God gives to all believers. You may say or do something unintentionally hurtful towards others based on some fear or worry. Instead, try a healthy dose of love. Love unites people and mends broken relationships. Pray that God will help you to love that other person and see how He frees you from your old insecurities and creates new and exciting relationships in your life.

The fourth and final enemy of community is resentment. Resentment wounds relationships. In your small group, you may have seen people do things like show up late, take too long to explain things, act overly sensitive, take a dogmatic stance on issues, or maybe they just continually make wise cracks during the discussion. Do you become resentful toward them? The author of Hebrews spelled out the consequences of such an attitude: "Watch out that no bitterness takes root among you, for as it springs up, it causes deep trouble hurting many..." (Heb. 12:15). The best answer for resentment is forgiveness. Just as the Lord forgave you, so you should forgive others (Col.3:13). By forgiving the offender, you set free the greatest captive, yourself.

You can see that the enemies of community aren't just nameless wicked forces out there. They can exist right inside your own heart. Protect yourself from those things by calling upon the powers of selflessness, humility, love, and forgiveness and see how you and everyone around you is blessed. Now, what can you do to win the relationship war this week?