

# Establishing Kingdom Communities, Part 2

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When brother Nathan called me and asked me to speak here, and I heard the different people that were going to speak, I thought, well that's just going to be a collection of all my friends. And so all of you brothers have been a huge influence on my life and I appreciate every one of you. From Chester way back in the years when he was putting up with us in our little radical church in Texas. Meeting brother Ernest, and of course David took me in right out of the army; John D. has just been incredibly influential to me with this articulating of the kingdom gospel and all those different things, and thank you all very much. It's been a blessing to be here with you.

Nathan gave me this title, and its a bit academic. You see, I have this strange allergy, seriously. And it took me a while to find out. I love history, its why, soon as I got out of the army, I went to live with a church there with David, and I went through this phase where I was really buying a bunch of old books. I love those old leather books, but I came to find out that I actually have an allergy to old books, it took me the longest time. I would literally break out with hives, so I would get surgical masks from work and then I would try to read the books. I finally started saying, "God, I've got an allergy to old books." I wondered, "Okay Lord, are you trying to tell me to stay out of the old and make it new?" I don't know.

Nevertheless, we're going to be looking at some quotes, etc. and I'm hoping that it's not too overly academic. If you didn't hear the first message, talking about kingdom communities, then listen to that if you want to hear any of my various disclaimers about community etc. A lot of people have asked me some questions about community because I live in a Hutterite community, and I'll say for the record now, again, what I'm trying to encourage all of us in is: I believe that built in to the spirit of Anabaptism is a true sense of community. If you look at it from my background to coming into any of the Anabaptist groups, the difference is huge, and it's something that I don't want you to lose.

There's community of goods, there's community of production, there's community of charity, and all of you have expressed that, and I think of the difference... I have a friend that I got out of the army with, and his daughter just died. I just found out today that he's asking for offerings to pay for the funeral, his 22 year old daughter died. I've just never experienced that kind of a need in any of the Mennonite, Anabaptist churches I've been a part of. So what I want to do is encourage you, and I want to take it further and focus on this concept of being together and glorifying God together in a greater way. And that's the burden that's in my heart.

"Does Dean believe you have to have a complete community of goods, the common purse, to be a real Christian?" Absolutely not, so I've said it, but don't misquote me and say that.

I thought...some people kept asking questions. I just want to give a quick look at where we live; some people think it's strange and that's okay. This is a picture of Elmendorf where a lot of us in our group here come from. Here's the main living area, that's the turkey barns, and that's the pig barns over there. I'll tell you, one of the biggest challenges of coming out there is, the city boy from Dallas, Fort Worth, living on a farm. There's a lot of funny stories with all that, especially with my wife and daughters. But anyway, here's a little closer up of the living area, this is actually an old picture, maybe ten or fifteen years old.

And here's the Altona community. Here is pig barn and I used to, just until last weekend, live right there, right next to the pig barn. I was saying they put me in the isolation barn. Here it is a little closer up. Now I just moved in last weekend to that little part of that house right there. Don't get the wrong impression, they are actually very nice houses, I don't want it to look like I'm overly radical. As a matter of fact, Tania was listening in to the message, both messages this morning and I got a text from her, and she said, "There will be a burn barrel when you get home, I wanted to go through more things and live radically." So anyway, we are continually wanting to follow Jesus in a better way and we haven't arrived and I don't want to give any kind of false impression about me being there.

I think there's something inside of us that we all feel like we want to go further, there's something. Here's a quote that I came to a few years ago from the introduction to *The Martyrs Mirror*, written right at the turn of the century into the 1700s. It's very interesting the way it's worded. I'm going to give it to you from Thieleman van Braght, written in *The Martyrs Mirror*, and this is the burden that made him write *The Martyrs Mirror*. I think it will be obvious how it sounds so applicable to today.

He says, "These are sad times, in which we live; nay, truly, there is more danger now than in the times of our fathers, who suffered death for the testimony of the Lord. Few will believe this, because the great majority look to that which is external and corporeal, and in this respect it is now better, quieter and more comfortable; few only look to that which is internal and pertains to the soul, and on which everything depends," - I sort of see brother David's theology coming out there - "It grieves us to the heart that we must live to see these times, and therefore speak in this wise. O Lord, strengthen our faith! Help thy weak, trusting lambs, that they may not be lead into error, nor moved from the foundation of this most holy faith.

"On the other hand, through his instigation, the world now reveals itself very beautiful and glorious, more than at any preceding time, in a threefold pleasing form – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Almost all men run after her, to worship her as queen supreme; but all are deceived thereby; yea, many who have drunk of the poisoned wine of her lusts from the golden cup of her iniquities and deception, die a spiritual death. As the first design is aimed at the faith, so this is directed against the true Christian life. Here lies a great danger. Who shall escape these snares?" He gives the answer, "He that would at no time be taken unawares by it, must in deed be cautious and watchful. But our very flesh seems prone to it. Here must be fasting, watching, praying, and calling upon God for help, otherwise there is no escape."

Well, that's the introduction to *The Martyrs Mirror*, and if you look at that, written at that time period, it was a time that was very comparable to our times. When there's so many things, and political changes, the prosperity of the church that he's a part of, and we're experiencing all of those in ourselves. You hear the cry of his heart come out to the different generations, and I think we have today.

We brought up a bunch of statistics, I found a couple in a book, and I wanted to bring them to you, but then I wanted to put a little perspective spin on them. We talked about people leaving the church and all that. There's been some books written, like *Road Signs for the Journey*, and they did some very good statistics on the Mennonite USA, and I don't want you to look at that and say, "Oh that's them." I wish we would have some of those statistics to look at too. These different graphs I have come from *Anabaptist World USA*. What I want us to do is to look at a reflection on us and not look at a reflection on someone else, it's just that they happen to have nice statistics.

Anyway, up until the 1970s you had a progression, increasing numbers of members, and then coming right at the 1970s there was some decline in the church. So you can fill in the blank on the different things that we've discussed and the different things that happened there. What does that mean? I'm just bringing it to you. Church of the Brethren, we have both the Anabaptists and Pietists here today, again a sharp rise with revivalism and the different things coming in the 1960s. Interestingly enough right after that a significant decline. Also from the same book.

So I just found these statistics on the growth of different groups. Okay, you're wondering what the statistic is for the Amish. What do you think, how do you think the graph went? Here's the statistics for the Amish, and the next one is here's the statistics for the Hutterite communities just for your information. Now, we say that, and what it tells us is several things. We're talking about this, it seems that where there's a clear understanding and clear culture there seems to have people stay within that community. What does that mean? Are these people sold out for the Lord?

I found this statistic just today, the Hindus have an 84% retention rate, the Jews have 76%, the Muslims have 76%, The Greek Orthodox come in at 73%. So it doesn't necessarily mean anything. It's good, we don't want to take advantage of having strong communities and being strong communities. And we can see some perhaps, I don't know, just human nature concepts of with that. Let's please not rest in that. We don't want to have a heathen morality in our church. We don't want to just exist for the sake of existing. We want to be followers of Jesus and we don't want our emphasis to be on this preservationism that we won't live out the words of Jesus, because we're going to bury our talent in the ground, so just want to bring that out.

All right, to start all this off though, what I'm most impressed about us all here is, I'm excited about the energy, I'm excited about the people we're talking to. I hear people talking and we're having all these nice coffee table revivals, and all these different ideas, and it frankly excites me. As I've gone through the last few years I hear more and more people talking about putting the words of Jesus into practice. I hear kingdom theology being talked about and it's getting me excited. Here's an analogy of what I think a group like this can do.

How many of you have ever heard of this man? [Samuel Pierpont Langley] Nobody? Very interesting. Okay, this is an interesting guy. He was a senior officer of the Smithsonian Institution, a mathematician, who had also worked at Harvard. His friends included some of the most powerful men in government and business, including Andrew Carnegie and Alexander Graham Bell. Well, Langley was given a \$50,000 grant from the war department to fund his project (a tremendous amount of money in his time) and his project was to create the first airplane. This was the guy that was going to do it. He's got the credentials, he's got the right friends, and he's got money, he's going to do it, but guess what, none of you heard him.

Well, how many of you have heard of these guys, Wilbur and Orville Wright? Wilbur and Orville Wright were working on their flying machine. Their passion to fly was so intense that it inspired the enthusiasm and commitment of a dedicated group in their hometown of Dayton, Ohio. There was no funding for their venture, no government grants, no high level connections. Not a single person on the team had an advanced degree or even a college education, not even Wilbur and Orville. But the team banded together – note – the team banded together in a humble bicycle shop and made their vision real. On December 17th, 1903 a small group witnessed a man take flight for the first time in history. I took that from a business book, *Start With Why*.

The point is this: the power of being enthusiastic, committed, and dedicated to something does things that all the money and academics in the world cannot do.

Margaret Mead was what's called an anthropologist, that's a big word that means a person who studies culture. She was a famous anthropologist, and somebody once asked her, "Can a small group of committed people make a difference?" You know what her answer was? "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." It's always been that way and I believe today, with us, it's going to be the same.

Now, what did I tell you yesterday is the essence of Anabaptism? My favorite quotes come from a letter from Conrad Grebel that he wrote to Vadian, and in that letter there's two nuggets that I think are the essence of Anabaptism. I think it's the essence of Biblical Christianity. He says this – remember this quote - *"I believe the Word of God without a complicated interpretation, and out of this belief I speak."* That's it, and I told you yesterday we need an Anabaptist study Bible that says "Love your enemies," and you look behind and it says, what it really says in Greek is – love your enemies. That's the kind of thing, it's easy, the Bible is easy to understand. It's all these gymnastics that make it very difficult. And then the other quote, which is the most profound statement of them all. *"The teachings of the Lord have been given for the purpose of being put into practice."* Those quotes were the seeds that led the revival of Anabaptism that shook this world and still is why we're here today. And it's those seeds that will do it again.

So let's look at this: Why would the Protestants, who escaped persecution just ten years before this, now turn on the Anabaptists and put them to death? Why? Let's look at why. Interesting. Remember the who topic is this, I'm trying to show you, kingdom communities and putting the words of Jesus into practice. Now, here in Zurich is where the whole thing started, and Zollikon was the first church that spread from that really quickly. They were captured, put in jail for a while, they escaped and they didn't go in to hiding, they went preaching again, and Felix Manz actually made it all the way over here to Chur. I've been there; that doesn't look that far on a map, but when you see the Alps and everything that they crossed it's really quite a distance.

So he went over there, and as he was there he was captured, and on January 5, 1527 he was put to death. Why? There is a letter found from the magistrate of Chur that then they sent back to Zurich. In those days being a part of a city was kind of like being a member of a church. Everybody sort of, the peasants and all that, they sort of... you owned your people. As a matter of fact the reason George Blaurock was kicked out of town and Felix Manz was killed was because George Blaurock wasn't a citizen of Zurich. Sometimes it pays not to be a citizen. So they wrote a letter from Chur to Manz's hometown of Zurich, and this is what's in the letter, and it's interesting because in this we get some of the nuggets of those things that made them move. Here's the letter of complaint that they wrote about Felix Manz, it says,

"For a long time we have had among us one who calls himself Felix Manz, the same has created much trouble and discord among our people by baptizing old people and corner preaching." Amen, that's what it said. "to such an extent that we ordered him to leave the city. After this he returned and did as before, disregarding the public proclamation in the church forbidding adult baptism on penalty of death, loss of honor, and loss of property. Therefore we arrested him and held him a few days... But because he is an obstinate and recalcitrant person we released him from prison, and because he is one of yours we have sent him to you, with the friendly request that you look after him and keep him in your territory, so that we may be rid of him and our people remain quiet, and that, in case of his return, we are not compelled to take severe measures against him." That's the letter from Chur. Isn't that interesting?

He kept preaching, they captured him and they finally put him to death. What I'm going to read to you now is the proclamation of the death sentence that was read from the town halls and the different places and the churches in Zurich, a proclamation, "This is why we're putting to death the first Anabaptist." It's interesting, let's see what it says. Remember, this is why he's being put to death:

"Because contrary to Christian order and custom, he had become involved in Anabaptism, had accepted it, taught others, and become a leader and beginner of these things, because he confessed having said that he wanted to gather those who wanted to accept Christ and follow Him, and unite himself with them through baptism, and let the rest live according to their faith, so that he and his followers separated themselves from the Christian Church and were about to rise up and prepare a sect of their own under the guise of a Christian meeting and church; because he has condemned capital punishment, - since such doctrine is harmful to the unified usage of all Christendom and leads to offense, insurrection, and sedition against the government, to the shattering to the common peace, brotherly love, and civil cooperation and to all evil, Manz shall be delivered to the executioner, who shall tie his hands put him in a boat, take him into the lower hut, there strip his bound hands down under his knees, place a stick between his knees and arms, and thus push him into the water and let him perish in the water, thereby he shall have atone to the law and justice... His property shall also be confiscated by my lords."

Now these are the Protestants, these are the brand new Evangelicals who just got saved ten years ago. Now, shortly after that the movement moved over to Zollikon and they began to have the first church there. Then when they were there, and this is where I'm coming to, we get another nugget. They wrote an order, a congregational order which is the very first Anabaptist statement ever created.

Now to back up just a little bit to give you a little bit of explanation. Right before this whole Anabaptist time there was the Peasant Revolt where the peasants revolted and they were trying to come against the government. They were taking a lot of Luther's teaching and saying, "Okay we're going to come against those monasteries, we're going to come those things. And have right within ourselves." They had good intentions that they thought were Christian.

You could see within Switzerland itself was a concept of this parish idea. "We want the people of our area to be able to appoint our own pastor, pay him his tithe and that type of thing." The people of this area in Switzerland fought more as a community than in many other places. So there was a concept of community that was Swiss in general that they took a part of. As a matter of fact you see within the Swiss movements, like the Hutterites and the Swiss Brethren, the different Swiss groups of South Germans, much more this community concept than perhaps you would in the Dutch churches.

So now we look at this now and there's been an interesting book, it's a bit academic, but there's an interesting book by a man named Werner O. Packel, called *Hutterite Beginnings*. And he shows in there how this very document that I'm about to read to you made a guide for several of the earliest documents that followed. This document was found with Michael Sattler in the bound book when he was burned at the stake, from the Catholics. It's been ignored for a lot, for some reason, we typically look at history, but it's interesting for the purpose that I'm trying to emphasize. The way the kingdom communities got together and just related and became this family of God in the area right from the very beginning. I wanted to show you those things.

"Since the almighty, eternal, and merciful God has made His wonderful life break forth in this world and in this most dangerous time, we recognize the mystery of His divine will, that the Word is preached to us according to the proper ordering of the Lord, whereby we have been called into His fellowship." - *notice their emphasis on the commands of the Lord, all the things that I'm showing you here next.* - "Therefore according to the command of the Lord and the teachings of his apostles, in Christian order, we should observe the new commandment, in love one toward another, so that love and unity may be maintained, which all brothers and sisters of the entire congregation should agree to hold to as follows:

1. "The brothers and sisters should meet at least three or four times a week, to exercise themselves in the teaching of Christ and His apostles and heartily exhort one another to remain to the Lord as they have pledged.

2. "When the brothers and sisters are together, they shall take up something to read together. The one to whom God has given the best understanding shall explain it, the others should be still and listen, so that there are not two or three carrying on a private conversation, bothering the others. The Psalter shall be read daily at home.

3. "Let none be frivolous in the church of God, neither in words, nor in actions. Good conduct shall be maintained by them all also before the heathen.

4. "When a brother sees his brother erring, he shall warn him according to the command of Christ, and shall admonish him in a Christian and brotherly way, as everyone is obliged to do out of love."

5. *Listen to this one.* "Of all the brothers and sisters of this congregation, none shall have anything of his own, but rather, as the Christians and the time of the apostles held all in common, and especially stored up a common fund from which a can be given to the poor, according as each will have need, and, as in the apostles' time, allow no brother to be in need."

What's interesting is this concept of at least a community of charity. I don't think that's what they had in the complete communities that were being experienced a little later in Moravia, but nevertheless it was a radical sense of being together in this family, we've got a mission we're on, we're doing something and we're going to take care of each other in a radical Christ-following way. Incredible right from the beginning.

6. "All gluttony shall be avoided among the brethren who are gathered in the congregation; serve a soup or a minimum of vegetables and meat, for eating and drinking are not the kingdom of heaven." Ouch!

7. "The Lord's Supper shall be held as often as the brothers are together, thereby proclaiming the death of the Lord, and thereby warning each one to commemorate, how Christ gave His life for us, and shed His blood for us, that we might also be willing to give out bodies and lives for Christ's sake, which means for the sake of all the brothers."

So just reading all those, you just get a sense and a flavor of, what did those guys think like? What were they like? And these are the things that came out right from the very beginning, right from the very beginning.

Then from there we went to Schleithem; for sake of time I'm going to skip through Schleithem because I think most of you heard of that, I hope. Andrew St Marie has just written a nice book on the whole coming up to Schleithem which you can get back there, which I would recommend, it's very good, he brings out the whole story of the process to Schleithem.

Again, over and over you're getting these people who are on a mission, a kingdom mission, with purpose, living together radically, putting the words of Jesus into practice in everything in their life. From economic, to ministering, to helping the poor, to all those things. "We want to live out the words of Jesus." Remember what Conrad Grebel said, "The words of Jesus are meant to be put to practice."

All right, now I've got some book quotes, so stay awake here, I wanted to just show, it is not just me coming up with some of these. I wanted to show you a few primary sources and then some of the scholars that say something on this. And I think it's fascinating. This is the scary part of this message because I don't want to bore you with this stuff, but these are interesting. A lot of things have been said about the Anabaptists and I want you to get these nuggets. I don't want to go back to my secular job, and have you all fall asleep. I'm a nurse anesthetist, so I put people to sleep for a job, so people always dub me the preacher who puts people to sleep.

Interesting quote from Ambrosius Spittelmaier in 1527, from Upper Austria: "No one can accept the kingdom of God except those who are poor in Christ here. For a Christian has nothing of his own... He should have nothing of his own in such a manner that he would not wish to say, 'the house is mine, the land is mine, the coin in mine,' but rather 'it is all ours.' This is why we say 'our Father.' In sum, a Christian... looks more to his neighbor than to himself." Interesting. He was not a Hutterite, just a Southern German or Austrian Anabaptist.

Hanz Leopold, who was martyred in 1528: "If they know of anyone that is in need, whether or not he is a member of the church, they believe it is their duty, out of love to God, to render him help and aid."

Heinrich Bullinger, speaking in his work against the Swiss Brethren, made the charge that they were of the opinion that to be rich is inconsistent with Christian principles. Where would they get that? Jesus? James? I don't know.

John D talked about the idea of the parish, the idea that there was this state church, within which was this invisible church, and that still permeates today. People say, 'well we don't know who.' The Anabaptists made very strong point on the church being visible. Do we believe in the incarnation of Jesus Christ this evening? Did Jesus Christ come in both the spirit and the flesh? Yes! And so the church must be visible they argue. The concept of them being together is very interesting.

Michael Sattler, who was burned at the stake, said this, "Forget not the assembly, but apply yourself to coming together constantly, and that you may be united in prayer for all men and the breaking of bread, and this all the more fervently as the day the Lord draws near. In such meetings together you will make manifest the heart of the false brethren, and will be freed of them more rapidly." Interesting, very interesting.

Peter Riedemann wrote it this way, "We confess also that God has, through Christ, chosen, accepted, a sought a people for himself... Therefore it is such a people, community, assembly, or church gathered and led together by the Holy Spirit, which from henceforth rules, controls, and orders in her... Thus, it is evident that the church is gathered together by the Holy Spirit; that she has being and is kept in being by Him. And that there is no other church apart from that which the Holy Spirit builds and gathers." Amen

Dirk Phillips wrote it this way, "The church of the Lord, although existing in spirit and in truth, is nevertheless also visible... The name church or congregation indicates that it is not only invisible, but also visible, from the term used that is ekklesia, that is, a gathering or meeting or congregating together," – always one of John D's big points, a coming together to govern. – "The apostles according to the command of the Lord," - notice again the emphasis on the command of the Lord - "gathered a church out of all nations. This was not an invisible body, for they did not write nor send their epistles or generals in an indiscriminate way to all people, but specifically did, nominating the believers and God fearing people and designated many places and calling many persons by name. How is it possible for all this to be invisible?" That's a good point there.

All right, now I'm going to give you some of the different Anabaptist scholars, just a few quotes from them. Harold S. Bender, who I think Brother Chester talked about today, quoted by Robert Friedmann in the book *Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision* (pp 105), said this:

"The answer is to be found rather in the doctrine of the two worlds. **The new Kingdom of God** which is being established in their terms and through them... is of necessity distinct from the world order which is dominated by Satan. That the church and the state join in persecuting the true church is only one more bit of evidence of the wickedness of the world order, they concluded. The old church (both Roman Catholic and Protestant) has failed particularly in its mixing of the two kingdoms, hence the true church must be, and is being, reestablished separate from the world. **This true church is the present kingdom of Christ which is being established in the midst of and alongside of the kingdom of this world**; it is not to be deferred to some millennial future."

And that was my background; "All this stuff's for some millennial reign," but I always ask, "How hard is it to love your enemies in heaven?" That is ridiculous; these things are for today.

Robert Friedman goes on, "...We make point to their unique and most concrete idea of the Gemeinde, the community, the brotherhood church, otherwise unknown in the Protestant world. It is the gathering of the reborn," - Watch this - "an attempt to translate kingdom ideas into practical forms of everyday living." Did you catch that? "It is an attempt to translate kingdom ideas into practical forms of every day livings – if not in terms of the fullness of the kingdom itself, then at least in what it foreshadows."

The brother from Caneyville, KY brought up a point: eschatology is part and parcel of the theology of the Kingdom which represents the very center of Anabaptist thinking and believing. The Kingdom (and not merely personal salvation) is the real concern of the reborn disciple of Christ. This kingdom may have become realized already in a small brotherhood, which sprang up everywhere, nuclei (little cells) of brotherly love and sharing, where hatred and violence were absent as far as humanly attainable by the grace of God.

John D Roth, who is here with us today, put it this way (from his book *Stories: How Mennonites Came to Be*), "Anabaptist teachings represented something new and dangerous in early modern European society. By calling on Christians to refrain from swearing oaths, from participating in lethal violence, or serving in magisterial offices, they seem to threaten the foundations of political stability." Listen to brother Ernest's sermon today, he talked a lot about this. "The Anabaptist model of economic sharing and social equality unsettled those in positions of power. And by defining the church as a voluntary community, separated from the 'fallen world', the Anabaptists raised doubts about whether Europe was entitled to call itself a 'Christian' society." Well said brother.

Just one more, this is an interesting quote by Franklin H. Littell. At this time communism, Marxism, was growing, and this council of churches made this statement and it's a great quote. This is quoted in the *Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision*.

"Some time ago, as national socialism and communism were in full flood, the general secretary of the World Council of churches expressed the problem in these words: 'The main task of the Christian community, and the greatest service which you can render to the world, is... to be the Christian community. For the real tragedy of our time is that we have on the one hand an incoherent mass of individual Christians and on the other hand powerful impulses toward new forms of community, *but no Christian community*. Christians today do not form a true community; and the communities that shape the new world are not Christian. The present day task of the Christian community is, therefore, not to enter more deeply into the world, but to rediscover itself. It must learn to understand again what Christian community means before it can go out and change the world around it.' Well said.

So they did this, and in that command of Christ, in that Kingdom reality, they went forward. As a matter of fact, Conrad Grebel, as soon as he left there in Zollikon they were attacking him... if you've ever read *Fire in the Zurich Hills*, it's a great book because it reveals, it really makes you appreciate these guys, because the whole town was getting it and then apostatizing and getting it and apostatizing again, but these guys stood firm. It really gives you a perspective of what was going on. Conrad Grebel goes right out and breaks into like a big procession, an Easter procession, where the Catholics are going by and he starts to preach with them and like five hundred people get baptized. They were unstoppable because they had a clear vision: They were representing the Kingdom of God.

They had a meeting in 1527, and many of the different Swiss Brethren and different radical groups got together, and it's called the Martyr's Synod. Sixty ministers that showed up there to take the map of Europe and they said, 'Okay, you take this area, you take this kingdom, your church go over here and you go over here. We're going to evangelize all over Europe.' But of those sixty ministers that were there, five years later there were two left.

And here's what gets me: They had this little meeting, like we're having a little meeting now, and the court records, if you dig through that, you see that two weeks later you find that there were laws written that responded to their missionary outreach. We have missionary conferences and we say, 'Wow, that would be great, yeah that'd be nice.' Two weeks later they were put into action and were caught and were persecuted for the results that led from this day. What an expectancy. In those days there was a 95% chance that you were going to get killed if you were a missionary, 95% chance. Later Robert Friedman says it fell to 80%.

Now here's something incredible, and this is built in, but here's the point that I want to get to you with the kingdom concept of community, is that this stuff comes from being radical followers of Christ. We've put a lot of emphasis, divorce, remarriage, non-resistance, and a lot of these things, but they just took the words of Jesus and put them into practice.

Here's a great little document; this is from the Wurttemberg government's court record. They're talking about the women. These are the Anabaptist women; this is one of my favorite quotes of this area. And they say this in this proclamation: "The propaganda activity of the Anabaptist women...through word of mouth [and] through booklets," - They were going to the mill or going to the store, they're passing out little tracts, they're saying something. It was so grievous, now listen to this, that those "mothers who could not be banished because of their little children must be chained at home to prevent their leading so many people astray." Wow. And one of them in the Martyr's Mirror mentions a friend of an Anabaptist woman who was being captured. The friend was saying, "Dear mother, can you not think what you please and keep it to yourself? And then you will not die." The Anabaptist lady said, "Dear sister," – watch now – "I am commanded to speak, and I'm constrained to do so; hence I cannot remain silent about it." The whole concept of sharing, when you're there in your everyday life talking about Jesus; they could not keep it in. No one could.

Now I'm going to show you some particular as we go forward of the Hutterites. Now one of the beautiful things about the Hutterite heritage is the Chronicles that they kept; so we have a lot of writings. I'm assuming from this we're also getting a flavor of the Swiss Brethren. From 1525, that first baptism, til they made it to Nicholsburg if 1527-28, there was twelve thousand people that made it to Nicholsburg, so there's a lot of talking going on to make that happen. The Hutterite missions in particular gave some. And I'm inspiring us with this kingdom communities for all of us, to think of the ways... And I'll say this, we can't relive everything exactly like they had in the past. God is a creator God, and one of our purposes at Anabaptist Identity Conference is to be inspired by them to look for future things today.

But watch what they did. They "sent brethren every year to lands" (this is from the Chronicles) "near and far." – watch now, I underlined it – "according to the commands of Christ and the practice of the apostles, to teach and to preach and to gather for the Lord God's people."

In order to be able to fulfill the task laid upon them by the Lord, the congregation... and you know they're busy. You're in a community, its busy, you got the canning season, you've got to make the sausage, you got all these different things. It is busy. So they realized in that busy schedule, we're going to somehow have to schedule in this command of Christ. So semi-annually, usually in the spring or the fall, they chose from the preachers a number of brethren to perform a wide-spread missionary service in all directions, to preach the gospel – watch – in accordance with the commandments of Christ. They kept emphasizing this in the Chronicles. In the early days of terrible persecution they usually brought these converts back to Moravia with them.

This quote just got me; okay, you go through the Hutterian Chronicles and you can study this, and you get to the Thirty Year War and it's so gruesome that in my copy of the Hutterian Chronicles I had to write warnings on the top because it's frankly graphic of the different things. I don't think anybody in this room would have faulted them if they had chosen to lie low, take it easy, take it easy guys. But this, when I came to this I couldn't believe it. So in the midst of all that terrible persecution, graphic stuff going on, whole communities burnt, in 1620 it says this,

"This year too, we followed the example of our forefathers by sending out several brothers to various places in Germany. They went to seek those on fire for the truth and to call people to repentance. It amazed many people in Bohemia (where both hostile armies were encamped, both the Protestants and Catholics) as well as in Germany that our defenseless members set out during times of such terrible danger, when scarcely anyone, whether of high or low estate, could travel in safety. But the Lord was their protector, and they relied on Him alone. When their task was complete (through the intercession of His people), He led them home again in peace and safety." Although, maybe 20% of them at least.

Peter Riedemann brings out this point, in the "Differences in the Offices", he says, "In the church, Paul says, God has first appointed apostles. These are the ones who are sent out by God and his church in accordance with the commands of the Gospel, to go throughout the country and establish the obedience of faith for His name's sake."

From the Hutterian Chronicles again: "Another servant of the church of God, George Fasser, was sent by the church to Pogstall in Austria because of the fervent longing in a number of people there. He did not know the alphabet, but preached the Gospel with power. And even though he had just returned from prison in Modling (near Vienna) he set joyfully about the Lord's work, gathered the believers, and established the church community in accordance with God's command." Now during that time of terrible persecution they were able to put up 100 different communities, spread throughout because of this. This is just one that we happen to have nice records of. The Swiss Brethren also had the same kind of spirit, the south Germans who were scattered, though they usually don't have as nice literature as we do from this period.

In those days they were clearly a city on a hill. Let me ask you today: now, are we a city on a hill today? Or are we a village in the valley? Are we a city on the hill, or a village in the valley? Now, let me say, I'm not throwing stones, I can't. Who gets the most accusation of being a village in the valley? Well, yeah, us. Okay, so I'm not throwing any stones, but I want us all... The second listing of the AIC mission statement says this, "To hold forth the ancient faith of those who have gone before us as an *example* for ourselves." I'm not throwing stones, but we're here today, not to just congratulate ourselves, we're here to see what it was that moved these people, and then make changes for us today. So please, I'm not throwing stones; I'm seeing it myself, in my own people.

But here's the point. The most important point that I want to say this entire day, and yesterday, and the whole thing: The seed that birthed the Anabaptist movement was nothing other than – Jesus. Jesus, that's what it was. Remember? "I believe the word of God without a complicated interpretation, and out of this belief I speak." "The teachings of the Lord have been given for the purpose of being put into practice." They just got a bunch of young guys who said, "You know what, I got an idea, let's do it. This is great, let's do it," and they were excited and they had vision and they did it.

Without this type of emphasis, we're over and over going to get the right answers to the wrong questions. You actually get right answers to the wrong questions, and sometimes we have to. Something comes up, something comes in our church, we have to fight with the heresy and all those types of things and we get far away. We talk about this, but eventually we have to bring it back to the core and say once again, it has to look like Jesus. It's got to be His words, it's got to be His dream, it's got to be His plans for humanity. It's got to come back or we're going to get the right answer for the wrong question.

Let me tell you this one quick story. There was a law school problem, and in this law school the students got together and the district said, "We want you to study the way we do the jury. We're having some statistics about how the jury works, we have a lot of court cases," and so the law school needed this grade, so they went out to do this study. They were trying to see how the deliberation process happened in the jury. They asked all kinds of questions. How many men versus women in the jury? What were the ethnic backgrounds? Were they younger? What did the place look like? What kind of clothes were they wearing? What kind of food were they fed? They asked everything, and in their investigation, you know what they found out? The thing that seemed to make the difference was – the table.

These students came up with the idea, and they said, "We think that it's the table." So they came and they had their statistics and they showed that the places that had a round table had more people talking – everybody was included. And the places that had this long table, just one guy dominated and the whole thing went on. So, "we're suggesting we have round tables." They were so excited about their data, they went to the local district judge and said, "Here it is, this is it." You know what happened? They were going through and the judge gave them this warning. He said this, "All jury rooms that have round and oval tables are to have the tables removed. Replace them with rectangular tables."

Now they had just proved that round tables were better, and more equitable or whatever, and see, he didn't want that. He wanted to get his court cases done. And he wanted to know whatever could get these court cases done, if one guy dominates, he didn't care; he wanted to get the court cases done.

The question is here: I think we all know what's wrong. I sometimes wonder if we want to. Are we like this court judge? The words of Jesus are the answer; *they are the answer*. I want you to dream with me – what if Jesus really meant every word He said? In this generation, let's put it to practice again. Are we a city on a hill, or a village in the valley?

I don't care who you are, I'm not asking you to change the different things. The Amish that are here, I'm so blessed that you're here, and you have something to offer. Do you know, from my background, if the bishops of the Amish church today would make a press conference (not saying you would, just hypothetically) and say, "We have something to speak to the nation," CNN, all the news people, would be there to hear. You have won the attention of the world. Now use it for His Gospel. And I love how you haven't all our fancy stuff, and our cars, and our houses, it is a rebuke to us, live that rebuke. But live it out.

I have a friend of mine in Boston, Matthew Millioni, who had a beautiful vision of doing a farm community on the outskirts of Detroit.

In 1912 the Egly Amish from Berne, Indiana, going all the way with buggies and trains and ships made it to the Congo. They setup a little translating community, went back when people thought the Congos still had dinosaurs; they pulled it off.

I say live your radical way of life with a Kingdom vision; people are listening. People are watching the Mennonites, the Brethren, the Hutterites, the radicals that are here. Let's let the words of Jesus live out. Leave this assembly with passion to see Jesus manifested, and not abstract, but simple words of Jesus. That's what I'm talking about.

My last slide. I have a dream. I have a dream that, armed with the faith of Jesus, the Anabaptist church would once again focus our energies on fulfilling Jesus' command to take the Gospel of the Kingdom and preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, and to preach the jubilee of the Lord.

Let's pray. Dear heavenly Father, we thank You Lord, and we do want to say right now Lord that You've very clearly proclaimed that You would build your church. You would build your church. God, we want to confess tonight of all the different ideas and movements and different suggestions and all the different right answers to the wrong questions, and tonight dear Heavenly Father we want to lift up Jesus Christ and give You that liberty to build Your church. Oh God, give us the grace in this age; we're being cast to and fro by every wind of doctrine. May the simplicity of the Gospel of the Kingdom and the words of Jesus Christ permeate our hearts and lives again and be put into practice by Your grace. I ask this, Father, do it again in our generation. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Question and Answer Time:

Wes Weaver, Clay Pool, Indiana: Thank you Dean and David for those messages. My dear people, my last name was born in the Reformation days. Twelve generations ago my grandfather was martyred. He's in *The Martyr's Mirror*. But today God is not so concerned about preserving a particular name; it's His name. And I just want to encourage every one of you: let's seek the Lord until the fire of God's Spirit falls on us. Will we remain silent? We have this movement, called "Revive Indiana", they say it's going to sweep this country. The goal is all fifty states and then Jerusalem. It is the spirit of the Antichrist, it is the emergent church, it is joining hands with the Catholics, it is joining hands with all the denominations. For anyone that cares to study the background of it, I have found few people, few plain people that are willing to stand up and call it for what it is. I've gone to a meeting, I have nothing in common, there was no spirit of God in that place. It is a big party. They've got their rock and roll music, they're rocking around, all you gotta do is say, "you know, we're sinners and Jesus died for us," and party on. It's not from God, but these people are out, they're going from door to door, and if we don't rise up and equip ourselves with the Word of God, they will be getting your young people. They already are. So it's just a word of encouragement, let's rise up, men of God, and equip ourselves with the Word of God.

Nathan Overholt: Thank you for speaking. I was trying to get over there also to take in a meeting of that and I just wasn't able to get there, so I thank you for speaking up and for sharing a word on this. I appreciate that, may God bless you.

