

I. What concept stood out to you?

The section chosen for reflection was chapter 13: The Fork in the Road to Spiritual Community. The concepts of this chapter helped me to better understand some of Dr. Wardle's classroom lectures. Reading this chapter was a "light on" moment for me, in which I understood more fully how the church is a community of people on a journey to God. The practical discussion between Dr. Crabb and his friend on the phone that begins this chapter helped to set the stage for me to finally get a handle on this community that lies 'outside of the box.'

II. What impact does it suggest for you personally?

My personality is one of an outgoing passion and vitality toward those that I love. However, I was raised in an environment that wanted little part of emotions and feared close emotional contact. Because of this I sometimes shy away from words like passion and I find myself pulling away from others. Arousing New Covenant passions that drive us to our upper rooms and toward each other in deeper more meaningful relationships are some of the concepts that Dr. Crabb explains in this chapter. The impact of the word 'choices' he makes and the explanations given really touched and motivated me to begin to move away from and guard against the "management" of my Christian life. I want to become the more personally involved mystic who experiences a real heart involved relationship with God and connects to others in this community.

III. Where do you disagree with the author? Agree?

While the repetition of these concepts finally registered fully within my heart and mind, I was also surprised by a lack of Biblical support provided. The New Covenant is

referred to several times without a definitive scripture reference being utilized. The transforming event of forgiveness and the celebration of community are also concepts that could have supplied scripture references. Perhaps the author believes that his readers are fully aware of New Testament teachings and scripture so that he does not need to cite his references to this source. I fully agree with his insights and perspective, however, scripture references would be helpful to the reader and help to strengthen his discussion of this topic.

One of my favorite phrases from this chapter is, “The passion to worship God for His gift of radical forgiveness and unblemished purity translates into the passion to celebrate when we look at each other.” Celebrating the gift of purity that we have been afforded through Jesus should be an amazing time of community and closeness for the body of believers.

IV. How should this concept be translated into practical ministry?

Dr. Crabb shares four passions that need to be aroused in us in order for the community to be one of a spiritual nature. These four passions are the passion to celebrate, the passion to envision, the passion to discern and the passion to empower. Each passion needs to be present among the body of believers. Dr. Crabb suggests they are the direct and supernatural effect of living under the New Covenant. In ministry these four passions could be utilized as a gauge to discern the depth of member’s relationships to God and their understanding of God’s design for His community. Practically speaking, these passions are not in and of themselves the target; they are merely indicators of the connection we have to God and our understanding of how He wants us to live in community.

Seeing God's people become a spiritual community means saying to them, "We believe in you and who you could become." The positive mindset of the pastor as a leader is crucial as an example here. I have failed in the past by seeing some in the body through a negative view. Did I feel God tugging at my heart to love His people and see them through the grace that His son provided them? Sadly yes I did, but I sat angrily in the lower room. The challenge of knowing God's heart and following His leadership in ministry can be daunting and requires me not to sell out and simply manage His church. Being connected to God at the heart and allowing Him to teach me how to lead from the position of His passions and vision. After all, who could I become if I fully trust in God; perhaps a man after God's own heart.