



## *Conversations on Community: Brian McLaren with Ashley Roberts*

### Preview

Brian McLaren and Ashley Roberts talk about the power of our story in the context of community, and what groups can do to model the community Jesus desired and bring His kingdom here to earth today.

© 2008 Brian McLaren

This resource may be printed, photocopied and electronically mailed as needed for use in the purchaser's church so long as no fee of any kind is charged and the resource is not used, in whole or in part, for internet viewing or posting, conferences, fund-raising or commercial purposes.

## Key Concepts

### The Significance of Our Stories in Community

- Learning to honestly tell our stories helps us be authentic with each other.
- Sometimes we are selective in the stories we tell.
- We must trust God with all parts of our story, since He is the only truly safe place.
- We show our trust in others by sharing what we wouldn't normally tell people.
- Revealing our stories is part of the dance of growing in relationship.
- A healthy small group is a place where people are interested in stories, and as they are shared, they form a fabric.

### A Vision for Small Groups

- There is room for many different types of groups.
- Groups aren't new.
  - Quakers had communities in which the question was asked, "How goes it with your soul?"
  - Early Methodists gathered together to ask certain types of questions of each other.
- Asking the question, "How goes it with your soul?" in your group allows the sharing of self-examination.

### A Generous Orthodoxy

- Jesus might not call himself a Christian if he were here today.
- Modern Christianity creates an in-group and an out-group.
- Jesus' message was about the kingdom of God, which is a "come on in" group.
- Brian calls himself a "follower of Christ."
- Follow God in the way of Jesus.
- Many people with a negative view of religion have a high view of Jesus.

### What the Body of Christ Should Look Like

- The body of Christ should be hospitable — creating space in our hearts for others and entering into people's worlds without judgment.
- There is a difference between acceptance and approval.
- In order to grow in our ability to love and accept others, we must mess up (and experience judgment ourselves), hurt someone, and read the Bible (Philemon 2).
- Knowledge of the Bible doesn't necessarily make us better Christians — there is no formula for transformation.
- Knowledge is good, but we also need wisdom and understanding.
- Suffering promotes wisdom.

### Orthopraxy

- The Bible does not teach that as long as you get an A in what you believe, you can get a D in living it out.
- The emphasis in Scripture is on living it out.
- We must teach people that "the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love" (Galatians 5:6, NIV).
- Do an experiment with your group — tell them that they aren't allowed to read the Bible

for a month, but they must take something they already know and try to live it out.

### **Jesus' Mission**

- There are Eastern and Western branches of Christianity.
- The Western branch focuses on the way Jesus came to save us from sin and get us into heaven.
- Brian feels that Jesus came to bring the kingdom of God to earth, which changes everything.
- This is not just an individual issue — it's a social reality.
- It starts with an individual, as one begins to have a new relationship with God's world.
- Being a change agent to bring God's kingdom to earth means:
  - Telling the truth
  - Living the truth
  - Loving our neighbor
  - Encouraging others to do the same

### ***A Generous Orthodoxy Mission Statement***

- The mission statement of the book is "to be and make disciples of Jesus Christ in authentic community for the good of the world."
- If it's only about me, then Christianity is a consumer market.
- You can care for the church in a way that's contrary to the kingdom of God.
- We need to become whole so we can contribute to this world.

### **The Past and the Future**

- It is necessary to go back into the past and get in touch with it.
- We should also practice spiritual disciplines that help us examine our lives in the present.
- These practices can be individual or in community.