

1 Why Ants Don't Sink!

- Why we don't have to either!

2 Bodysurfing

- Almost anyone who has ever gone to the beach has tried it.
- The concept is simple -- instead of riding waves using a surfboard or Boogie-board, a person surfs on his or her own body.
- You line up in front of a big enough wave, take off swimming, and that wave will pick you up and surf you along its crest.
- It is great ride and a real rush -- that is if you can handle the splash at the end of the line.

3 Animals Bodysurf Too

- Not only humans have been spotted bodysurfing.
- Recent scientific research has shown that fire ants are actually saving their own lives by ... bodysurfing.
- Yes, fire ants. And yes, bodysurfing -- of sorts.
- These ants have developed a stunning way to survive huge rains that flood their colonies -- common occurrences in the American South or their native Brazil.
- They'll link together and assemble into flat waterproof rafts that float atop the flood waters.

4 Bodysurfing Ants

- The disc-shaped rafts are actually water-repellent due to the interlocking pattern between the ants.
- Some ants in the raft even remain submerged below the water's surface, but the structure of their interconnection traps air bubbles between them allowing the ants to breathe.
- On top of the raft, other ants surf along until the colony washes up onto dry ground.

5 Fire Ants Sting!

- Southerners are no doubt irritated that scientists haven't devised an efficient way to drown these stinging hexapods.
- But linked together, they're so water repellent that an ant raft can float for up to two months!
- This has engineers trying to link ant raft methods to technologies for waterproof materials and self-sealing lifeboats.

6 The Key

- The key to these rafts is the strength of the interconnection between each ant.
- The whole raft is held together as the ants clutch to one another with jaws and claws.

- By measuring the force required to break these links, scientists have determined that the ant's grip force is on par with that of a human being able to suspend six elephants off the ground.

7 The Key to Success

- The key to the success of the fire ants surrounds the interdependence of the fire ant community.
- Drop one ant in the water, and it's dead.
- Drop in a tablespoon of ants, and they live through interconnection.
- They know instinctively what Ben Franklin reminded his fellow patriots who were about to sign The Declaration of Independence: "We must all hang together, or assuredly we shall all hang separately."

8 The Church and the Ant

- So how does this stuff about bodysurfing ants speak to the body we call the church?
- The apostle Paul helps us with that (in a round about way) that the ant raft is the church.
- It's the surfing body which hangs together, the body that when carried on a flood of cultural confusion, links up and survives.

9 The Church and the Ant

- If the following applies to an ant raft, it also applies to the church:
 - The individual lives to help others.
 - What appears to be personal sacrifice is actually service.
 - One's service has meaning only when others use it, accept it or take advantage of it.
 - Nobody can survive and thrive without the help of others.
- If churches could learn from ant rafts, there would be new meaning to Proverbs 6:6 -- Go to the ant, you lazybones; consider its ways, and be wise. Or we go to Ephesians 4 and consider its ways.

10 A Quality of Relationships

- Paul's concept of the church is not that of a building one goes to once or twice a week.
- Experiencing church isn't about the quantity of time spent at a purpose-built structure, but about the quality of relationships nurtured in a purpose-built community.
- It's what we experience when we're engaged in relational linkages, gathering around Good News, sharing common beliefs and practices, and living our shared lives in grace and truth with and for one another.

11 A Quality of Relationships

- This fuller experience of church requires interdependence.
 - Trusting others.
 - Being dependent on and depended upon.

- Making mistakes and seeking forgiveness.
- Metaphorically, making a raft together instead of surfing solo.
- For the Apostle Paul this is what church is all about.

12 A Unity of Relationships

- Paul wants singularity—harmony through a shared identity.
- But we can't be naive about unity like this.
- It doesn't come naturally, or easily. Paul says we must make every effort to maintain it . . . (v. 3).
- Just like to keep a house clean it needs to be maintained, so do our relationships in churches.
- Entropy happens . . . relationships will degrade unless regularly maintained.

13 A Unity of Relationship

- In Ephesians, Paul has cultural reconciliation (Jews & Gentiles) in mind, but we must apply the appeal for unity to all forms of division in the church -- racial, gender, age, maturity gaps, differences in personality, worship preferences, etc.
- With the grip strength of ants in a flood, an interconnected community requires so much external force to break it apart that it can survive for huge stretches of time against adversity.
- Our churches should have a chosen unity -- which is not always natural unity -- but it's unity nonetheless.
- The apostle doesn't care if it doesn't seem natural. Unity is something you work at, even if it's sometimes painful.

14 A Purpose in Relationship

- Much has been made of the five-fold ministry of 4:11, but let's focus on the result of those gifts.
- The purpose of these ministerial functions is to encourage even greater ministry in and from the church.
- It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, . . . (Ephesians 4:11-12 NIV)
- However, if you read the rest of this passage, you will see there is another purpose in this relationship . . .
 - . . . become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:13 NIV)

- In other words, the purpose of the Five-fold ministry is to equip the saints for ministry, so that they can through participation in doing ministry grow, be mature, and no longer be preyed upon by false teachers. (Ephesian 4:14)

15 A Purpose in Relationship

- The road to maturity is through the participation in ministry.
 - Ask the average adult in our churches how we grow spiritually, and you'll probably receive a smattering of answers addressing good preaching, devotional life and small group discussion.
 - But ask most college students, and they will tell you about the mission trip when they were in youth group.
 - They'll talk about being asked to lead freshmen when they were seniors.
 - They'll share how their faith and comfort were stretched by ministering to the needs of others.
 - So then, is it possible that mission leads to maturation? and That the fruit of service is spiritual growth?
 - Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. (Ephesians 4:14 NIV)


16 A Security in Relationships

- When the members of the body of Christ function together in ministry they insulate themselves from deceitful and heretical teachers.
- This happens because when we help others we are in essence obeying the words of Christ and showing true love to our savior by obeying His commands.
- When we do this the result is awesome.
 - He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him. (John 14:21 NIV)
 - Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. (John 14:23 NIV)
- So then when a church is faithfully doing the work of the ministry, the Holy Spirit is richly abiding in that community and everyone will have the mind of Christ.

17 A Security in Relationships

- How does the church grow and become mature?
 - From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Ephesians 4:16 NIV)
- When a flood comes how do fire ants survive?

- Each ant doing what it can to support the whole.
- When a flood of evil comes how will the church survive?
 - Each part helping to support the whole.
- What is the spiritual forecast? Are there any floods on their way?
- But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, . . . Have nothing to do with them. (2 Timothy 3:1-2, 5 NIV)

18  Work as a Team