

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

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**#1: ARE WE WILLING TO CALL ON  
OUR PEOPLE TO INVEST THE  
TIME TO BUILD COMMUNITY?**

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**“A new commandment I give to you,  
that you love one another, even as I  
have loved you, that you also love one  
another. By this all men will know that  
you are my disciples, if you have love  
for one another.” (John 13:34,35)**

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**#1: ARE WE WILLING TO CALL ON  
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TIME TO BUILD COMMUNITY?**

- Encourage one another
- Admonish one another
- Confess your sins to one another
- Forgive one another
- Show forbearance to one another
- Pray for & with one another
- Bear one another's burdens

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

**#1: ARE WE WILLING TO CALL ON  
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***This requires a lifestyle  
of intentional relating  
outside of meetings.***

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**“And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer . . . And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart . . .” (Acts 2:42,46)**

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**#1: ARE WE WILLING TO CALL ON  
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TIME TO BUILD COMMUNITY?**

***This is the  
difference between  
“going to home group” &  
“being in fellowship.”***

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**- Rivals to community:**

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- Rivals to community:
  - CAREERISM

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- Rivals to community:
  - CAREERISM
  - MATERIALISM

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- Rivals to community:
  - CAREERISM
  - MATERIALISM
  - HOBBYISM

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**#1: ARE WE WILLING TO CALL ON  
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**- Rivals to community:**

- CAREERISM**
- MATERIALISM**
- HOBBYISM**
- ENTERTAINMENTISM**

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

#1: ARE WE WILLING TO CALL ON  
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*“Our people are so busy . . .*

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

#1: ARE WE WILLING TO CALL ON  
OUR PEOPLE TO INVEST THE  
TIME TO BUILD COMMUNITY?

*“Our people are so busy . . .  
we can’t ask them  
for more than  
one night a week.”*

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

#1: ARE WE WILLING TO CALL ON  
OUR PEOPLE TO INVEST THE  
TIME TO BUILD COMMUNITY?

*“Our people are so busy . . .  
so we try to  
get everything  
done on Sunday.”*

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

**#1: ARE WE WILLING TO CALL ON  
OUR PEOPLE TO INVEST THE  
TIME TO BUILD COMMUNITY?**

***Will we accept these rivals  
& make excuses  
for our people -  
or will we challenge them  
for their own good to  
biblical involvement?***

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

**#2: ARE WE WILLING TO MODEL  
THIS KIND OF INVOLVEMENT FOR  
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**#2: ARE WE WILLING TO MODEL  
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- Why should they get vitally involved in a home group if we aren't?**

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

**#2: ARE WE WILLING TO MODEL  
THIS KIND OF INVOLVEMENT FOR  
OUR PEOPLE?**

- Why should they get vitally involved in a home group if we aren't?
- How can we help our home group ministry flourish if we aren't deeply involved in it?

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

**#2: ARE WE WILLING TO MODEL  
THIS KIND OF INVOLVEMENT FOR  
OUR PEOPLE?**

***“I have too many other  
pastoral  
responsibilities.”***

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

**#2: ARE WE WILLING TO MODEL  
THIS KIND OF INVOLVEMENT FOR  
OUR PEOPLE?**

***“Others will not lead  
if I am there.”***

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

**#2: ARE WE WILLING TO MODEL  
THIS KIND OF INVOLVEMENT FOR  
OUR PEOPLE?**

***“I can’t afford to be that  
open & vulnerable  
to people  
in our church.”***

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

**#3: ARE WE WILLING TO THINK  
CAREFULLY ABOUT THE EFFECT  
OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
ON COMMUNITY?**

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- “Connectivity” cannot replace the priority of face-to-face relating

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

**#3: ARE WE WILLING TO THINK  
CAREFULLY ABOUT THE EFFECT  
OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
ON COMMUNITY?**

- **“Connectivity” cannot replace  
the priority of face-to-face  
relating**

**“Night and day (we) keep praying most earnestly that we may see your face, and may complete what is lacking in your faith?” (1 Thessalonians 3:10)**

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**#3: ARE WE WILLING TO THINK  
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- **“Connectivity” cannot replace  
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relating**

**“I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write them to you with pen and ink; but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face.” (3 Jn 1:13,14)**

**“Human interaction at the deepest level involves at least two participants who acknowledge & respond to each other’s spoken questions, comments, and exclamations as well as the nonverbal language of embodied articulation--the raised eyebrow, the squinting eye, the furrowed brow, the misty eyes, the nodding or shaking of the head. These irreducibly personal factors & many others--such as spontaneity & humor--make up a conversation . . . in which no machine can participate.”**

*The Soul in Cyberspace*, by Douglas Grootuis (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Co., 1997), p. 152.

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the priority of face-to-face  
relating

*“Virtual community”  
is a biblically  
self-contradictory term*

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**#3: ARE WE WILLING TO THINK  
CAREFULLY ABOUT THE EFFECT  
OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
ON COMMUNITY?**

- **“Connectivity” can undermine  
community unless we use it  
wisely**

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**“By assigning the highest priority to speed, the power of now enhances the value of those activities that exemplify speed (electronic entertainment & information transfer . . . )**

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**“By assigning the highest priority to speed, the power of now enhances the value of those activities that exemplify speed (electronic entertainment & information transfer . . . )**

**“By assigning the highest priority to speed, the power of now undermines the value of those experiences that . . . require time to develop (psychological maturation, the building of meaningful human relationships . . . )**

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

**“The power of now gives us what we want when we want it, from fast food & ATM cash to emergency medical care, thereby promoting the happiness, health & safety of the individual.”**

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**“The power of now gives us what we want when we want it, from fast food & ATM cash to emergency medical care, thereby promoting the happiness, health & safety of the individual.”**

**“The power of now obscures the need for us to develop those skills & virtues-- patience, commitment, self-denial, & even self-sacrifice--without which no civilization can long endure.”**

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

**“The power of  
now permits us to  
know (more  
people) by  
electronically  
connecting us with  
people of like  
interests . . .”**

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

**“The power of now permits us to know (more people) by electronically connecting us with people of like interests . . .”**

**“By interposing technology between human relationships, the power of now displaces flesh-&-blood relationships with synthetic ones.”**

**Stephen Bertman, *Hyperculture: The Human Cost of Speed* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishing, 1999), pp. 192,193**

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

**#4: ARE WE WILLING TO RETHINK  
THE PRIORITY OF LARGE GROUP  
WORSHIP?**

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#4: ARE WE WILLING TO RETHINK  
THE PRIORITY OF LARGE GROUP  
WORSHIP?

*“Our Sunday worship  
service is  
the most important thing  
we do as a church.”*

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

**#4: ARE WE WILLING TO RETHINK  
THE PRIORITY OF LARGE GROUP  
WORSHIP?**

- How this priority can undermine  
community:**

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

## #4: ARE WE WILLING TO RETHINK THE PRIORITY OF LARGE GROUP WORSHIP?

- How this priority can undermine community:
  - BY DEFAULT, WE ARE COMMUNICATING HOME GROUP INVOLVEMENT AS LESS IMPORTANT

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

## #4: ARE WE WILLING TO RETHINK THE PRIORITY OF LARGE GROUP WORSHIP?

- How this priority can undermine community:
  - BY DEFAULT, WE USE RESOURCES THAT COULD BE USED FOR CULTIVATING & IMPROVING COMMUNITY

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

**#4: ARE WE WILLING TO RETHINK  
THE PRIORITY OF LARGE GROUP  
WORSHIP?**

***The New Testament  
neither describes nor  
prescribes such a  
worship service.***

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

#4: ARE WE WILLING TO RETHINK  
THE PRIORITY OF LARGE GROUP  
WORSHIP?

*New Testament worship  
centers around  
a daily lifestyle -  
not a weekly service.*

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

## #4: ARE WE WILLING TO RETHINK THE PRIORITY OF LARGE GROUP WORSHIP?

**“I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship service.”**

**Romans 12:1**



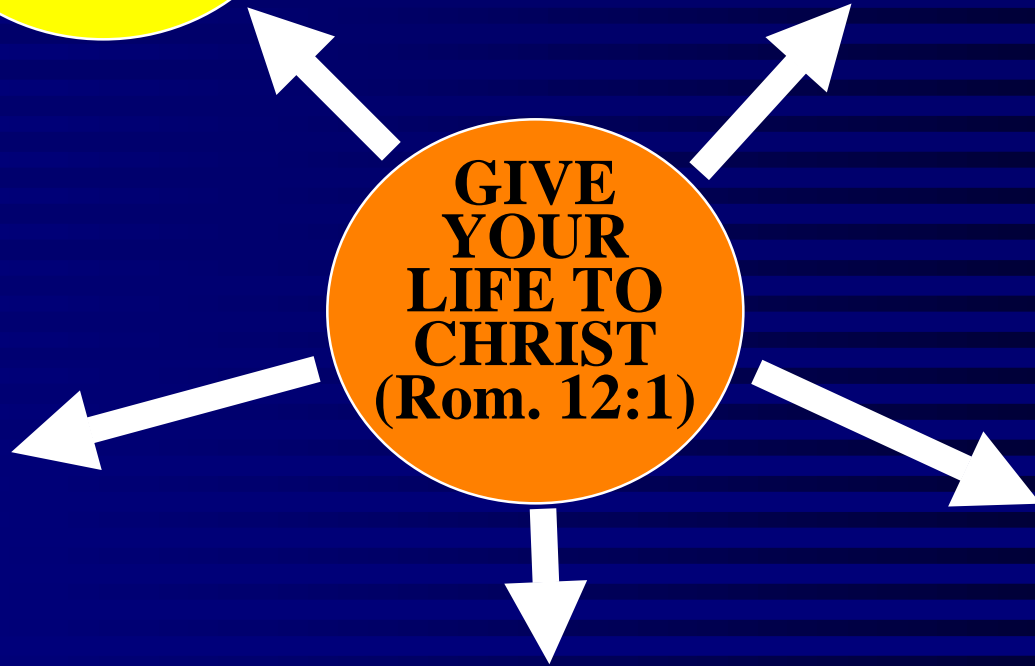
**GIVE  
YOUR  
LIFE TO  
CHRIST  
(Rom. 12:1)**



**GIVE  
YOUR  
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CHRIST  
(Rom. 12:1)**

**COUNTER-  
CULTURAL  
THINKING &  
LIFESTYLE  
(Rom. 12:2)**

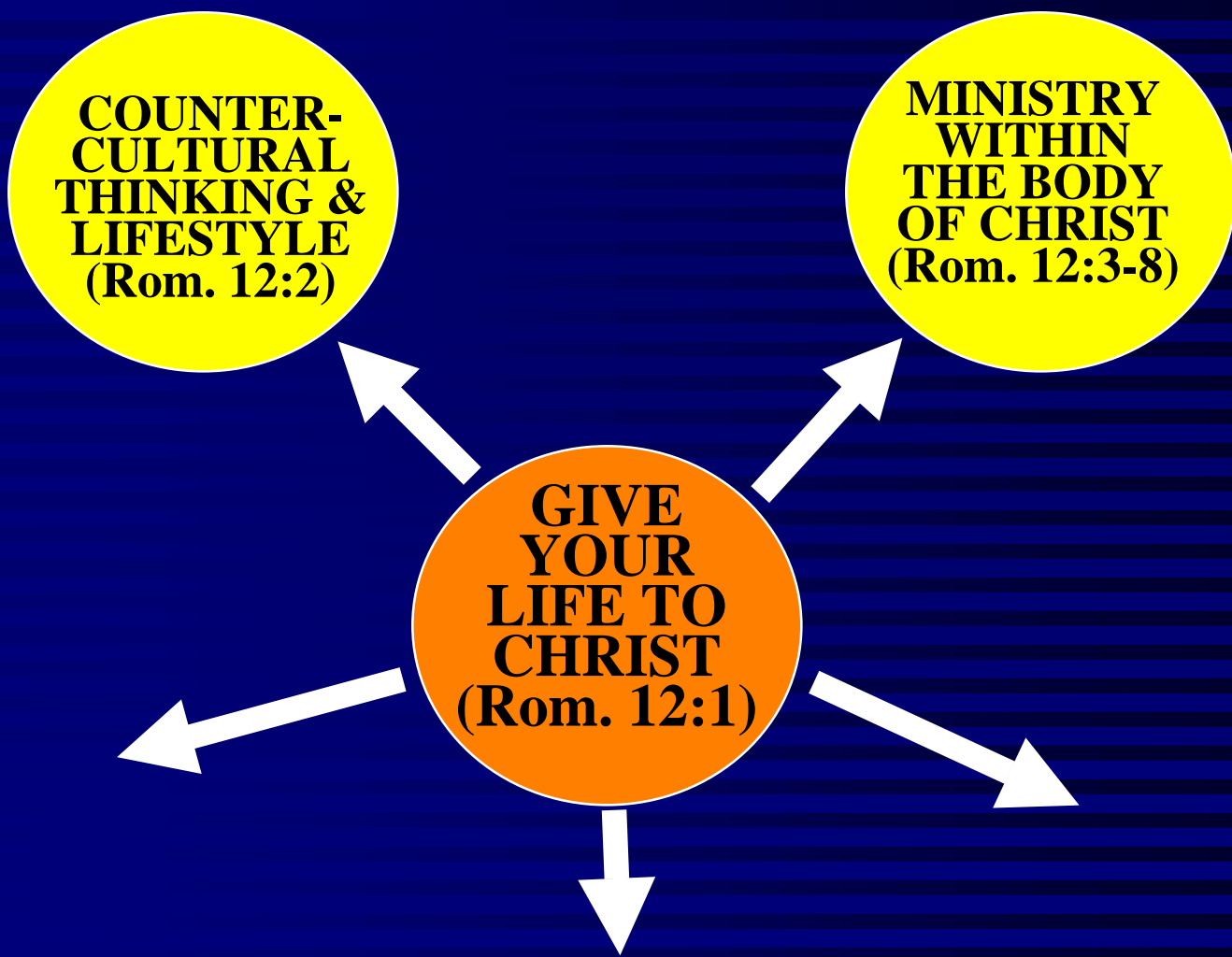
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**COUNTER-  
CULTURAL  
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(Rom. 12:2)**

**MINISTRY  
WITHIN  
THE BODY  
OF CHRIST  
(Rom. 12:3-8)**

**GIVE  
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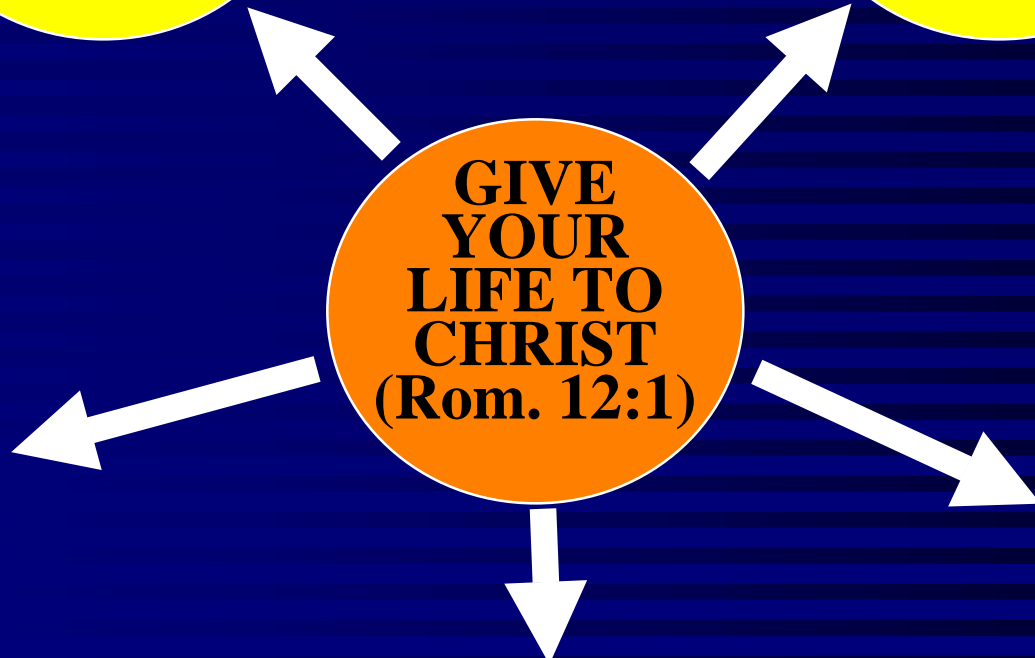


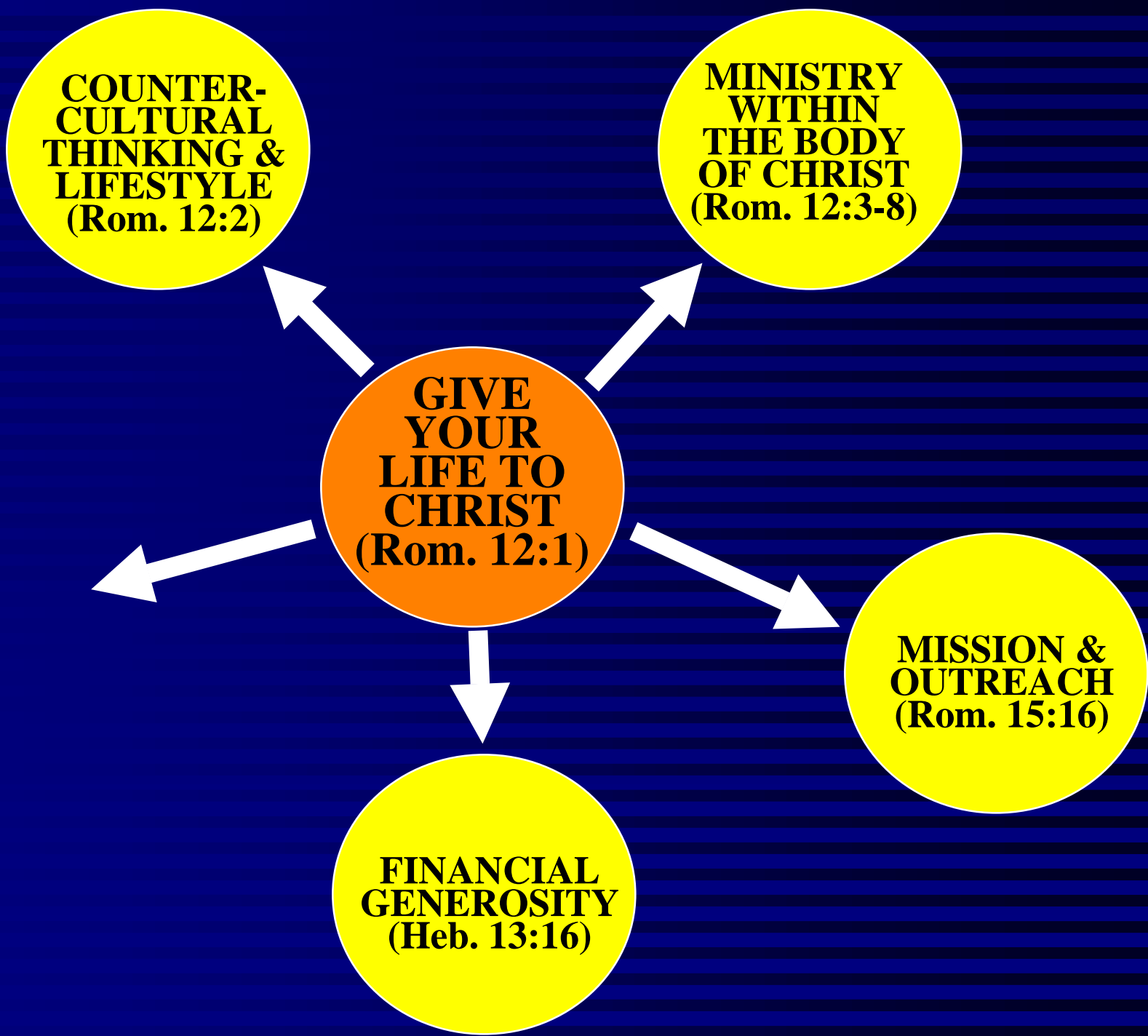
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(Rom. 12:3-8)**

**GIVE  
YOUR  
LIFE TO  
CHRIST  
(Rom. 12:1)**

**MISSION &  
OUTREACH  
(Rom. 15:16)**





**COUNTER-  
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(Rom. 12:2)**

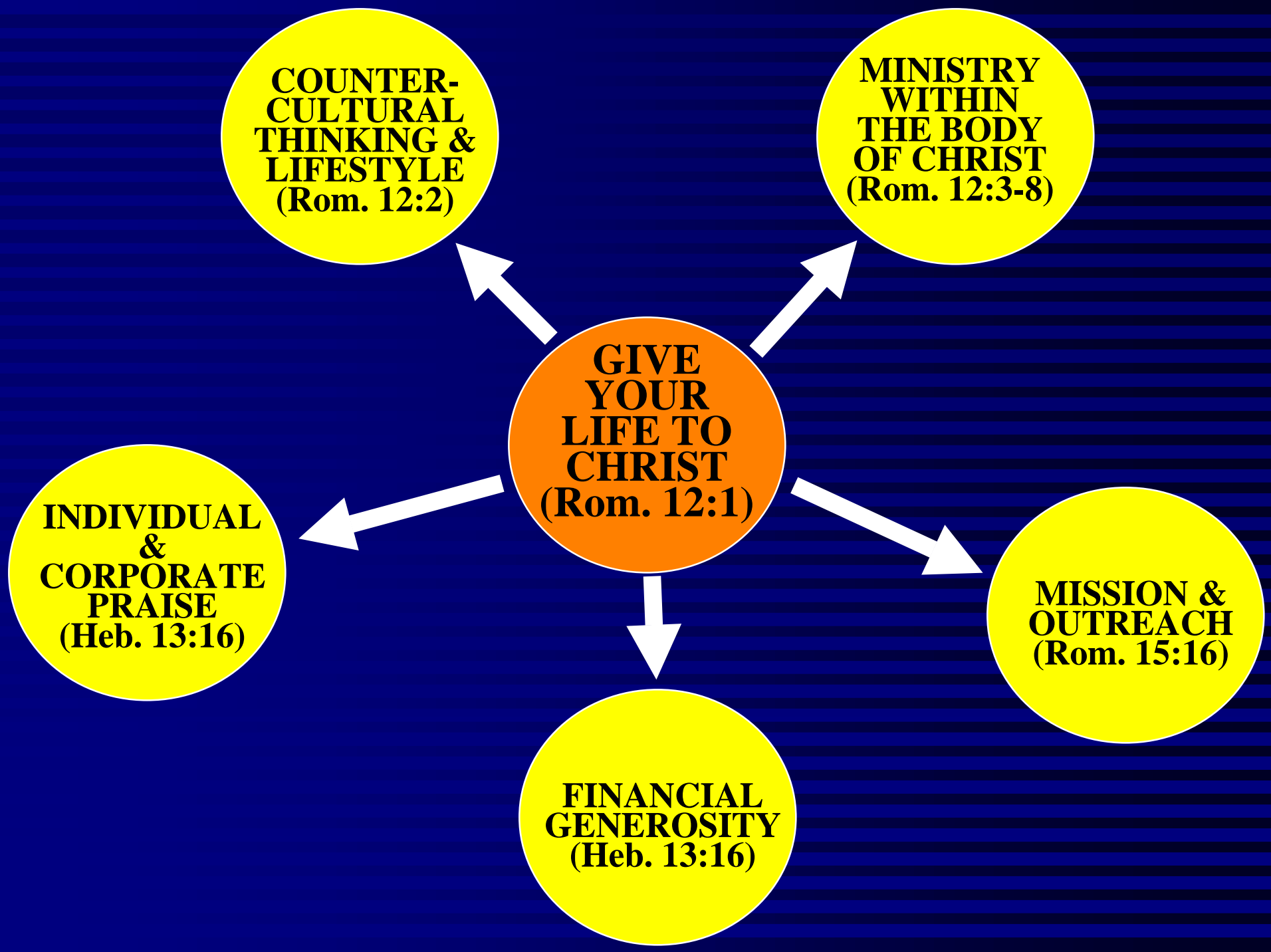
**MINISTRY  
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**GIVE  
YOUR  
LIFE TO  
CHRIST  
(Rom. 12:1)**

**INDIVIDUAL  
&  
CORPORATE  
PRAISE  
(Heb. 13:16)**

**MISSION &  
OUTREACH  
(Rom. 15:16)**

**FINANCIAL  
GENEROSITY  
(Heb. 13:16)**



**“One of the most puzzling features of Paul's understanding of *ekklesia* for his contemporaries . . . must have been his failure to say that a person went to church primarily to ‘worship.’ Not once in all his writings does he suggest this is the case. Indeed it could not be so, for he held a view of ‘worship’ that prevented him from doing so. This is crystallized in his plea at the beginning of Rom. 12 . . . The striking feature of Paul's statement . . . is his noncultic use of this language, that is, its metaphorical application to the sphere of everyday behavior . . .**

**“... So worship involves the whole of one's life, every word and action, and knows no special place or time ... Since all places and times have now become the venue for worship, Paul cannot speak of Christians assembling in church *distinctively* for this purpose. They are already worshipping God, acceptably or unacceptably, in whatever they are doing.”**

**Robert Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998, pp. 88,89)**

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**#4: ARE WE WILLING TO RETHINK  
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- An community-based alternative:

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

## #4: ARE WE WILLING TO RETHINK THE PRIORITY OF LARGE GROUP WORSHIP?

- An community-based alternative:
  - **CONSISTENTLY TEACH  
WORSHIP AS A LIFESTYLE  
EXPRESSED IN COMMUNITY**

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

## #4: ARE WE WILLING TO RETHINK THE PRIORITY OF LARGE GROUP WORSHIP?

- An community-based alternative:
  - REPLACE LARGE-MEETING WORSHIP SERVICES WITH MEETINGS THAT HELP HOME GROUPS IN OUTREACH & INSTRUCTION

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

## #4: ARE WE WILLING TO RETHINK THE PRIORITY OF LARGE GROUP WORSHIP?

- An community-based alternative:
  - AT LARGE MEETINGS,  
COMMUNICATE THAT HOME  
GROUPS ARE THE HEART OF  
THE CHURCH

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

## #4: ARE WE WILLING TO RETHINK THE PRIORITY OF LARGE GROUP WORSHIP?

- An community-based alternative:
  - MOVE CORPORATE WORSHIP  
FEATURES TO THE HOME  
GROUPS

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

**#5: ARE WE WILLING TO TELL THE TRUTH TO ONE ANOTHER IN OUR HOME GROUPS?**

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**#5: ARE WE WILLING TO TELL THE TRUTH TO ONE ANOTHER IN OUR HOME GROUPS?**

**- Personal challenge**

**“... you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.”**

**1 Thessalonians 2:11,12**

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

**#5: ARE WE WILLING TO TELL THE TRUTH TO ONE ANOTHER IN OUR HOME GROUPS?**

**- Informal, private correction**

**“I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.” (2 Timothy 4:1,2)**

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

**#5: ARE WE WILLING TO TELL THE TRUTH TO ONE ANOTHER IN OUR HOME GROUPS?**

**- Informal, private correction**

**“Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another . . .”**

**Colossians 3:16**

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

**#5: ARE WE WILLING TO TELL THE TRUTH TO ONE ANOTHER IN OUR HOME GROUPS?**

**- Formal, public discipline**

**“... if he will not listen, take one or two others along . . . If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”**

**Matthew 18:16,17**

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

**#5: ARE WE WILLING TO TELL THE TRUTH TO ONE ANOTHER IN OUR HOME GROUPS?**

***Home groups that lack this ethos are like dysfunctional families.***



**EFFECTIVE  
TRUTH-TELLING  
REQUIRES  
HEALTHY  
COMMUNITY**

**HEALTHY  
COMMUNITY  
REQUIRES  
RISKY  
TRUTH-TELLING**

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**#6: ARE WE WILLING TO RETHINK  
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**#6: ARE WE WILLING TO RETHINK  
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*The problem is not  
professional counseling,  
but prioritizing it over  
community in healing  
personal problems.*

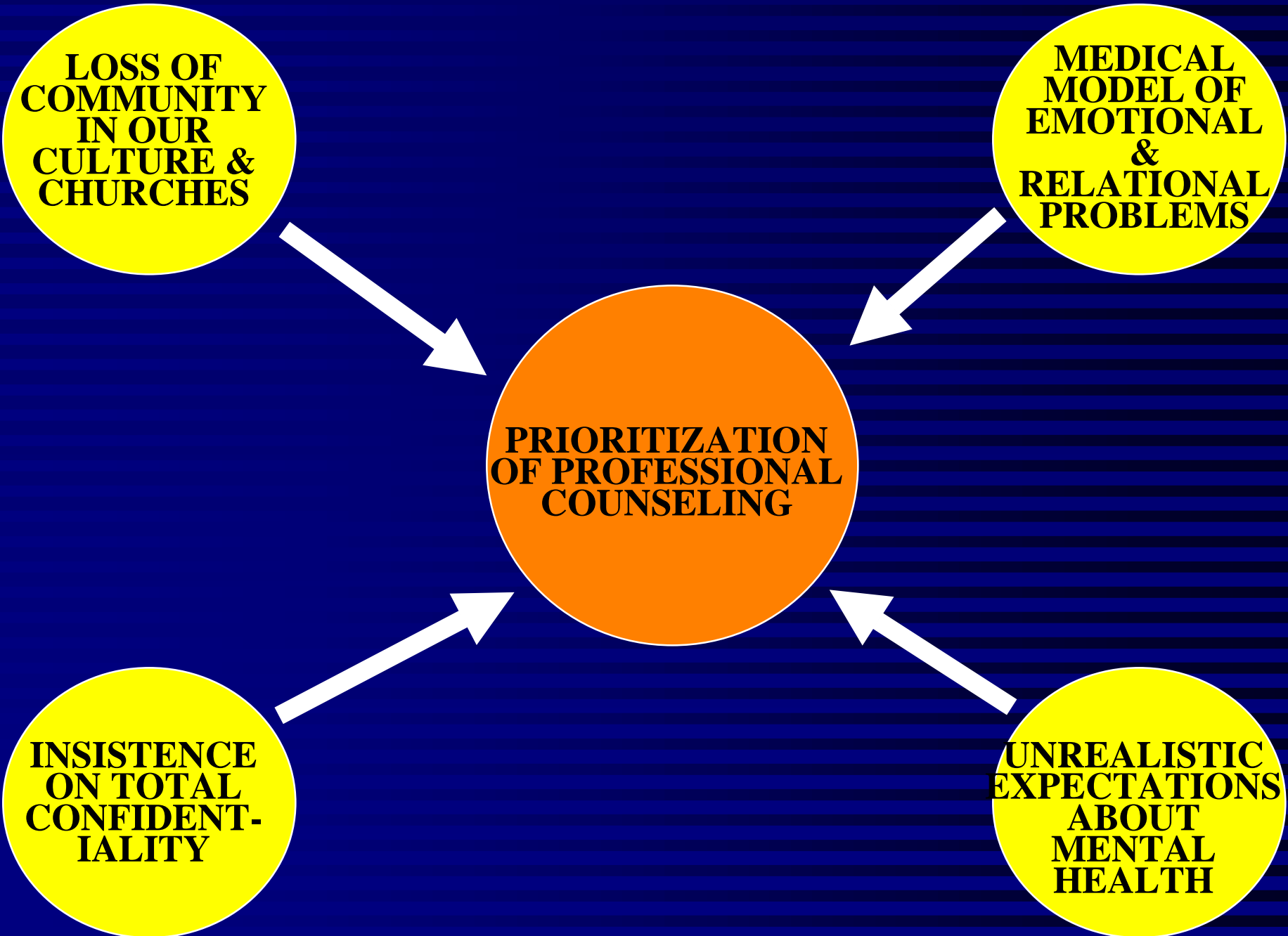
**LOSS OF  
COMMUNITY  
IN OUR  
CULTURE &  
CHURCHES**

**MEDICAL  
MODEL OF  
EMOTIONAL  
&  
RELATIONAL  
PROBLEMS**

**PRIORITIZATION  
OF PROFESSIONAL  
COUNSELING**

**INSISTENCE  
ON TOTAL  
CONFIDENT-  
IALITY**

**UNREALISTIC  
EXPECTATIONS  
ABOUT  
MENTAL  
HEALTH**



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*If we rely on  
private counseling,  
we undermine both the  
need for & the quality of  
community.*

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

**#6: ARE WE WILLING TO RETHINK  
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING &  
CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY?**

*If we rely on  
private counseling,  
we also forfeit the  
healing power of  
community.*

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

**#6: ARE WE WILLING TO RETHINK  
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING &  
CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY?**

- Access to models of (relative) emotional & relational health

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

## #6: ARE WE WILLING TO RETHINK THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING & CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY?

- Access to models of (relative) emotional & relational health
- Empathy & hope from people with the same problems who have been substantially healed

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

## #6: ARE WE WILLING TO RETHINK THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING & CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY?

- Access to models of (relative) emotional & relational health
- Empathy & hope from people with the same problems who have been substantially healed
- Discernment & application of biblical truth from those who know you well

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

**#6: ARE WE WILLING TO RETHINK  
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- Confession that breaks the power of sin

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

## #6: ARE WE WILLING TO RETHINK THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING & CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY?

- Confession that breaks the power of sin
- Support & accountability to keep cooperating with God's healing steps

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

## #6: ARE WE WILLING TO RETHINK THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING & CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY?

- Confession that breaks the power of sin
- Support & accountability to keep cooperating with God's healing steps
- Context for practicing self-giving love in the midst of your problems

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

## #6: ARE WE WILLING TO RETHINK THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING & CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY?

**“In recent days, I have made a shift. I am now working toward the day when communities of God’s people, ordinary Christians whose lives regularly intersect, will accomplish most of the good we now depend on mental health professionals to provide. And they will do it by connecting with each other in ways that only the gospel makes possible . . .**

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**“... The crisis of care in modern culture, especially in the Western church, will not be resolved by training more therapists . . . The greatest need . . . is the development of communities, true communities where the heart of God is at home . . .”**

Larry Crabb, *Connecting* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), pp. xii,xvi,xvii.

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- **Community-based alternatives:**

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- **Community-based alternatives:**
  - **WHY NOT SEEK HELP FROM  
YOUR HOME GROUP BEFORE  
SEEKING PROFESSIONAL  
COUNSELING?**

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

**#6: ARE WE WILLING TO RETHINK  
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- **Community-based alternatives:**
  - **WHEN IN PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING, WHY NOT INCLUDE A FRIEND FROM YOUR HOME GROUP?**

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**#7: ARE WE WILLING TO CALL ON  
THOSE WHO HAVE BUILT  
COMMUNITY TO SACRIFICE IT?**

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**#7: ARE WE WILLING TO CALL ON  
THOSE WHO HAVE BUILT  
COMMUNITY TO SACRIFICE IT?**

**“Whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s shall save it.”**

**Mark 8:35**

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

**#7: ARE WE WILLING TO CALL ON  
THOSE WHO HAVE BUILT  
COMMUNITY TO SACRIFICE IT?**

***If we refuse to  
split our home groups  
for this mission,  
we will forfeit the very  
vitality we seek to  
preserve.***

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

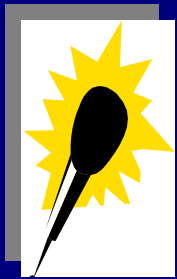
**#7: ARE WE WILLING TO CALL ON  
THOSE WHO HAVE BUILT  
COMMUNITY TO SACRIFICE IT?**

***“We are willing to lose  
some of our  
relational support  
so that others can have  
the same opportunity  
we have had.”***

# Challenges to Christian Community In the 21st Century

*These challenges are great  
- but the power of God  
is greater!*

# Questions? Comments?



**Raise your hand -- we'll bring a  
microphone to your seat**