

Prayer Practicum 1 – Confession & Intercession

CONFESSION AND INTERCESSION ARE LINKED WITH CONFESSION CLEARING ONE'S HEART SO THEY CAN BE USED AS GOD'S INSTRUMENT TO INTERCEDE ON BEHALF OF OTHERS. THIS IS PART OF DISCIPLESHIP AND BEING A LIVING SACRIFICE.

PRACTICUM GOALS:

1. MOST OF US ARE HEAVILY INVOLVED WITH LIFE INCLUDING WORK, FAMILIES, AS WELL AS VARIOUS ASPECTS OF MINISTRY. THE PACE OF LIFE ROBBS US OF OUR ABILITY TO FOCUS ON GOD AND ENTER INTO THE SPIRITUAL REALITY. THERE IS A NEED FOR US TO DELIBERATELY SLOW DOWN AND ENGAGE IN PERIODS OF ATTENTIVE SILENCE BEFORE GOD WHERE WE ACTIVELY LISTEN AND 1) MEDITATE UPON SCRIPTURAL TRUTH [MEDITATION] OR 2) CONTEMPLATE THE WONDERS OF GOD [CONTEMPLATION].
2. BECAUSE GOD DESIRES INTIMACY WITH HIS PEOPLE IN GENERAL AND HIS CHILDREN IN PARTICULAR, HE DESIGNED US WITH A GREAT NEED AND A LONGING FOR PERIODS OF MEDITATIVE AND CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER.
3. PRAYER CENTERS AND NOURISHES OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE... IT KEEPS US IN TOUCH WITH OUR LORD WHOM WE SERVE.
4. THIS IS A DELIBERATE ATTEMPT TO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT TO FACILITATE MOMENTS OF SPIRITUAL CONNECTION TO GOD. AS WE SET TIME ASIDE FOR GOD, WE LEARN TO HEAR FROM HIM WHICH ENCOURAGES US TO LOOK FOR HIM.
5. AS PRAYER ENGAGEMENTS UNFOLD, PEOPLE ARE DELIBERATELY ALLOWED AND IN FACT ENCOURAGED TO GO DEEPER INTO GOD AND ALLOW HIM TO OPERATE IN US. GOD IS GRACIOUS AND WON'T FORCE HIMSELF UPON US, INSTEAD HE WAITS FOR US AND ENCOURAGES US TO COME TO HIM.
6. IT IS NOT ABOUT OUR GETTING OUR WAY WITH GOD, BUT ALLOWING HIM TO HAVE HIS WAY WITH ME.
7. ABIDING IN CHRIST IS THE MOST INTIMATE UNION POSSIBLE, AND IS THE CALLING FOR ALL BELIEVERS TO ENTER INTO AND ENJOY. IT IS USED 112 TIMES IN THE NT... MOSTLY IN JOHN'S WRITINGS. ABIDING HAS 2 MAIN ASPECTS:
 - a. ABIDING AS A QUALITY OF CHARACTER – THE ABIDING CHARACTER OF GOD IS ETERNAL AND UNCHANGING, IN CONTRAST TO THE TRANSITORY AND INCONSISTENT NATURE OF HUMANITY IN OUR FALLEN STATE. THE LAW FAILS TO TRANSFORM HUMANITY, WHILE ABIDING IN GOD DOES.
 - b. ABIDING IN RELATIONSHIP – PRIORITY IS GIVEN TO THE INVITATION JESUS ENCOURAGES IN DWELLING IN OR ABIDING WITH GOD AS FATHER, SON, SPIRIT. TRINITY IS A HOLISTIC UNITY OF ETERNAL RELATIONAL INTERDEPENDENCE INTO WHICH WE ARE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE.

PREPARATION & RESOURCES:

1. AS SOON AS YOU DETERMINE THE TIME AND PLACE FOR YOUR PRAYER RETREAT, BEGIN TO PRAY THAT GOD WOULD INTERVENE AND BLESS, THAT YOU WOULD HAVE A FRESH EXPERIENCE OF GOD, AND THAT HE WOULD PREPARE YOU FOR HIS PURPOSE.
2. FIND A PLACE WHERE YOU FEEL CLOSE TO GOD – IT COULD BE AT THE BEACH, OR IN THE FOREST, OR IN A CHAPEL, ETC. IT SHOULD BE A PLACE WHERE YOU FEEL SAFE AND SECURE, AND YET WON'T HAVE TOO MANY DISTRACTIONS. SUCH A PLACE IS KEY FOR ENTERING INTO MEDITATIVE OR CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER.
3. BRING ALONG YOUR BIBLE AND A JOURNAL OR NOTE PAD TO KEEP TRACK OF WHAT YOU EXPERIENCE. BRING ALSO SOME BOTTLED WATER AND IT WOULD BE WISE TO KNOW THERE IS A REST-ROOM NEARBY SHOULD YOU NEED IT.
4. DON'T ALLOW YOUR NOTE TAKING TO DISTRACT YOU... BUT DO MAKE TIME TO NOTE YOUR EXPERIENCE SO YOU REMEMBER WHAT GOD SAID AND IS DOING. AS AN EXAMPLE IN THIS EXERCISE, AFTER EACH STAGE IS DESCRIBED I HAVE INCLUDED MY OWN EXPERIENCE – THESE ARE MY NOTES OF WHAT I CAME AWAY WITH IN PRAYERFUL DELIBERATION.
5. MAKE SURE YOU ARE COMFORTABLY DRESSED AND WARM ENOUGH SO YOUR PHYSICAL CONDITION IS NOT A DISTRACTION FOR YOUR SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE. IT IS USEFUL TO HAVE YOUR PHYSICAL CONDITION SORT OF A NEUTRAL COMPONENT AS YOU ENGAGE IN SPIRITUAL ENCOUNTER.

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STAGES:

1. THIS EXERCISE CAN BE SET UP AS LONG AS YOU DESIRE. I HAVE LISTED A 2 HOUR OR 4 HOUR EXPERIENCE DEPENDING ON HOW MUCH TIME YOU HAVE AND ALLOW YOURSELF. WITH PRACTICE THIS CAN BECOME MUCH LONGER, BUT 2-4 HOURS IS PROBABLY A GOOD STARTING PLACE. ALLOW 5 MINUTES TO READ THE DIRECTIONS AND MENTALLY PREPARE, AND ANOTHER 10 MINUTES AT THE END TO DEBRIEF.
2. DON'T FORCE THE STAGE SCHEDULE, BUT BE MINDFUL AND ALLOW THE SCHEDULE TO MOVE YOU ALONG. OTHERWISE IT IS TOO EASY TO GET LOST WITHOUT FOCUS.
3. THE EXERCISE HERE HAS 4 STAGES FOR INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE. THIS IS A GOOD BEGINNING PLACE.
4. ENTER INTO EACH STAGE DELIBERATELY HAVING READ THE DIRECTIONS AND PREPARED YOUR HEART.
5. YOU ARE ENCOURAGED TO BE SPIRITUALLY ACTIVE AND REACTIVE.
6. THE STAGE DIRECTIONS WILL HELP KEEP YOUR HEART AND MIND CENTERED... WHEN THERE... LET GOD WORK.
7. DON'T FORCE THE EXPERIENCE, ALLOW GOD TO WORK ON YOU AND MOVE YOU AT HIS PACE AND DIRECTION.

STAGE 1 - SILENCE:

1. DIRECTIONS FOR THIS STAGE – TIME ALLOWED 15 TO 30 MIN:
 - a. THE PURPOSE OF THIS STAGE IS TO STILL YOUR MIND – THIS IS ALSO KNOWN AS “CENTERING.”
 - b. FIND A PLACE WHERE YOU CAN BE STILL AND YOUR POSTURE IS EASILY MAINTAINED.
 - c. BREATHING IS AN IMPORTANT MEANS TO STILL YOURSELF AND FORM A CONTEMPLATIVE ATTITUDE. TAKE DEEP AND REGULAR BREATHS – TAKE IN ALL YOUR SURROUNDINGS, BE AWARE OF EVERYTHING AROUND YOU. DRINK IT IN AND THEN RELAX AND CLEAR YOUR MIND.
 - d. THIS STAGE IS ALL ABOUT LISTENING TO GOD – DON'T SPEAK FIRST... RESIST THE TENDENCY TO START PRAYING. QUIET YOURSELF AND LISTEN. GOD ALREADY KNOWS WHAT YOU WANT AND WHAT YOU NEED, THIS IS ABOUT HEARING WHAT HE MIGHT SAY.
 - e. THIS IS REALLY ABOUT “HANGING” WITH GOD – MAKING TIME TO BE ALONE WITH HIM.
 - f. GOD IS ONE AND TRINE – THIS IS A MYSTERY. IT IS OK TO ENCOUNTER GOD AS ONE OR AS TRINITY... WHEN ENCOUNTERING GOD AS TRINITY:
 - i. FIX YOURSELF AS IF YOU ARE SITTING BEFORE THE FATHER... IT IS OK TO USE SCRIPTURAL DESCRIPTIONS TO MEDITATE UPON. ALLOW YOUR IMAGINATION TO WORK IN THINKING WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE IN THE TEMPLE OF GOD. IMAGINE WHAT ISAIAH, EZEKIEL, AND THE APOSTLE JOHN MUST HAVE FELT BEING BEFORE GOD.
 - ii. THEN SEE YOURSELF SITTING WITH JESUS... LOOKING INTO HIS EYES. CONTEMPLATING HIM. ALLOW YOUR IMAGINATION TO WORK IN HANGING WITH JESUS AND HEARING HIM SPEAK AND TEACH.
 - iii. THEN SEE YOURSELF SITTING WITH THE SPIRIT. ALLOW YOUR IMAGINATION TO WORK IN SENSING THE SPIRIT'S ALL ENCOMPASSING PRESENCE AND SUPPORT.
 - g. IF YOU STRUGGLE BEING QUIET BEFORE GOD... ASK HIM WHY?
 - h. PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT YOU HEAR AND SEE AND FEEL.
2. MY OWN EXPERIENCE:
 - a. I FOUND A BENCH NEARBY IN A COZY SPOT THAT OVERLOOKED THE FOREST. I WAS AWARE OF THE SOUNDS AND SPACE AROUND ME.
 - b. IT WAS DIFFICULT STAYING STILL – ALWAYS IS FOR ME AS I HAVE WAY TOO MUCH ENERGY. BREATHING HELPED.

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- c. PSALMS CAME INTO MY MIND – “HEAVENLY FATHER... HOW MAJESTIC IS YOUR NAME IN ALL THE EARTH.” PSALM 19 WITH CREATION DECLARING THE GLORY OF GOD – AS I LOOK AROUND I SEE BEAUTY, PURPOSE AND INTEGRATION IN LIFE – A DECLARATION OF GOD’S PURPOSEFUL NATURE.
- d. I HAD DIFFICULTY HANGING WITH FATHER AND SON... BUT IT WAS EASY AND COMFORTABLE WITH THE SPIRIT... AS THERE WAS NO PERSON PER-SE, BUT RATHER AN AWARENESS OF HIS ALL ENCOMPASSING PRESENCE. IT WAS A COMFORTABLE EXPERIENCE OF BEING.
- e. AN HOUR WOULD PROBABLY HAVE BEEN BETTER FOR ME AT THIS TIME.

STAGE 2 – CONFESSION:

1. DIRECTIONS FOR THIS STAGE – TIME ALLOWED 25-45 MIN:

- a. THE PURPOSE OF THIS STAGE IS TO CLEANSE YOUR HEART – JUST AS OUR MIND NEEDS STILLING OUR HEART NEEDS CLEANSING. ALLOW GOD TO BRING THINGS TO MIND THAT HE WOULD HAVE YOU CONFESS AND CAST AWAY – AS IT COMES TO MIND COMMIT IT TO GOD AND LET IT GO. CONFESSION ELIMINATES THE BAGGAGE OF OUR LIFE – THE THINGS THAT DRAG US DOWN AND DISCOURAGE INTIMACY.
- b. CONSIDER DANIEL’S CONFESSORY/INTERCESSORY PRAYER – DAN 9... DANIEL’S CONFESSION WAS PERSONAL AND CORPORATE – HE STOOD AS AN INDIVIDUAL AND AS PART OF HIS COMMUNITY BEFORE GOD. FIRST DANIEL CONFESSED, HE IDENTIFIED WITH GOD’S PURPOSES IN HIS PEOPLE, AND THEN HE INTERCEDED. DO LIKEWISE AS A CHILD OF GOD AND A MEMBER OF YOUR OWN LOCAL CHURCH AND THE CHURCH IN GENERAL.
- c. AS INDIVIDUALS AND AS GOD’S PEOPLE ASK GOD TO SHOW YOU:
 - i. HOW HAVE I FAILED TO BE THE PERSON GOD WANTS ME TO BE?
 - ii. HOW HAS MY MINISTRY FAILED?
 - iii. HOW HAVE I FAILED THOSE FOR WHOM GOD HAS CALLED ME TO CARE FOR?
 - iv. HOW HAVE I FAILED MY LOCAL BODY OF BELIEVERS?
- d. THINK OF YOUR FRIENDS WHOSE LIVES ARE A MESS... WHAT WOULD YOU LONG TO HEAR FROM GOD IF YOU WERE THEM? TRY TO SEE THESE THINGS FROM THE INSIDE OUT BY IDENTIFYING WITH THEIR NEED AND PAIN. BE MINDFUL OF THE FRIENDS OF THE PARAPLEGIC WHO LOWERED THE HELPLESS MAN INTO JESUS’ PRESENCE SO HE COULD BE HEALED. WHO IS GOD ASKING YOU TO BRING BEFORE HIM?

2. MY EXPERIENCE:

- a. I READ DANIEL’S PRAYER AND CONFESSION AND TRIED TO SENSE HIS SITUATION AND EMOTIONS.
- b. AS I CONTEMPLATED FAILURE, PAIN, AND PROBLEMS – ALL THAT KEPT COMING TO MIND WAS HOW FAITHFUL GOD HAS BEEN TO ME... SPECIFICALLY IN 3 SITUATIONS WHERE PEOPLE I ACCEPTED AS FRIENDS TRIED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ME, AND CAUSE ME HARM. IN EACH SITUATION I DIDN’T SEE THE DANGER BUT GOD KEPT ME SAFE.
- c. I AM NOT INNOCENT... BUT IN SO MANY WAYS I AM BLESSEDLY NAIVE... I DON’T EXPECT OTHERS TO BE ANYTHING OTHER THAN HONEST AND KIND. THIS IS A GIFT, BUT I ALSO REALIZE THAT I NEED TO BE MORE AWARE – “BEING AS SHREWD AS SNAKES AND INNOCENT AS DOVES” [MAT10:16] CAME TO MIND.
- d. WITH THIS REMINDER OF HOW FAITHFUL GOD HAS BEEN... WHY DO I FIND IT SO EASY TO BELIEVE THAT EITHER MY LIFE & MINISTRY OR THE CHURCH IN GENERAL IS OUT OF CONTROL?
- e. I CONFESSED MY LACK OF FAITH IN THINKING I KNEW WHAT GOD WAS UP TO. I CONFESSED MY FAILURES TO TRUST HIM AND BE HIS SALT AND LIGHT IN SITUATIONS HE HAS PLACED ME.
- f. I AM AWARE THAT WE ARE SOMETIMES CALLED INTO PROPHETICALLY SPEAKING TRUTH INTO OTHERS LIVES AND THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH – BUT I MUST BE CAREFUL TO DO SO IN LOVE AND WITH RESPECT.

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STAGE 3 – PERSONAL PRAYER:

1. DIRECTIONS FOR THIS STAGE – TIME ALLOWED 25-45 MIN:

- a. THE PURPOSE OF THIS STAGE BUILDS UPON CONFESSION AND SEEKS CATHARSIS AND LIBERATION. BRING BEFORE GOD ALL THE STUFF THAT GRABS HOLD OF YOUR HEART... THE THINGS THAT YOU LOVE AND THE THINGS THAT HURT YOU DEEPLY. DETAIL IT ALL AND DELIBERATELY BRING IT TO GOD.
- b. AS YOU RELEASE ALL THIS STUFF... POUR OUT THE EMOTIONS AND ALL TO GOD. IT'S OK TO GET ANGRY OVER IT... GOD CAN HANDLE IT. BE REAL WITH YOURSELF AND WITH GOD.
- c. GODLY PASSION OFTEN EXPRESSES ITSELF AS ANGER WITH THE EXISTING FALLEN STATE, WITH MY OWN FAILINGS, AND WITH THE FAILINGS OF PEOPLE WHO SHOULD KNOW AND ACT BETTER, AND WITH THE CHURCH. POUR IT ALL OUT TO GOD.
- d. ENTER INTO A CONVERSATION WITH GOD... IMAGINE YOURSELF CENTER STAGE WITH HIM ALL ALONE.
- e. IT MAY BE HELPFUL TO WALK AND TALK ON THIS STAGE RATHER THAN SITTING STILL... WALKING OFTEN ALLOWS THE EMOTION TO FORM AND FLOW... BUT PAY ATTENTION TO WHERE YOU ARE GOING!
- f. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN YOU CAN HEAR PEOPLE PRAYING LOUDLY AT PRAYER-FASTING MOUNTAIN IN THIS MANNER. THIS IS A GREAT LOCATION FOR THIS SORT OF PRAYER EXPERIENCE... AND THEY WON'T THINK YOU ARE WEIRD!

2. MY EXPERIENCE:

- a. AS I WALKED I WENT PAST 2 STATUE-SETTINGS OF THE "LADY OF FATIMA" ON THE GROUNDS OF THE RETREAT. I RECALLED THE OLD BLACK AND WHITE MOVIE FROM THE 60'S THAT I HAD WATCHED AS A CHILD AND WAS REMINDED THAT BEFORE I REALLY KNEW GOD... HE KNEW ME AND HAD A HOLD OF ME. GOD WAS AGAIN REMINDING ME OF HIS FAITHFULNESS.
- b. I PRAYED... "LORD GOD... GIVE ME A FRESH EXPRESSION OF YOUR SPIRIT... ENABLE ME TO SEE THINGS FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE. ENABLE ME TO BE YOUR AMBASSADOR INTO THE LIVES OF OTHERS – NOT IN MY OWN STRENGTH OR KNOWLEDGE, BUT AS GOD'S SUPERNATURAL SON.
- c. AS YOU ARE FAITHFUL WITH ME... YOU CAN BE TRUSTED TO BE FAITHFUL WITH OTHERS AND WITH YOUR CHURCH... IT IS YOUR CHURCH AFTER ALL, NOT MINE.
- d. FORGIVE MY DOUBT LORD GOD.
- e. ENABLE ME TO PARTNER WITH YOU TOWARD YOUR ENDS.

STAGE 4 – STRATEGIC PRAYER:

1. DIRECTIONS FOR THIS STAGE – TIME ALLOWED 25-45 MIN:

- a. THE PURPOSE OF THIS STAGE IS INTERCESSION... TO MOVE FORWARD IN GRACE . ASK GOD HOW HE WOULD HAVE YOU PARTNER WITH HIM IN YOUR SPECIFIC NEEDS OR MINISTRY ISSUES?
- b. SEEK GOD'S GUIDANCE AND DIRECTION. HOW SHOULD YOU PRAY FOR OTHERS? WHAT DO THEY NEED TO HEAR FROM ME?
- c. BRING PEOPLE WITH WHOM YOU ARE ENGAGED IN LIFE AND MINISTRY WITH YOU BEFORE GOD... WHAT DOES HE HAVE IN STORE FOR THEM? WHAT IS HE PUTTING ON YOUR HEART ABOUT THEM?
- d. SEE THINGS FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE AND PRAY STRATEGICALLY FOR THEM. OPEN YOUR MIND AND HEART AND ALLOW GOD TO GIVE YOU A VISION FOR YOURSELF AND FOR OTHERS. GOD LONGS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THOSE WE LIVE AND SERVE WITH – AM I A WILLING PARTICIPANT IN GRACE?
- e. LET GOD REVEAL WHAT THEY NEED FROM HIM AND THEN FROM YOU, AND THEN DARE TO UPHOLD THEM PRAYERFULLY.
- f. KEEP BRINGING YOURSELF BACK INTO WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE IN ME SO THAT I CAN BE THE VEHICLE GOD CAN USE IN OTHERS.

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2. MY EXPERIENCE:

- a. I REALIZED HOW CLUMSY AND AWKWARD WE ARE LORD – WE CRUSH THE GENTLE AND SUBTLE THINGS FOR WE DON'T HAVE THE DELICATE HANDS TO HOLD THEM... OR THE PHYSICAL MOBILITY AND DEXTERITY TO MANEUVER AROUND THEM. WE CRUSH THEM UNDERFOOT EVEN AS WE ADMIRE THEM... LIKE THE WINGS OF A BUTTERFLY... WE CRUSH THEM WITH OUR HANDS EVEN WHILE WE LONG TO HOLD THEM AND CONTEMPLATE THEM CLOSER.
- b. I THOUGHT OF ISAIAH'S PROPHECY OF THE SUFFERING SERVANT – THAT A SMOLDERING WICK HE WOULD NOT EXTINGUISH, THAT A BRUISED REED HE WOULD NOT BREAK.... LORD MAKE ME STRONG, BUT MAKE ME ALSO GENTLE. MAKE ME PURPOSEFUL AND DIRECTIVE, YET ALSO FLEXIBLE AND OPEN TO CHANGE.
- c. LORD – GIVE ME THE ABILITY TO WALK IN A MANNER WORTHY OF YOU.
- d. FOR SPECIFIC PEOPLE:
 - i. – LET ME REMIND HIM THAT HE IS WORTHY OF LOVE JUST AS GOD HAS MADE HIM... MAY HE BE FREE TO ENGAGE IN LIFE THAT IS NOT ABOUT SELF-SUPPORT.
 - ii. – LET ME REMIND HIM ALSO THAT HE IS LOVED BY HIS WIFE, MANY FRIENDS, AND ESPECIALLY YOU.
 - iii. – LET HIM BE FREE TO TEACH IN POWER THROUGH YOUR SPIRIT. BRING LIFE TRANSFORMATION TO OUR GROUP OF DISCIPLES....
 - iv. – LET THE LIGHT GOD IS REVEALING IN US RADIATE THROUGH OUR BODY... THROUGH OUR COMMUNITY, AND THROUGH OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS.
 - v. – LET HER NOT WORRY ABOUT THE THINGS WE HAVE NO CONTROL OF. THANK YOU FOR HOW YOU ARE BLESSING HER AND WORKING IN AND THROUGH HER. THANK YOU ALSO FOR HOW SHE IS ABLE TO SEE OTHERS AS YOU SEE THEM.

TAKE AWAYS:

1. A HALF-DAY PRAYER RETREAT IS EASILY DONE AND VERY WORTHWHILE.
2. APPROXIMATELY HOUR INTERVALS ARE A REASONABLE APPROACH: 5 MIN SETTING UP THE STAGE, 45 MIN TO PRAY, AND 10 MIN TO DEBRIEF.
3. KEEPING IT MOVING TO PRAYER WITH SOME INTERACTION BETWEEN IS GOOD... KEEPS US FROM GETTING BOGGED DOWN.
4. NEED REASONABLE PROXIMITY TO RESTROOM FACILITIES, PLACES TO SIT-WALK-CONTEMPLATE. BEAUTIFUL SURROUNDINGS IN NATURE REALLY WORK FOR ME.
5. THE IDEA OF A GROUP EXPERIENCE THAT IS NOT FORCING A ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL APPROACH, YET ALLOWS FOR REASONABLY COHESIVE CONTEXT FOR EXPERIENCE WOULD BE GREAT TO BUILD COMMUNITY. BE MINDFUL THAT IT IS WAY TOO EASY FOR SOME TO WANDER OFF ON THEIR OWN... AND WHILE INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES WITH GOD ARE NECESSARY, SO ARE CORPORATE ONES... WE WERE AFTER-ALL, CREATED FOR RELATIONSHIP IN COMMUNITY.