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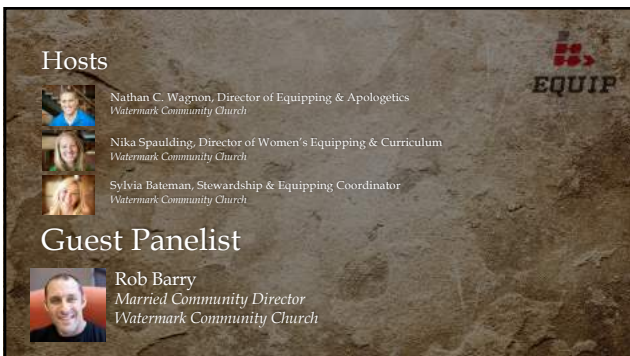
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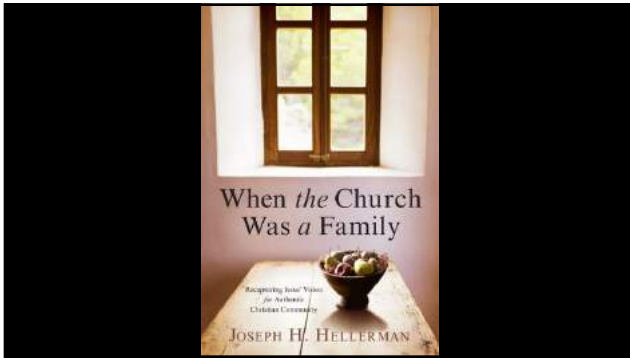
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*Weak-Group / Strong-Group*



In a **Weak-Group** culture, the preference of the individual takes priority over the good of the group.

In a **Strong-Group** culture, the good of the group takes priority over the preference of the individual.

Individualism is "a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world's cultures."

Clifford Geertz in *Culture Theory*

Joe Hellerman's *When the Church Was a Family* Lecture  
Part 1: "Christian Community in Cultural Context"

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*Strong-Group Culture*



**Principle #1:** In the New Testament world the group took priority over the individual.

**Principle #2:** In the New Testament world a person's most important group was his blood family.

**Principle #3:** In the New Testament world the closest family bond was not the bond of marriage. It was the bond between siblings. The deepest betrayal was not against a spouse but a sibling.

Joe Hellerman's *When the Church Was a Family* Lecture  
Part 1: "Christian Community in Cultural Context"

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### Jesus' Radical Concept



Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you." "Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked. Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

Mark 3:31-35

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### Strong Group Church



1. Jesus chose the strongest group of his culture - the family - as the model for relationships among his followers.
2. New Testament ethics assume strong-group family values.
3. Strong-group values are deeply woven into the very fabric of the gospel.

Joe Hellerman's *When the Church Was a Family* Lecture  
Part 1: "Christian Community in Cultural Context"

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### Priorities



- |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Western Evangelicals: | Jesus:                |
| 1. God (≠ 3)          | 1. God and His Family |
| 2. My Family          | 2. My Family          |
| 3. God's Family (≠ 1) | 3. Others             |
| 4. Others             |                       |

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*Implications*



1. The Church is a family, not a business; an organism, not an organization.
2. Jesus calls us to relational commitment, not institutional commitment.
3. Christians in my relational family remain my first priority among the people of God.
4. The Church is not here to serve my family; my family is here to serve the Church.
5. A family that is deeply embedded in the broader family of God will be healthier and more effective for the Kingdom of God than a family that is not.

Joe Hellerman's *When the Church Was a Family* Lecture  
Part 3: "Who Are My Mother & Brothers?"

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WHAT IS CHURCH MEMBERSHIP,  
AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

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WHAT SHOULD CHURCH  
MEMBERSHIP LOOK LIKE?

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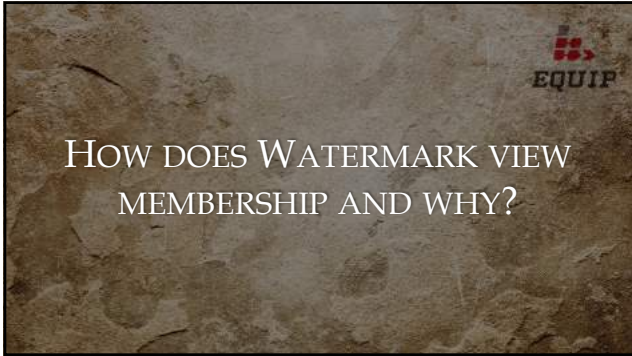
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