***A Church Called Tov*** **Book Study: Session #4**

***Discussion Sheet for* Chapters 8-10**

1. Fred Rogers has received a lot of attention lately as someone who exemplifies character, civility, gentleness, and respect. McKnight and Barringer go on to describe Rogers’ work in broadcast television as creating and maintaining a culture of *tov* (p. 122). What did Rogers do, in what ways did Rogers behave that contributed to a culture of *tov*?
2. How do we promote a spirit of *yom kippur*, confession and repentance, in our churches? Are there aspects to the culture of our churches that inhibit those in leadership from acknowledging wrong-doing or failure? Or alternatively, what kind of ethos contributes to a culture in which wrong-doing and failure can be acknowledged and repented of?
3. Loyalty is often considered a good quality. But loyalty can sometimes get in the way of justice. Given the inclination toward loyalty, what can churches do to prevent loyalty from obscuring the commitment to justice, to doing what is right?
4. What does it look like to become an agent of *tov* in a toxic church? What qualities, characteristics, support systems does one need to have in place to sustain a posture that promotes *tov*?
5. Consider spending some time this week creating and praying a litany of confession for your church. Who has been wronged in your congregation? What words would you use to express sorrow, lament, confession, and repentance?

**Chapter Summaries and Themes:**

**Chapter 8: Tov Churches Nurture a People-First Culture**

Becoming a people-first church

* 1. Treat people as people
  2. Enfold others into the community
  3. Recognize all people as made in the image of God
  4. Treat people as siblings
  5. Develop Jesus-like eyes for people

**Chapter 9: Tov Churches Nurture Truth**

Forming a Truth-Telling Culture: “A culture of truth telling can only be formed through the disciplines of knowing the truth, doing the truth, and surrendering to the truth.” p. 137

Knowing the Truth: “It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that we can know and learn the truth. It is also by the power of the Spirit that we are able to do the truth.” p. 139

Doing the Truth: “A truth-telling culture emerges from people who live in the truth, and living in the truth fosters people who tell the truth. Life and speech--living a true life and telling the truth--a vitally connected.” p. 140

Surrendering to the Truth: “God’s call for us to live in the true light is an exhortation to know the truth, make truth a way of life, open ourselves to the Spirit’s revealing the truth, and be vulnerable to the truth so that we can live honestly before God.” p. 141

“Prophetic action [in the form of going public] should never be the *first* thing someone does.” p. 145. However, when powerful perpetrators and church leaders refuse to do what’s right, it is time for prophetic, biblical action. p. 146

According to James Baldwin, “Whoever cannot tell himself the truth about his past is trapped in it . . . unable to assess either his weaknesses or his strengths, and how frequently indeed he mistakes the one for the other.” p. 153

“Telling the truth is at the heart of the Circle of *Tov*, but truth telling is not instinctive in toxic cultures where false narratives proliferate. It must be developed.” p. 158.

**Chapter 10: Tov Churches Nurture Justice**

In a 2018 interview with *Christianity Today,* Rachael Denhollander said she believes “church is one of the least safe places to acknowledge abuse,” and “church is one of the worst places to go for help. . . . What Rachael and her husband, Jacob, encountered was loyalty to the institution at the cost of justice . . . ” p. 162

“*Tov* cultures are loyal to a higher power--Almighty God--which means a higher standard of honesty, integrity, justice, and righteousness.” p. 166

“Put into a formula, justice means *to be empowered through the Spirit to do the right thing.* And the “right thing” is *what Jesus teaches. . .* God’s will is for us to follow the teaching of Jesus, which Jesus himself summarized as *loving God and loving others--*or as Paul teaches, to live in the Spirit of God. We love God by loving others and doing what is right” p. 168

“When churches get caught up in issues of loyalty, they lose their perspective on doing the right thing. So, what can we teach in our churches to help build a godly standard of justice into the culture?” p. 169

* Know what justice looks like
* Recognize injustice
* Recognize the fallout, and press on
* Tell stories about doing the right thing