

SESSION 5: THE HABIT OF COMMUNITY

– Participating in God’s Family

"Let us not give up the habit of meeting together, as some are doing. Instead, let us encourage each other." Heb. 10:25

WHY IS COMMUNITY SO IMPORTANT?

1. I belong IN GOD'S FAMILY WITH OTHER BELIEVERS.

"Let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." Gal 6:10

"You are a member of God's very own family...and you belong in God's household with every other Christian." Eph 2:19

"So in Christ, we who are many form one body; and each member belongs to all the others!" Rom 12:5

"The Christian who is not committed to a group of other believers for praying, sharing, and serving, so that he is known, as he knows others, is not an obedient Christian. He is not in the will of God. However vocal he may be in his theology, he is not obeying the Lord." Dr. Ray Ortland

"You can only be loved to the extent that you are known." Dr. John Ortberg

2. I NEED encouragement TO GROW SPIRITUALLY.

"Let us think of one another, and how we can encourage each other to love and do good deeds." Heb. 10:24

"Two are better off than one...If one of them falls down, the other can help him up. But if someone is alone and falls, it's just too bad, because there is no one to help him...Two men can resist an attack that would defeat one man alone. A rope made of three cords is hard to break." Eccl 4:9-10,12

3. I NEED accountability TO GROW SPIRITUALLY.

"People learn from one another just as iron sharpens iron." Pr 27:17

"Every day...keep encouraging one another so that none of you is hardened by the glamour of sin." Heb. 3:13

"Brothers, if someone is trapped in some sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently...Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the Law of Christ. Gal 6:1-2

4. CHRIST IS present WHEN WE FELLOWSHIP TOGETHER.

"For wherever two or three have come together in my name, I am there, right among them!"
Matt 18:20

5. THERE IS great power WHEN PEOPLE PRAY TOGETHER.

"Whenever two of you on earth agree about anything you pray for, it will be done for you by my Father in Heaven." Matt 18:19

6. FELLOWSHIP IS A witness TO THE WORLD.

(Jesus) "My prayer for all of them is that they will be of one heart and mind...so the world will believe you sent me." John 17:21

7. I AM obligated TO EVERY OTHER CHRISTIAN

"God has given you some special abilities; be sure to use them to help each other..." 1 Peter 4:10

"There are different kinds of service to God...together you form the body of Christ and each one of you is a necessary part of it." 1 Cor. 12:5, 27

The "One Anothers" of Fellowship (Partial List)

Serve one another	Gal. 5:13
Accept one another	Rom. 15:7
Forgive one another	Col. 3:13
Greet one another	Rom. 16:16
Bear one another's burdens	Gal. 6:2
Be devoted to one another	Rom. 12:10
Honor one another	Rom. 12:10
Teach one another	Rom. 15:14
Submit to one another	Eph. 5:21
Encourage one another	1 Thes. 5:11

HOW DOES A LARGE CHURCH MAINTAIN CLOSE COMMUNITY?

EVERY MEMBER NEEDS TO BE A PART OF A small group.

"(They met) day after day, in the Temple courts and from house to house." Acts 5:42

TWO TYPES OF CHURCH MEETINGS

Large Group: Celebration

Small Group: Community

"Greet the church that meets in their home." Rom. 16:5 Also Acts 2:26, 8:3, 16:40, 20:20,
1 Cor.. 16:19, Col. 4:15

At Trinity, we believe our church must grow larger and smaller at the same time.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF SMALL GROUPS?

Acts 2:42-47

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1. Bible Study | "They DEVOTED THEMSELVES to the apostle's teaching..." |
| 2. Fellowship/Community | "...and to the fellowship..." |
| 3. Communion | "...and to the breaking of bread..." |
| 4. Prayer | "...and to prayer..." |
| 5. Support | "...they gave to anyone as he had a need..." |
| 6. Social | "...they ate together with glad and sincere hearts..." |
| 7. Singing and Praising | "...praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people." |
| 8. Outreach | "And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." |

LIFE GROUPS/ACE GROUPS

Purpose

- Life Groups - built around relationships.
Growth & service to and with one another.
"Doing Life Together"
- ACE Groups- built around common interest of learning.
Focused on learning together.

Commitment

- Life Groups – Annual commitment (can go on for years)
- Ace Groups – Seasonal commitment (Fall/Spring/Summer)

Connecting

- Life Groups: Build through relational connections
- ACE Groups: Join by sign-up

Location

- LG: Mostly off-site in homes, but not necessarily
- AG: Mostly on-site, but not necessarily

Curriculum

- LG: Curriculum determined by group members
- AG: Curriculum determined by what is offered

Unique ACE Groups Characteristics

- Can Specialize: Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced
- Some groups will offer easy ingress
- Works for many who can't make life groups work

HOW TO START AND MAINTAIN GOOD HABITS

STEP ONE: _____ **Desire** _____.

You must start with a strong desire. You must be internally motivated. External motivations don't last. If you start only half-heartedly, you will never make it to the success point.

STEP TWO: _____ **Decision** _____.

Begin right now! Don't wait. Don't procrastinate. You don't slide into a new habit. "One of these days" never arrives. You must have a starting point. It's easier to break a bad habit today than it will be tomorrow!

"If you wait for perfect conditions, you will never get anything done." Eccl. 11:4

STEP THREE: _____ **Declaration** _____..

Announce your intentions publicly. Make a covenant or resolution. The power of a vow is awesome. It is particularly powerful if you put your commitment in writing.

"Make vows to the Lord your God and fulfill them." Ps. 76:11

STEP FOUR: _____ **Determination** _____..

Never allow an exception until the new habit is securely rooted in your life. Each lapse will be critical. A single slip unwinds many turns at first. Continuity and success at the start is essential. Never be swayed by "just this once." The act of yielding weakens the will and reinforces your lack of self-control. It takes 3 weeks to become comfortable with a new habit and it takes another 3 to 4 weeks (doing it daily) for it to become a part of your life.

IT TAKES 7 TO 21 REPETITIONS TO LEARN SOMETHING.

STEP FIVE: _____ **Do It** _____.

Whenever you feel the slightest urge or prompting to practice this new habit--DO IT THEN! Don't wait. Seize every opportunity to reinforce your habit. Those feelings will not last, so whenever you feel inclined to perform your new habit, do so!

STEP SIX: _____ **Double Up** _____.

Get a partner who will support you and encourage you. Find someone who is willing to hold you accountable and check up on you especially in the early days before the habit is firmly rooted in your life.

"Let us consider and give attentive, continuous care to watching over each other, studying how we may stir up and stimulate each other to...helpful deeds and noble activities."

Heb. 1:25

"Two are better off than one, because together they can work more effectively. If one of them falls down, the other can help him up." Eccl. 4:9-10

STEP SEVEN: _____ **Depend On God** _____.

Rely on God's power to help you establish the habit. Remember, Satan does not want you to develop habits that help you grow spiritually and make you like Christ so he will do all he can to tempt you, cause you to slip, or discourage you. Pray!

"For the Spirit of God has not given us a spirit of fear but fills us with power, love, and self-control." 2 Tim. 1:7

"For it is God who is at work within you, giving you the will and the power to achieve his purpose." Phil. 2:13