

Jason Smith - Renewed

Part 4: Renewed Community

If you show me your friendships, it will reveal the direction of your life. The community you choose could be the difference between living in darkness or living in light.

We first must enter into fellowship (koinonia) with God, and that fellowship will ensure that we live in the light of truth.

It is a beautiful thing when groups of people fellowship with God and enter into fellowship with one another. Sometimes this means we have to search for a new community that can help us live into the light.

Scripture: 1 John 1:5-7 / 1 John 2:5-6

Today is the final week in our series Renewed. I hope that each and every one of you have experienced some kind of renewal within your life as we have walked together the past few weeks.

Our God renews our spirit, as we trust him to forgive us of our sins through our repentance. Our God offers us a renewed purpose as we trust him to guide us.

Our God renews our love for him as we allow him to remind us of his great love for us.

It is because we have a God who is so intimately involved in our lives that we never have to resign ourselves to a hopeless and broken life. We can experience renewal.

Today, we want to look at the community we have surrounded ourselves with. **Who we are is largely a result of the people we have chosen to call friends.**

You might be thinking, well that's not me, I don't have any friends. That's a different problem that needs to be addressed at some point.

The choice of who we fellowship with may be one of the most important decisions we make in life.

I want to show you a few fellowships, friendships, squads, and communities that many of us would love to have.

Let's see if you can guess who they are. **(SHOW PICS)**

- **The Sandlot**
- **Ghostbusters**
- **Minions**
- **Scooby Doo**

Each one of these groups of people are well known friends who work together to accomplish all kinds of great things. Who would not want a group of friends that you can really count on?

I'm thankful for my Circle. (Jerry, Brian, Brett)

1. **CHOOSE YOUR FRIENDS WISELY**

You show me your friends, and it will reveal the direction of your life.

Some of us today have chosen wonderful friendships that constantly encourage us and always push us forward.

A good friendship is a two-way street. You give, and you receive in a selfless and committed community. However, some of us have chosen poorly today.

We find ourselves in friendships that harm us. We do not have people who encourage us or want what is best for us.

Often, we choose people who take advantage of us and only look out for themselves.

The problem with this, among many, is the developed misconception about what all friendships will be like.

Maybe today you need to hear that God can help us experience renewal in our community.

The kind of people we need to strive to be and the kind of people we should strive to surround ourselves with, are people who keep God's commands.

When we follow God's commands and walk in his ways, it enriches our lives and protects us from unnecessary harm.

John was one of the twelve disciples. These twelve were a crew of ordinary men who were committed to following Jesus through the ups and downs of life.

They turned the world upside down for Jesus.

John was very familiar with choosing a fellowship of people who would live intentionally for Jesus.

John wrote the book of 1 John, and in it he reminds us of the importance of being mindful of whom we walk with in life.

1 John 2:5-6

⁵ but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: ⁶ whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

John offers a litmus test for the community in which we find ourselves.

He says the mark of a committed Christ follower is someone who keeps the commands of God.

The kind of person who helps develop a strong community is someone who holds the Word of God in high regard. This kind of person takes God at his word.

They believe that it is important to repent of sin (*Matthew 4:17*).

¹⁷ From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

They believe it is important to serve people as they serve Christ (*Philippians 2*).

They believe it is important to be reconciled with one another (*Matthew 5:23-25*). They believe it is important to keep their word (*Matthew 5:37*).

In addition, they believe it is important to pray for one another (*Matthew 21:13*).

¹³ He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.”

2025 was a challenging year for me, in more than one way. I’m thankful for my circle.

We must have a sober assessment of our current community.

We should ask ourselves if we personally, and those with whom we spend most of our time, are keeping God’s word faithfully.

The Law of reproduction.

What do you desire to reproduce?

Before you build a circle, there something that is of the greatest importance.

2. BEFRIEND GOD FIRST

Just one chapter before, John offers this test that we can apply to our friendships. He points out the most important community that we should be committed to.

Without being committed to this vertical relationship, our horizontal relationships with people may experience significant strain.

1 John 1:5-6

⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

⁶ If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

John tells us the message that had been passed on to him. The message is simple. The message is that God is light. In God is all goodness, and everything is exposed.

There is no darkness in God at all. He is trustworthy and he always does what is right.

John tells us if we want to be in fellowship with God, if we want to be a friend with God, then we must be careful to walk in light as well.

He invites us to live our lives in the full exposure of God's goodness.

We cannot claim to have community with God and yet walk in darkness and live in sin. That makes us liars, and the truth is not in us.

A friendship with God will expose the dark corners of our lives and allow us to remove anything that should not be there.

Light is helpful in renewal in our lives. Without light, the darkness allows brokenness and sin to remain hidden.

It reminds me of what it is like when you are trying to rid yourself of pests in your home. Living in the South US, our homes are riddled with cockroaches and spiders.

They are nasty creatures. There have been times when I was living in poverty and woke up in the middle of the night to get something to drink, and when the light turned on and exposed the corner of the kitchen, these little bugs scattered.

GROSS. When God is light and we walk with him, we are able to see clearly the sinful attitudes and dark thoughts in order to become all God has desired for us to be.

Once we establish this, we must understand we cannot walk this journey out alone.

3. **WALK WITH OTHERS IN LIGHT**

John adds to this idea of having fellowship with God and points out that if we walk in the light with God, then we also can better walk in a relationship with others.

1 John 1:7

⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

A healthy community. A strong group of friends begins with a deep connection to God, and that connection allows for genuine and beautiful fellowship with others.

If you look at your closest friendships, would you say they make you more like Jesus? Do your closest friends encourage you to make choices and decisions that you are proud of?

When we walk in the light of God, we have nothing to hide. We are able to be honest with our friends.

Maybe today you do not get the sense you could really bring the serious matters of your life to your community for help.

Maybe today you get the sense that you are having to keep some of who you truly are from your community because they would be offended, angered, or disappointed.

Maybe today you know you want to walk in the light, but your community feels very dark.

It does not have to stay like that. You could begin to ask God to bring renewal to your community.

Maybe you could be the catalyst for renewal in your community by letting God do a work in you and let your light shine so that others can see. Sometimes it just takes a little change for a whole community to be renewed.

The story of the LA Dream Center **(SHOW PIC)**

The **Los Angeles Dream Center** is a faith-based organization dedicated to restoring lives and rebuilding communities through the love of Jesus Christ.

It serves individuals and families impacted by homelessness, addiction, human trafficking, poverty, and crisis by providing housing, recovery programs, education, and practical support.

The Dream Center exists to meet immediate needs while offering long-term hope, transformation, and purpose.

The most interesting thing happened. Violence dropped. Crime dropped. The city became a safe haven. All because of a little paint.

A little change and the community was renewed.

4. **YOUR LIFE COULD BE THE KEY TO RENEWAL**

You can be cleansed of all sin. Your community could be cleansed of all sin. It happens in only one way: the blood of Jesus Christ.

You see, we were never meant to live this life alone. God's intention has always been for us to walk with him by the power of the Holy Spirit and the blood of Christ.

We were always meant to find strength and encouragement by walking in the light alongside others.

We find strength from a fellowship with God and a fellowship with others in order to offer hope to others with whom we come into contact.

Your life could be the light that someone else needs to see that could light their way to the truth of Jesus' sacrifice for them.

Maybe today you have one of two choices to make:

1. Maybe you need to begin to pray and intentionally search for a renewed community in order for you to live more in line with God.
2. Maybe today you need to recognize that your life can be a light to someone else. Who is one person you can share the good news of Jesus' love with?

This morning I want you to think of one person that would help you to live into the light or consider one person they could offer light to. Make a commitment to take action this week.

Prayer