

The Essentials – Part 2: Living in Community

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Intro:

We are in Week 2 of our Essentials series. What is essential?

If you were stranded on a desert island and you could only have ten things to survive, what would be essential. I know some of us would be shocked to find out that bacon wasn't in the top three. My Posturepedic mattress. Espresso maker. Food and Shelter. So, you absolutely gotta have bacon, right? And for some of you for shelter, you would definitely need...

Louis Zamperini's Story

I should not be the first to tell you that living in spiritual community is not just a good suggestion. It's essential. The simplest single-celled organisms on the planet require over 100 proteins working in concert together to formulate life. You too need to be in concert with a community of like-minded believers.

Now, there are no perfect communities—as soon you join it would cease to be perfect. 100% safe. They're real. They are full of personalities. Personalities are messy and unpredictable.

- You will probably be hurt by somebody, offended by someone. Listen to this church bulletin and tell me if you wouldn't be offended by this.
- **Slide: "Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Don't forget your husbands."**
- Yet spiritual community is the only life raft in a wilderness of sharks and enemies.

Ephesians 4:16

From (Jesus) the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

- This is who we are. It's not just an optional wardrobe we put on and take off when we show up on Sunday.

Living in Community

The love of Jesus becomes real when we live in loving relationship with each other. Connecting, caring, serving, growing, and leading in healthy groups and teams knits us together as a church family.

Turn to Acts 2 (the first church)

Everywhere the spirit of Jesus shows up, we see people in relationships. Everywhere you see revival, you see communities being revived. There are no healthy examples of Christianity without community.

Acts 2:42

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

- **Slide: Christian community is both spiritual and relational.**
- Creating a culture where Jesus is present among us.

- Creating a culture where people are present among us. (Not about numbers or systems)

Acts 2:43-47 NIV 2011

Acts 4:32-37 NIV 2011

- The community meets spiritual needs, and it meets relational/practical needs as well. Because God cares about your spiritual wellbeing as well as your social, financial, and physical wellbeing.

Slide: Our aim is to create a culture where Jesus is present among us.

- We're more than the rotary club, or the rook club or basketball lovers' association.
- Christian community is more than having pool parties and cookouts with your Christian friends. That's wonderful. That's community. That's friendship. it's not church.
- Next generation says: I don't need to go to a church building. I have Christian friends and we hang out. I have worship music I listen to on Spotify. I sing in the shower. And I download Rick Warren's teachings and listen to them every week while I'm driving to work. That's not church either.
- Gathering is not Church. Spiritual habits are not church. What is the distinct role of Church?
- [Matthew 18:20 For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.](#)
- As soon as we begin to welcome the presence of Jesus, we go from a club to a people united around his Lordship.
 - I've been in Small Group meetings where the whole thing was, "how was your week?" That's fellowship. It's not church.
 - I've been in coffee shops where the Spirit of prophecy fell because they welcomed the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- A gathered people united around his Lordship can happen anywhere.
- As soon as you say... "can we take five minutes to pray about that..."
- In a vehicle, in an office, at backyard cook out, -- it happens in relationships.

There are a couple of key elements to this.

Colossians 4:2

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

Colossians 3:16

Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom

- The community helps you practice his teachings, his way of life, his Lordship.
- The community becomes a greenhouse, a hothouse – there's a sharing effect.
- As we're helping each other to mature through scripture, Bible Study, truth, discussion.
- Sharing the Word in community: you can feel the life of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Encourage one another (in the faith) and build each other up

- Maybe 6 people, maybe 4 people, who know the creamer in my coffee, who know the color of my socks, who know my grandmother's name, who know my triggers and who can be my armor when I feel insecure, discouraged, defeated, or self-reliant.
- Authenticity is so essential. Ask anyone through our Celebrate Recovery, or Sexual Addictions recovery. This is where I'm at. It's not where I want to be...
- **Pictures: Cardboard Testimonies**



- Creating a place (usually smaller group) where we have built enough trust, we can be embarrassingly honest.
- In community we create a culture that says, "I'm a great sinner, and Christ is a great savior."

Our aim is to create a culture where people are present among us.

Acts 6:1-4 NIV 2011

- We are a relational community with practical needs. A culture where we're not concerned about your prayer life. We're thinking about your schooling, and your friendships. We're not just passing people by. We're not just gathering and scattering. Gathering and scattering.
- *Ill: Years ago, one of our single moms.* Relationships, finances, housing, saved recently, healing.

Our small group leaders and regional care teams have stepped into the middle of many messy situations and have helped single moms, helped people organized their finances, move in a pinch.

- **Camera Crowd Shot: Have Our Small Group Leaders Stand Up!**

Video

A Word from Your Local Pastor

You've probably noticed that our Sunday gathering here in the Petra community is a big place. It's easy to get lost. I've attended churches of 60, 200, 450, 4000, 800, 1500.

Developing relationships takes dedication, energy, and longevity. One of the ways we try to help people is by offering groups that meet in homes, Bible Studies, age-appropriate ministries like Young Adults, or serve in a ministry team. But none of those are a guarantee. There's no silver bullet.

It really requires a culture of relationships; I have to decide I am going to show up. I'm going to give an honest answer and see what happens. I'm going to invite someone out for coffee. I'm going to say hi to one new person today. I want to really notice people.

Petra can't create community for you. I can't do it for you. Sharon can't do that.

- *Ill: I remember a season of grief.*
- We really see people. Have you ever felt so alone in a crowd? Felt so abandoned or misunderstood or vulnerable? We want to be a community that cares about your health, and your friendships, and your vocation.

Slide: Picture of Guru Faith isn't just the Guru, meditating in a cave...or that you're a spiritual superstar that crosses the finish line ahead of everyone else.

Christian maturity is not measured by your level of zeal, that you have more Biblical knowledge, or you pray more than anyone else, number of disciplines. It is recognized by the scars of commitment, the hidden payments you've made to love people, the dents from loyalty and sacrifice. It's the slow march of helping others travel through swamp and forest to cross the line all together. That's what the perfecting of love is.

A Few Final Thoughts

1. **A community of relationships is a refuge against loneliness and isolation.**
2. **A community that cares is an oasis of encouragement.**
3. **A community can help protect you against the traps, temptations, accusations, and lies of the enemy.**
4. **A community can help you in your times of need.**

When you are walking through the trial of your life and you have friends and support around you, they are your armor. Anything is possible. When you're in the hospital and you don't know if you're going to get through it, and nobody walks through the door, it's crippling.

Louis Zamperini's Story