

Next Steps – Community

Session Two

VIEW VIDEO: “LIFE IS BETTER WITH COMMUNITY”

(Available in church app or through links emailed to you)

OUR FAITH IS CERTAINLY PERSONAL, BUT NOT PRIVATE

“Personal relationship with Jesus Christ . . .” This phrase is used countless times each weekend when churches gather for worship across the United States and around the world. And while such wording is helpful in describing the intimacy of our fellowship with God, it is only part of the truth— because it neglects the reality that God’s design is for believers to be deeply connected in community with other followers of Christ. “

Matt Chandler

From the beginning of creation Human beings were created to be in relation with one another.

Genesis 2:18-25

In all of creation the only thing God said was “not good” was the loneliness of man. God created man as a relational and community driven being, and therefore he needed companionship.

When we try to live our Christian life and faith in the most private way possible, we are working against our created nature. God has designed us for community because of all the benefits, encouragement, support, and help that comes from being a part of a community focused on God.

God himself exists in community: Father – Son – Spirit.

THE PROBLEM

The problem is that in our current world we are using things like social media and technology to stay “connected” without ever building any real relationships. We “relate” to one another without having a “relationship” with one another. You could call this being “alone together.”

A pastor gave a wonderful analogy about this phenomenon when he observed how people interacted in his local Starbucks and he said:

“Starbucks was founded to be a gathering place for relationships. Sure, they serve a million combinations of coffee and pastries, but it was also intended as a place where people could get their coffee not “to go” but to stay. And stay together. Starbucks was built to capitalize on the intrinsic human desire to relate. But as you look into your local Starbucks, notice that many people are in there— together in one place— but they’re also alone. They’re sitting at tables with their headphones on, working on their computers or fiddling with their phones.”

Matt Chandler

We have become a culture of information without relation.

The problem with this format comes when there is a real need in our lives. Since we have no community, and no relationships, we are left trying to figure things out on our own... we are left trying to fix every little problem as well as every catastrophe with no help or support to think of and inevitably we will fail. That failure then leads to our depression or despair... this process leaves us thinking we will never be good enough or that our problems are so great that they could never be overcome.

It takes a community to build each of us up, it takes relationships to get us through hard times, and it takes encouragement and support from both to help us continue on a healthy and growing journey in our relationship with Christ.

“True friendship calls you out of the darkness of personal privacy into the loving candor of mutual concern. It moves you from being a sealed envelope to being an open letter.”

Paul David Tripp

So what does that community look like?

Unlike any other standard group of people who connect because of common interests in any number of things... Christian communities have only one single thing in common: All members have been saved by Jesus Christ!

Christian community is not concerned with social status, political affiliation, affluence, color, or cultural background. All that matters is that you have surrendered to Christ as the Lord of your life. This is the only firm foundation to build a lasting community upon. Every other type of relation, connection, and community will be shallow and over time fade away because it was based on something superficial and temporary. But a community with Christ has an ETERNAL FOUNDATION that will never fade, or weaken. A community is only as strong as the foundation it is built upon.

“The church is . . . made up of natural enemies. What binds us together is not common education, common race, common income levels, common politics, common nationality, common accents, common jobs, or anything else of that sort. Christians come together . . . because they have all been saved by Jesus Christ. . . . They are a

band of natural enemies who love one another for Jesus' sake."

D.A. Carson

In Philippians 1:27 The apostle Paul reminds the Christians of Philippi that the Christian life is one that is lived in community with like minded Christians who want Christ to be glorified through the building up of one another with the Gospel.

²⁷ Only let your manner of life be worthy^[a] of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.
Philippians 1:27

HOW DO WE JOIN OR BUILD COMMUNITY?

⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit,^[a] serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

Romans 12:9-13

Most translations of scripture will put a heading over this passage of scripture from Paul to the Romans as something like "Marks of a true Christian." In this passage Paul outlines what it means to properly respond to the Gospel and follow Christ. This section of scripture can really help us to see exactly what the Christian life and community should look like:

1. It should be Genuine (v.9)

- This means no pretending or “putting on an act,” this type of community must cut to the core of who we are and not merely stay on the surface of who we want people to perceive us to be.

2. It should be a place of Confession (v. 10a)

- A community built on Christ must be willing to open up with one another and confess for the purpose of moving past the grasp of sin so that we can hold tight to the good promises of God. A Christ-centered community is one that is safe for confession while firmly standing on truth.

3. It should be filled with brotherly love (v.10b)

- Too many people in our world today feel like outcasts or second class citizens for many different reasons. Our Christ based community should be a place of care and acceptance, realizing that we are all sinners who have been redeemed ONLY by the love and mercy of Christ.

4. Rejoice in hope (v.12a)

- Our purpose, our life, our joy, and our hope are all found in Jesus Christ! We are redeemed even though we never deserved such redemption and for that we should constantly give praise, we should constantly rejoice, we should constantly remind one another how wonderful it is and how thankful we are that we have such an awesome savior!

5. Pray Constantly (v.12b)

- Our community should be one that is trying to take all things good and bad to prayer to the Lord. Our community can only be as strong as it's connection is to it's foundation so that means as a community we must be a people of constant prayer!

6. Help one another's needs (v. 13)

- A Christ-centered community seeks to help both the spiritual and physical needs of its members. We must be

concerned with the well-being of others around us. This is a Gospel theme that runs clearly throughout scripture: those who follow Christ will be those who desire to put the needs of others before their own. Christ himself, at the last supper, reminded the disciples “the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” So we see that our community must be one that is willing to serve one another.

VIEW VIDEO: “WE ARE THE CHURCH”

(Available in church app or through links emailed to you)

REVIEW & FILL IN THE BLANK

1. Our faith is certainly _____, but definitely not _____.
2. God created man as a _____ and _____ driven being, and therefore he needed companionship.
3. God himself exists in _____ : Father – Son – Spirit.
4. Christian communities have only one single thing in common: All members have been _____ !
5. A _____ is only as strong as the _____ it is built upon.

6. What are the 6 ways through which we build or join a Gospel-centered community?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Community starts with us considering others more significant than ourselves, so what can be done in your life to cultivate greater love and concern for others?

2. Do you agree that the community of friends you surround yourself with should be people who share your belief in Jesus? Why or why not?

3. What practical step can you take this week to connect with another believer in a genuine and meaningful way?
