

BEING

SERIES

40 days to being more like Jesus

BEING Series Week 1 - [Commit to Community]

January 14, 2024 - Pastor Jason Carter

Our theme for the year: FIND YOUR COURAGE: BELIEVE

We need to find our courage. Stand firm. Take action. Courage is action.

It's not a feeling, a sentiment, a strategy. Courage is the will to act. It's charging forward when you want to run away. When critics heckle from the sidelines. When failure seems imminent, leaders have the courage to go first. They surge when others retreat.

- As you start 2024, what goals are you striving for that necessitate courage? What do you need to focus on first?

If you have big goals, you will experience fear. But courage is, as Franklin D. Roosevelt said, "not the absence of fear but rather the assessment that something else is more important than fear."

- What is more important than your fear? What needs you to fight against fear and actually take courage and act?

Fix on that idea. Commit to it. And then dare greatly.

5 Keystone Habits are like hitting off a tee in baseball. No matter how long you have been playing, you always need the basics, on the tee. Small things done well become big things well done.

Keystone Habit #1: Commit to Community

God calls us to biblical community. I want all of us to intentionally commit to community in 2024.

Other words for community: Crowd. Network. Bunch. Circle. Clique. Crew. Squad. Pack. Gang. Fam. Tribe. The Ladies. Girl's club. Fellas. Brotherhood.

- Who are you running with? Doing life with? Who's got your back?
- Who is challenging you to grow in faith? To act on your faith?
- Who are you allowing yourself to be held accountable to?
- Who are you around that inspires you, pushes you, challenges you?
- Who is causing you to make poor decisions? Who is influencing you to NOT pursue Jesus and what matters to Him?

At our core, we want real community. We were made for it. Research shows that loneliness has as much negative effect on health as drinking and smoking.

We see the pattern of community throughout scripture.

Genesis 2:18 NIV "God saw man Adam and said it not good for man to be alone."

Psalms 68:6 NLT "God places the lonely in families..."

God mandated care for the widow and orphans throughout the Old and New Testaments.

Many of the miracles of Jesus were physical but also brought relational closeness and healing.

95% of our *success or failures* in life are determined by the people we habitually *associate* with.

- Harvard Study

- Think about the religious laws of 'clean and unclean' that existed then. How would that have affected community? How would sickness/healing affect community?

Jesus is our model for community.

We have a tendency to choose people like us. Jesus chose different people from different economic backgrounds, different occupation with whom to do life with.

- Simon the Zealot (wants to overthrow Rome) and Matthew a tax collector (who works for Rome). They had to choose to get along once they both started to follow Jesus. There were tradesmen and fishermen.

Jesus called them, put them in community, and then put them on mission together.

- How do you do in community with people who are not like you; who don't worship like you, don't understand the Bible the way you do, etc?

- PJ said that community helps determine satisfaction and/or reinforces dysfunction in life. What does he mean and why?

Community shapes and influences us.

We become like the people we spend the most time with. Harvard Professor David McClelland tracked people and their communities for over 30 years and discovered that 95% of our success or failures in life are determined by the people we habitually associate with.

Acts 2:44-47 NLT ⁴⁴“And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. ⁴⁵They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. ⁴⁶They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity^(j)— ⁴⁷all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.”

Together reflects team, not individuals. Together works, sacrifices, prays for, shares with, etc with others.

Community challenges us in spiritual formation, sharing, selflessness, accountability, comfort and taking God-inspired risks. Community won’t let you settle.

- **Unpack this and share how it applies to your life.**

Biblical community will serve as a mirror to help us see ourselves more clearly and helps us ask: Who am I becoming? What is important?

- **Who are you becoming? Is the community that influences you decreasing or increasing your faith, spiritual growth, and biblical influence?**

Matthew 16:26 NIV ²⁶“What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?”

- **What does this mean, and in what ways do we exchange eternal things for temporal things?**

We can pursue many things but are they the right things?

Biblical community will help us determine what we are trading our life for, what our priorities are?

Almost always, it is not money, valuables, and things that people cherish most in life. It is relationships. Family, friends. People who spent time together, accomplished something together or were on mission together, went through difficulties together. There is a sense of commitment, care for one another. This is what adds value in life and on the journey. Community has a way of keeping us in check and on track, especially in pursuit of Jesus.

PJ said: *I marvel at where I am in life. Small town- family, never had big aspirations. I felt like I got a late start. In my walk with God, things began to change when my commitment level changed. It was when I made a decision to be committed (all in) and with whom I chose to be committed to that created the transformation in the right things, eternal things.*

- How have you seen this in your own life?

PJ said: *I am watching and hearing young adults/young professionals talk about their commitment to Jesus and give their lives for Him. We are seeing an increase in the engagement of people following Jesus. Not just attending but actual participation in the things of God. More people are wanting to find their place in the mission of Jesus. Our older generation has been faithful and all-in and have paved the way for these younger generations. A huge component of this is biblical community.*

Community helps us discover our part in the mission of God and reminds us we all have a part to play.

1 Corinthians 12:17-19 (NIV)- ¹⁷“If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be?”

The more you hang out with those pursuing Jesus, the more opportunities you will have to meet needs and discover your part. Think of the men with the paralytic friend. He had a need, they made a plan. There is a need. We take action. We make it happen. This is the power of a group. A group can do what one may not even try.

- What's your part?

You bring something to community.

Winston Churchill said *“What is the use of living, if it be not to strive for noble causes and to make this muddled world a better place for those who will live in it after we are gone?”*

Hebrews 10:24 NIV *“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”*

- Is your community calling you to biblical action?

- Are you calling people to biblical action and faith? Are you calling people up?

- Are you investing in others? Are you sharing your story, your life, and your gift?

Here is the challenge: Jesus calls us into community versus our culture calls us to settle for individualism and false community (virtual).

In America, we have this ingrained notion of individuality. We as Americans are fiercely independent and enthralled by the American dream. If not careful, these two things (independence and pursuit of American dream) will stand diametrically opposed to the gospel of Jesus.

We want you to succeed and flourish, but the value system of your success should be shaped and measured by the Bible and influenced by those in pursuit of Jesus. Have goals and purpose but be confident that it is rooted in the Mission, in the Truth of the Bible.

- Are your plans and dreams shaped by the Bible?
- Are you fiercely independent or settling for false
- What needs to shift?

Don't settle for imitation community or social media/virtual are made to thrive in real interaction.

- Have you settled? If you have, how can you change this?

1 John 3:16 NIV ¹⁶ "This is how we know what love is: Jesus life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our sisters."

"One who wants *fellowship* without solitude plunges into the void of words and feelings, and the one who seeks *solitude* without fellowship perishes in the abyss of vanity, self-infatuation, and despair."

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

One of the biggest sacrifices we make in our context in America is not money or things, but rather that we would be willing to give our time to someone else. *Everyone is busy, but are we busy about the right things?* This is what makes life worth living.

- What do you think about this statement? Can you see its truth in your own life?

Galatians 6:2 NIV "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

James 5:16 NIV ¹⁶ "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."

This gives us accountability. Shame is broken when we share and confess to each other. We discover we are not alone. The enemy can no longer shame us.

- Can you share a personal example of this truth?

"Let him who cannot be alone beware of community... Let him who is not in community beware of being alone... Each by itself has profound perils and pitfalls. One who wants fellowship without solitude plunges into the void of words and feelings, and the one who seeks solitude without fellowship perishes in the abyss of vanity, self-infatuation, and despair." - Dietrich Bonhoeffer in the book Life Together

- Unpack this loaded quote and apply it to our discussion today.

Biblical Community is one of the keystone habits that allows you to finish well.

2 questions we need to ask ourselves repeatedly this year and consider sharing the answers within your biblical community:

1. God what do you FOR me in community in 2024?
2. God what do you want FROM me in community in 2024?

We are believing for 12 new Life Groups to launch at Good News this year.

There are people who know how to create environments and create space where life happens. Would you prayerfully consider starting a group? We will train and equip you if you need help!

We go through different stages in life, and different times need different aspects of community. But the one thing that never stops is the call to biblical community.

- Ask God if you need to help foster or create biblical community. You have the ability. Will you make the availability?

- Do you need to say yes and be one of the 12 new groups?

It's as if we are standing at the fridge looking for something to satisfy a craving, and we keep sampling different foods but nothing will satisfy. There are a few things we could be craving spiritually:

1. Craving community: feel unsettled, unfulfilled, unsatisfied
2. Feel too busy, unqualified to lead a life group: you are going to step up and say "yes", open your home, open your life, and allow gospel to be shared through you.
3. Surrender life to Jesus: it is time to follow and give your life to Him, not just "try it again". It is time to commit to a relationship with Jesus.

PJ said: *I want this to be the year that you are in pursuit, that you make it a priority to commit to community and all that God is calling you to, that you find your courage and believe. God wants you out of your excuses and to be on mission. God wants you to give yourself to others. God awakens something in each of us. Be glorified as we pursue You in biblical community in 2024.*

- What is your response?

Community Study Article: <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2017/04/over-nearly-80-years-harvard-study-has-been-showing-how-to-live-a-healthy-and-happy-life/>