

## **Get In The Game-1**

### **“Community”**

Hey Newsong!

I want to take a second and welcome our first-time guests and those worshipping with us online today...

We're starting a brand new series called "Get in the Game." If there's one thing that we New Yorkers love it's our teams...Giants, Jets, Mets, Yankees, Knicks, Nets, Rangers, Islanders...

I just read an article that 70% of Americans tune into live sporting events every week...That's a lot of spectating!

Think about this...You go to Met-life Stadium to watch the Jets or Giants...that stadium holds about 82,000. 82,000 people watching 22 people (11 on offense and 11 on defense) actually play the game.

You have a few people who are in the game, and a whole bunch of people who are watching...Now that's okay in pro sports...but it's not okay in the church!

Following Jesus isn't about sitting on the sidelines and being entertained...It's about getting in the game...

In fact, the Apostle Paul compares the Christian life to running in a race...

Series Verse

***24 Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win!-1 Corinthians 9:24 (NLT)***

Run to win! Get in the game!

So over the next couple of weeks we're going to ask the Holy Spirit to help us evaluate the race we're running...

We're going to look at a few key areas and ask ourselves are we in the game? And if we're not in the game, we're going to ask the Holy Spirit to help us take our next step towards getting in the game...

Before we can get in the game we have to make sure that we've actually joined the team...

In this case the "team" is the church...Jesus is the owner of the team...and all who have placed their trust in Jesus for their salvation are on the team...

Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, He commissioned His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel...In other words, go get people to join My team! In order to do that He knew that they would need His power, so He told them to wait until He sends the Holy Spirit...

On the day of Pentecost, the disciples are all praying and the Holy Spirit is poured out...they speak in tongues, they are empowered to testify about Jesus, and Peter preaches a sermon, and 3,000 people get saved! They join the team!

***42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.-Acts 2:42-47 (NIV)***

Three things about community

Community is life **TOGETHER**

***44 All the believers were together and had everything in common.***

In order for a team to be strong it has to spend time together...Everyone has to be on the same page...learn the plays...support one another.

The church is no different, we should be making sure that we spend time together...That we are unified in our mission...learning the playbook...following King Jesus...

We live in a time when our culture is divided in so many ways. Rather than celebrating what we have in common, we focus on what separates us. Our culture is politically divided, racially divided, economically divided...

Even the family dynamic which should be the most basic place to find community and belonging is falling apart...

And people are looking for a real community, they're looking for a place where they can belong, a place where they can find love and support...

The church was always supposed to be that place! The church is a family...It's a community...The church is supposed to be the place where people can come as they are, and find a safe place to belong...

So we see that a church is made up of believers in Jesus who come together...they live life together...even though they come from different backgrounds, different walks of life, they still have a commonality...

It's like being a fan of a sports team...It doesn't matter who you are, what color you are, how much money you make...When you're at a game and the person next to you is wearing your team colors...

You're high-fiving, you're talking...why?

Because you've got something in common! The same is true for the church...have you ever been around a person and you just know that they're a believer?

You can start to talk to them because you have Jesus in common...you're on the same team!

The Greek word "in common" is koinonia. It means fellowship, communion, partnership...

I've been to all kinds of churches over the years...Mega churches, small country churches...churches in India & Africa...

No matter where I go, I can feel at home, these are my people...my family

In Romans 1:6 Paul tells us that Christians are “the called of Jesus Christ...”

See we were on the sidelines but we’ve been called to join the team...

We were called out of something and into something...The Greek word for church is “Ecclesia” it means to be called out...

When we join the team, we’re called out of this world, its beliefs, its ideologies, its systems and we’re called into the church...

Jesus said in Matthew 16 that He will build His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it...We’re called into a gathering of people...the ecclesia...the church...

Jesus is saying...I will build My gathering and hell can't stop it!

Now notice the word "all" in all of the believers...their identity as followers of Jesus was demonstrated in their coming together...So if you weren't in the game...if you were isolated and alone, you were not one of them!

But if you were a believer, you were in the game...you were together...you worshiped and prayed together, you studied the Word together...you ate together, you gave your tithes and your offerings together...you played together...

Are you getting in the game? Are you part of the local church? Part of the ecclesia? Or are you kind of isolated? On the side lines...It's time to get in the game...

I can't tell you how many times I've had a conversation with a believer who for whatever reason is not part of a local church... That's like being on a team and never going to the game

That leads me to my next point  
Community is life together...

Community happens in the **HOUSE**

***46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts.***

Attending church is vital in so many ways, but if you're not showing up to the house on game day, then you're probably not experiencing koinonia... You're probably feeling isolated and disconnected...

The writer of Hebrews says

***23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.***

***24 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.-Hebrews 10:23-25 (NIV)***

There's a big difference between going to see a game live and watching it on tv. The excitement, the energy...It's like one of those "You had to be there moments"

Did you ever miss a service and your friend tells you how amazing it was, and you go back and watch it and you're like okay...It's the same thing!

You can go to YouTube and get a video of a fireplace but you can't feel the heat...You just got to be in the room!

I want to challenge those of you who have made a habit of watching the service online...if you're able to go to work, go to the movies, go out to dinner...then make it a priority to come to church...take that next step!

We call Sunday the best day of the week! Why? Because it's an opportunity to come together and worship God!

It's our opportunity to hear Him speak to us through His Word...to see Him move as we pray for one another!

I can't tell you how many bad weeks I've had...only to come into the house and feel uplifted, encouraged, strengthened, inspired...

The thought of coming to church should bring joy...the psalmist says

***1 I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD.”-Psalm 122:1 (NLT)***

I'm always trying to encourage people to get to church...that's my job as a shepherd...to help lead the flock into green pastures...

I don't do it for me...I do it for you. I truly believe that regular church attendance will help make you spiritually strong...

So I'll go on social media and say “Hey Sunday church is a Saturday decision”...

Or “I know it's raining outside but you would still go to work...you would still send your kids to school...you make time for what's important to you!...No Skip Sunday!”

But the reality is, if I have to talk you into coming to church you're probably not in the game...you're probably not very spiritually strong...you're probably bouncing around from church to church, never getting connected, never getting in the game!

It's time to take your next step...Make church a priority, we want you to make Newsong your home field...We want something for you!

If you're on the sidelines when it comes to church attendance I want to give you a challenge...

Commit to coming to church for 4 weeks in a row. See if it makes a difference in your life!  
Community is life together...  
Community happens in the House...

Community happens **OUTSIDE** of the house

Sunday is our main day to gather together but the text says they didn't just gather in the temple...they gathered in their homes

***46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,***

We call our gathering together outside of a Sunday "life groups." Now some of our life groups do meet in their homes, and others meet in one of the community rooms, or at a restaurant, or sometimes it's over zoom...

The where isn't as important as the why...We believe that life is better together. We believe that real life change happens in the context of relationships...

It's in our life groups that we really get to know each other, trust each other, pray for each other, encourage one another...

It's where we laugh together, cry together, celebrate life together...

Because God made us to be relational we have a need to find people who are walking through the same stage of life that we're walking through and in that we unity, commonality and community...

But the life groups that amaze me the most are those that are made up of people from all different walks of life...

We've had Bible study groups and book study groups where you have college students with empty nesters, young adults with older married couples, people with children with people who have lost a child...

People who have otherwise have nothing in common except Jesus...You know why I love it? Because it's not normal. It's uncommon fellowship and it makes the unbelieving world stop and take notice...

Why? Because the world divides itself by what color you are, how much money you make, how you vote, and on and on...

But the church gathers together under the banner of Jesus...And all of that other stuff takes a back seat...

Paul says it like this...

***26 For you are all children[m] of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes.[n] 28 There is no longer Jew or Gentile,[o] slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.***

***29 And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children[p] of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you.-Galatians 2:26-29 (NIV)***

Look around you today...we are beautiful kaleidoscope of colors and ages and stages of life...and we're gathered together as brotha's from otha motha's and sisters from otha mister's!

What I'm saying is if you haven't joined a life group in a while get in the game...we have a few of them coming up...

This is your opportunity to get to know each other...get off the sidelines...It's something for you to take advantage of!

If your interaction with other believers is only once a week in our large gathering then you're not in community...

The Bible compares the church and our involvement in the church to being in a family...but it also compares the church to being part of a body....

And an arm can't exist apart from the rest of the body to support it...now for you medical people you can say but you can put it on ice and it can survive for a few hours...true but it can't grow!

If you're not in the game with community then you're just surviving but you're not thriving...you're not growing!

God has commanded us to be a functioning part of the church...and everybody has a part to play and everyone gets a seat at the table...

It doesn't matter how far you've fallen, or how far away you've been...you are welcome to come back home!

I saw a statistic this week that less than 18% of Christians participate in a small group community...Less than 18% of Christians are doing what God called them to do by being with one another, living life together, experiencing community...this means that 82% of the body is cut off!

Another study shows that the average American only has two people that they can confie in for any meaningful conversation...

We live in a time where because of social media we're more connected than any other generation and yet we're the most isolated, the most depressed, the most anxious...

We're not created for isolation...we're not meant to live our lives disconnected...God said that it's not good for man to be alone...

Community is God's idea...

Think about it!

Community isn't about us, it's about God.

Community is an instrument of worship...

Community is a weapon against sin. Community is a tool for evangelism...It's in community that we fulfill God's purposes and plan...it's where we grow! Your Instagram and Tiktok community isn't going to be able to do what the church can do!

## **Friday Prayer Meeting...**

As we come to a close today let me ask you something...

When was the last time you poured out your heart to someone without any fear of judgement? How many friends do you have that you can call at any hour and pray and say hey, I'm struggling...That's why community is so important!

It's time to get in the game...

Take your next step...

## **What's the Holy Spirit Saying To You?**

If you're a follower of Jesus, but you only watch us online...take your next step. Physically get to the house...

If you come to church on and off...take the four week challenge...

If you come, but you're not involved in a life group or discipleship...take your next step...

I would like to pray for you if you're far from God today. You have no idea where you will go when you leave this earth...friend, Jesus gives you an open invitation to His team!