

Authentic Community

SESSION 1



BIG IDEA

The remedy for a counterfeit world is authentic faith. This week we look at how Authentic Community is the remedy for loneliness and isolation.

KEY SCRIPTURE

Proverbs 18:24 — *A man who has friends must himself be friendly...* (NKJV)

MESSAGE SUMMARY

We live in a world where almost nothing is as it appears. Deep fakes, AI-generated content, and digital deception have made it harder than ever to know what is real. But beneath it all, there is a hunger in the human heart that no algorithm can satisfy. The message digs into that hunger and points us toward something ancient and proven: authentic community rooted in genuine faith.

In 2 Timothy, we are reminded that, as deception grows worse and imposters multiply, the answer is not a better app or a smarter device. It is holding fast to the truth of Scripture and to one another.

The world is searching desperately for something real, and we have the opportunity to offer exactly that.

Key Points

- 1) We live in an increasingly counterfeit world. Technology, AI, and digital tools have made deception easier and more convincing than ever. As followers of Christ, we are called to rise above the fake and be the genuine article.
- 2) Scripture is the anchor in a world of deception. Paul's words in 2 Timothy 3 remind us that, in times of widespread deception, the Word of God equips us completely and keeps us grounded in truth.
- 3) Loneliness is one of the greatest crises of our time. Studies show that more than one-third of the global population experiences loneliness, with young

people being among the most affected. This is not a new problem; God pointed out at the very beginning that it is not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2).

- 4) The church is not just an organization, we are a family! Scripture describes God as Father, Jesus as Son, and believers as sons and daughters, brothers and sisters. This is not merely poetic language. It describes a real and living community that we are invited into when we come to Christ.
- 5) Every person longs to know who they are, what difference they make, and where they fit in. These three questions, identified in research by the Fuller Youth Institute, are at the heart of the human experience. Authentic Christian community offers real answers to all three.

ICEBREAKER

Play “Two Truths and a Lie.” Have members of the group share 2 truths about themselves along with 1 lie and have the group try to guess which is the lie.

AND/OR

Have you ever been deep faked by a video? When did you realize it was not real?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. We are created for relationship. God said that it was not good for man to be alone. One-third of the people on planet earth are lonely, with younger people being the loneliest. Seventy percent of young people have tried companionship apps.

Why are people attracted to these apps? Why might these apps fall short in being the “real deal” in being a companion?

Are there steps we can take to limit the influence of these apps in our lives?

2. We live in a world that is obsessed with privacy. **What are the benefits and drawbacks of privacy? Are there ways in which privacy is actually an enemy of community?**

3. What do the following Bible verses say about the benefits of authentic community?

- Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 — *Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. (NIV)*
- Proverbs 27:17 — *As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. (NIV)*
- Galatians 6:2 — *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. (NIV)*
- Hebrews 10:24–25 — *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 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. (NIV)*
- Ecclesiastes 4:12— *Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. (NIV)*
- Romans 12:15 — *Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. (NIV)*

Are there any other benefits you can think of that come from being in authentic community?

4. Share a moment where you experienced the gift of authentic community.

5. On a scale of one to ten, how connected do you feel to a genuine community right now? What is one word that describes why?

6. Jesus spent 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week for 3 and a half years with 12 men. The church is not like family, it really IS family. Jesus said, "These are my

brothers and sisters,” (Matthew 12:48) when speaking of those with him. If you have accepted Jesus into your life, you are part of God’s family! You are a son or daughter of God.

How does this impact how you look at our church community?

7. As our key Scripture for this week says, “A man who has friends must himself be friendly” (Proverbs 18:24 NKJV). **What challenges are there in being friendly with people? How might you take a step towards being more friendly?** For instance, are there conversation tools or strategies that you find helpful when meeting new people and making new friends?

ACTIVATION

People can be reluctant to enter into community for a lot of reasons. Perhaps they are shy, or they have been hurt, or they don’t know the biblical necessity of community.

Take time to choose which of these three areas you would like God to help you with:

- Help with forgiveness and healing from hurt
- Courage to take a step towards community
- Any specific steps for relationships you need to build

Have each person in the group pray for the person to their right for these requests.

TAKE IT HOME

Reach out this week to one person you know who may be experiencing loneliness. (Perhaps they are already on your B.L.E.S.S. list.)

A phone call, a coffee invitation, or even a simple text can open the door for them to enter into authentic community.

FOR FURTHER STUDY – THE 59 “ONE-ANOTHER’S”

There are 59 “one another’s” in the Bible which are commands that only can be kept within community. Read through them to help you be motivated towards entering into authentic community.

Practise Love, Peace, and Honour

- Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another. (Mark 9:50)
- You also ought to wash one another’s feet. (John 13:14)
- Love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. (John 13:34)
- By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:35)
- This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. (John 15:12)
- These things I command you, so that you will love one another. (John 15:17)
- Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honour. (Romans 12:10)
- Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. (Romans 12:16)
- Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. (Romans 13:8)

Welcome, Unity, and Mutual Care

- Let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. (Romans 14:13)
- Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. (Romans 15:7)
- You yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another. (Romans 15:14)
- Greet one another with a holy kiss. (Romans 16:16)
- When you come together to eat, wait for one another. (1 Corinthians 11:33)
- There may be no division in the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. (1 Corinthians 12:25)
- Greet one another with a holy kiss. (1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12)

Serve with Humility and Forgiveness

- Through love serve one another. (Galatians 5:13)
- Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. (Galatians 5:26)
- Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2)
- With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love. (Ephesians 4:2)
- Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)
- Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. (Ephesians 5:21)
- In humility count others more significant than yourselves. (Philippians 2:3)
- Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices. (Colossians 3:9)
- Bear with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgive each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. (Colossians 3:13)

Teach, Encourage, and Build Up

- Address one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart. (Ephesians 5:19)
- Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom. (Colossians 3:16)
- May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all. (1 Thessalonians 3:12)
- You yourselves have been taught by God to love one another. (1 Thessalonians 4:9–10)
- Encourage one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:18)
- Encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- Exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. (Hebrews 3:13)
- Consider how to stir up one another to love and good works. (Hebrews 10:24)
- Do not neglect meeting together, as is the habit of some, but encourage one another. (Hebrews 10:25)

Guard Your Words and Pray

- Do not speak evil against one another. (James 4:11)
- Do not grumble against one another. (James 5:9)
- Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. (James 5:16)

Practise Hospitality, Service, and Humility

- Have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. (1 Peter 3:8)
- Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. (1 Peter 4:9)
- As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace. (1 Peter 4:10)
- Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.' (1 Peter 5:5)
- Greet one another with the kiss of love. (1 Peter 5:14)

Keep Loving One Another

- Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. (1 Peter 4:8)
- This is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. (1 John 3:11)
- This is his commandment: that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. (1 John 3:23)
- Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God. (1 John 4:7)
- Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. (1 John 4:11)
- If we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. (1 John 4:12)
- I ask you—not as though I were writing you a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning—that we love one another. (2 John 5)

Warnings About Harmful Community

- If you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. (Galatians 5:15)