

3. It's not Attending its Belonging

The measure of community is not attendance. You can attend church and still not be experiencing community. The measure of community is finding your place and belonging in that community. Your community should be a place where you feel connected and a place where you contribute.

Romans 12:5 NLT - 5 so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

As part of the community at New Life we want you to know that you belong. You are loved, and you are needed. If God has drawn you to this community, make that genuine connection and plug in to the life of the church. Find a place to use your God-given gifts and graces for God's glory.

WRAP-UP

Being part of a community of believers is more than just showing up for services on Sunday. You were created in God's image to live in community. That takes a genuine connection with others; loving and working together with them, encouraging and motivating them to good works. To do that we need to ask God to deal with our sinful nature and change our attitudes to His. Then we stop making excuses and settling for less than genuine connection. Community is the place where you know you belong. It's the place where you show up, plug in and contribute your unique gifts and graces. We are called to share our lives with one another – this is how we practice the way of Jesus – we grow in community and connect others to the family.

Memory Verse

All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer. Acts 2:42-47 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs: _____

Challenge- The church in Acts shared their meals with great joy and generosity- find someone to share a meal with this week.

“Living in Community” “Practicing the Way” #2

INTRODUCTION

One very important aspect of the expression of our faith is living together as a community of believers. It is more than just attending a church service; it's living the way God created us. We may be tempted to think our faith is just between us and God, but as we study what it means to “live in community” we find that the only way to be fully alive in Jesus, is doing life together.

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

In what kind of community were you raised- rural, small town, big city???

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

1. Why We Need Community

Genesis 1:26-27 NLT - 26 Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground." 27 So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

We were built for community. In Genesis 1:26 God says, “Let us make man in our image.” It is one of the places we find the trinity represented in scripture. The word for God in this verse is *'elohiym* which is a plural noun. God the Father, Son and Spirit were all present at creation, and when man was formed, God made us in His image; one of community. And like God we were created to live in close relationship with others.

God made us for community, but He also made us unique. Are you the type of person who has lots of close friends or only one or two

close friends? Who would you say is in your innermost circle of family and friends right now?

Acts 2:42-47 NLT - 42 All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer. 43 A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. 44 And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. 45 They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. 46 They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity-- 47 all 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.

As we see the new church birthed in the book of Acts, their lives were deeply intertwined.

What are some of the ways they interacted? Which of these would you say you currently do with other believers?

There is danger in becoming isolated. Our spiritual vitality suffers. Not only do we lose the support and perspective of others in our lives, but the community loses our unique contribution as well.

Hebrews 10:24-25 NLT - 24 Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. 25 And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

In community we grow, we learn, we improve, we find our giftedness and we spur one another along.

Can you remember some of the ways you have been encouraged or motivated by other believers? What might have happened without that encouragement?

Even Jesus had a close circle of twelve disciples who He shared His daily life with. It is vital that we develop close relationships with other believers just as Jesus did.

2. Why is Community Hard?

Romans 3:23 NLT - 23 For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.

Let's admit it, living in close relationships with others can be hard. We know from Romans 3:23 that we are all sinners and so we fall short. In fact, the closer we get to others, the more opportunity we have to discover how imperfect we are.

Philippians 2:1-5 NLT - 1 Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? 2 Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. 3 Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. 4 Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. 5 You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

In his plea to the church at Philippi, Paul lists the way the church can live out community together in fellowship. The word for fellowship is *koinonia* and it expresses an intimate association, community, communion, or joint participation. More than just coffee on the patio.

What are some of the things he specifically encourages the Philippians to do and what should they not be doing in a display of their koinonia. Which do you feel are the most challenging?

This intimate level of connectedness does not allow us to “settle” for the cursory, convenient digital updates of social media. It calls us to invest in a genuine face to face connection by loving others and working together. It doesn't allow us to make excuses, although we may be good at that. Paul calls us to have the same attitude that Jesus had.

How can we develop the same attitude as Jesus?