



Week/Sermon # 7

Title: Why Do We Need Consistent Community?

Key Texts: Genesis 1:26-27, Matthew 28:16-20, Romans 12:3-5, Mark 12:29-31, John 13:34-35

Overview: God exists in perfect, eternal, trinitarian community. Jesus made relationships a priority when He walked on this earth, and He called His disciples to live in consistent loving community. When we walk in loving fellowship with God and each other, the world will see that we have what their hearts long for. This draws people toward the only one who can heal their hearts, bind their wounds, and satisfy their hunger to belong.

Sermon Outline:

Introduction- Have a testimony of a small group in your church or a ministry team of volunteers who have grown close through serving together. This can be live or on video. Have them share the joy, value, and importance of community with other believers. Have individuals share how their faith is strengthened as they walk in fellowship with God's family.

Movement 1- Learning from Jesus...Our God **Loves Community**



- **Image:** If you are going to use the seven icons for the seven markers of spiritual growth, show the image for "Consistent Community" and let people know that this picture will show up in sermons, on your website, in youth and children's materials, and other times when you are focusing on the marker of Consistent Community. Consider having the icon on the sermon title if you project notes or on the cover of your bulletin if you have one. You might want to have the icon in one of the corners of every slide you project in this sermon. ([Here is the link to Consistent Community badge](#))
- God exists in perfect, eternal, trinitarian community! Read: Genesis 1:26-27

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." ²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them (NIV).

- o Teach about how God exists in eternal and perfect community. From the beginning God existed, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When God says, “Let us,” He is speaking to the Son and the Spirit.
- Jesus was committed to community and discipleship.
 - o Read: Matthew 4:19 (Simon and Andrew)... Jesus said, “Follow Me.” Jesus was God in human flesh. He did not need people to complete Him or to remove any loneliness. Yet, Jesus called people to follow Him and be with Him. Jesus loved community with His disciples when He walked on this earth and He still loves community.
- Jesus accomplished His mission in community. Read: Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (NIV).

- o Jesus was clear that He held all power and authority over the whole universe. Yet, as He goes on mission and reaches lost and broken people, Jesus invites us on the journey with Him. He calls us to go and make disciples. And, Jesus is crystal clear that He will go with us. The very mission of God is bound together in the community He has with us. Amazing!
- The heartbeat of community...Love! (Jesus was a perfect model of love. Take time to teach about how Jesus loved and who He loved. There are passages all through the Gospels you can share and examples in the book, *Organic Disciples*. Take time to look at some of the ways Jesus loved and who His heart went out to.)
 - o Jesus loved...Every kind of person (In John 3 & 4, we see Jesus love two very different people...this is a powerful example.)
 - o Jesus loved...The forgotten (Look at how Jesus reached out to those who were passed over by the religious leaders of His day.)
 - o Jesus loved...The intentionally excluded and abandoned (There were people that were excluded due to sickness...lepers. There were people that were on the margins because of their work...tax collectors. There were people who were avoided because they were morally questionable...prostitutes. In the Gospels, we see Jesus loving and building community with all of these people.)
 - o Jesus loved...The unprotected (The poor, the widow, the orphan, and others who had no social safety net of provision were loved and protected by Jesus.)

- Jesus understood the cost of community!
 - Jesus was betrayed, abandoned, and abused! When Jesus entered relationships, loved people, and opened His heart to sinful people, He felt the pain of being treated with cruelty and malice. Jesus knew this was going to happen but He was so committed to community that He opened His heart to the possibility of pain.
 - Peter post-resurrection (John 21). Jesus was denied by Peter three times... publicly, vocally, fiercely! After He rose from the dead He made a point of restoring community. Though Jesus was rejected, He still forgave, loved, and sought healing in this relationship with Peter.

Movement 2- The Journey of Organic Discipleship...God Created You and Me for Community

- Read: Romans 12:3-5

³ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. ⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others (NIV).

- You might want to read more of Romans 12 or from 1 Corinthians 12. Open up this text and help people see God's design for us to live in intimate community because we are part of the spiritual body of Jesus. We are connected. We are family.
- Sober judgment...I am not on my own! Invite people to be sober and serious about the fact that they are not a solo act or an isolated person. We belong to each other. This is true in our church and the body of Christ around the world. We are all connected in the heart of God.
- The image of a body...many parts. Unpack the similarities between a physical body and the spiritual body of Jesus.
 - Many parts but one body.
 - Every part matters and is needed.
 - No part can say, "I don't matter."
 - No part can say, "You don't matter."
 - We are closely connected.
 - If you drop a weight on your foot...your whole body feels it. (We hurt together!)
 - If we taste something delicious, our whole body savors it. (We rejoice together.)

- o We belong to each other (counter cultural!). We live in a world where individualism is the norm and often praised. Jesus was clear that we are not alone but are always better together. “We” is better and stronger than “me.”
 - Give examples of what happens in the church that would never happen if we tried to do the same things alone.
 - Give examples of how each of us is stronger in community than we are when we are alone.
- Read: Mark 12:29-31

²⁹ “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ ³¹ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these” (NIV).

- o Community with God (Vertical). Look at how our relationship with God and community with Him sets the table for all the rest of our community.
- o Community with each other (Horizontal). God calls us to love the people around us. This is the key to community.
- But I Don’t Like Community...I’m better on my own! Many in the church have been hurt by people in God’s family who should have protected them. Sometimes this pain is very deep and personal. Take time to acknowledge this reality and address the fact that the church is made up of broken people who are being restored by the grace of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. If it would fit your ministry and church context, reflect on some of the challenges of living in community with people who are still growing in sanctification:
 - o Community is broken (sin). Talk about how there are no perfect people and no perfect churches (this side of heaven). Admit that it can be painful to stay close and connected to sinful people...but it is God’s plan and is worth it.
 - o Community is complicated. Discuss how blending people together and seeking to unify our hearts with people who have different history, tastes, political views, interests, and passions is complicated. But, what unifies us is even stronger. Jesus is our Savior, passion, and leader and when we keep our eyes on Him, He can bind our hearts and lives together.
 - o Community is painful (history). If we are in the church long enough, we will all feel pain when we are hurt by a person who bears the name “brother” or “sister” in Christ. This is tough! It hurts! It can cause us to pull away from the church and the community of God’s people. But, this is exactly what Satan wants! God knows we need each other, even when there is hurt.
 - Illustration- If you have a story of when you have been hurt in the church (and every pastor does), share it in a generic way. Don’t use names. An example from a different time and place in ministry is best. Admit that

you have been hurt by a member of God's family, but you still love the church and the people of God.

- o Community is powerful (the enemy knows...). The enemy of our soul knows that we find power and protection in community. Talk about how Satan is like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). He knows if he can get us to wander off on our own (away from the body of God's people) we are an easy target for his attacks.
 - Illustration- You can find videos on YouTube where lions and other predators hunt on the edges of a pack of animals. They can't get to the animals that are in the middle of the pack (community) but they go after the ones who are alone on the edges. They are more vulnerable.
- My next step into consistent community. (Take time to share some examples of ways people can engage in community on a deeper level in their personal life by using some of the ideas below. Add practical ways people can get into community in the life of your congregation):
 - o Share a meal (Jesus did)
 - o Take a walk (Jesus did)
 - o Give a blessing (Jesus did)
 - o Gather with the family (Jesus did)

Note- If you project this list, you might want to have them come in one at a time.

Movement 3- How Consistent Community Shows the Presence of Jesus...God Uses Community to Reveal His Presence and Power

- **Read:** John 13:34-35

³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (NIV).

- o Teach about how the world will know we are the followers of Jesus if we love each other well. This is the heart of consistent community. Our community is a picture of heavenly community and the world is looking for this in our fragmented and broken world.
- Community is the longing of every human heart. Every person lives with a deep longing to belong, to be loved, to be accepted among others. When we model community, lost people will be drawn to the Church, Christian homes, clusters of believers who love each other. As they draw near us, we can point them to Jesus, the One who makes our community possible.
- Make your home a lighthouse! We are only in the church a few hours a week. We are in our homes and neighborhoods every day! We need to model consistent community

right where we live. This will draw people near to Jesus and reveal His presence and glory. Share about the importance of being an example of consistent and loving community right where we live. There are lots of great examples found in the book, *Organic Outreach for Families...Turning Your Home Into a Lighthouse*.

- Let's make our church a beacon of community light. Finish your message by highlighting some of the ways we can make community sweet and attractive to the non-believers around us. Share a few words about how each of these can reveal the presence of Jesus in the life of the church:
 - Love in Action (Share ways that church members can love each other),
 - Relentless Forgiveness (Share ways that church members can forgive each other),
 - Unity in Diversity (Talk about how we are united even when we don't all agree on everything...this is greatly needed in our world today),
 - Collaborative Service (Give examples of how your church members serve each other and your community together),
 - The Presence of the Spirit (Point out that when we live in community, the Holy Spirit of the Living God is present and draws people to Jesus).

The Great Reversal...How Does Organic Outreach Move Us toward Community?

- Consistent community reveals the heart and presence of Jesus and opens the door of heaven for people to see that God is present, powerful, and real. Our community is a door to evangelism. In a similar way, when we are seeking to reach out with the Gospel and fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus, we are moved to community. Our communion with God expands as we do outreach. Our need for other believers increases as we walk into the world together. And, we grow to love the lost like Jesus does as we follow Him to engage with spiritually hungry people.
- **Closing Prayer:** Close your message thanking God for living in eternal community within the Trinity and for coming to this world to be in community with us. Ask the Holy Spirit to grow your passion and commitment to community among the family of God (in your church and beyond). Pray that the consistent community of the people in your congregation will be an example and light to those around you who do not yet know the amazing grace and love of Jesus.