



Overview

People need people. We need people who support and love us, build us up, hold us accountable, and encourage us when we're struggling. We need help as we grow, serve, and learn. We need others to come alongside of us and pick up the pieces when life gets messy, and we need a community of people who share our same values, beliefs, and Christian worldview. While individual faith is clearly essential in the context of scripture, independent faith is never found in the text of Scripture. It was God's plan from the beginning for us to live in authentic community with others. In fact, when the church relates as Jesus intended, masks come off, conversations get deep, hearts get vulnerable, lives are shared, accountability is invited, and tenderness grows. This week we'll talk about what authentic community is, expand further on its importance, and look at what Scripture tells us about it in order to validate its unique and valued place in the lives of believers who truly long to *Be the Church ... everyone. everywhere. everyday!*

Going Deeper

Share one thing you like about your "community of believers" and one thing you don't like or that makes you uncomfortable.

Making It Stick

Read Acts 2:41-47.

The word "fellowship" in this verse is the Greek word *Koinonia*, which means common, partaker, partner, community, fellowship, or membership.

- From verse 42, what became the first church's *way of life*? (Hint: They were "continually" doing this.)
- Why is it essential that there be interdependence or community between believers?
- What is the difference between "community" and "individuality" (i.e. self-indulgence or selfish motives)?

In his sermon, Pastor used the word LIFE to help us see the importance and intentionality of LIFE Groups. Spend some time discussing these key thoughts and passages.

- **L = Love (1 John 3:23, 4:7-12, John 13:34-35, 1 Peter 1:22, Romans 5:5, Galatians 5:22)**
 - What does Scripture tell us about loving one another?
 - Where does love come from?
 - How do we show love to others? Name practical ways we can demonstrate God's love.
 - How do we love those who are difficult to love?
 - Who has God recently placed in your path to love into the Kingdom?
- **I = Instruct (Matthew 28:18-20, 1 Peter 1:23-2:3, 1 John 2:5-6, 3:18, James 1:19-25, Hebrews 4:12, Proverbs 1:8-9)**
 - What does Scripture tell us about the Word of God and its work in our lives?
 - How do we gain wisdom and understanding of the things of God?
 - How are you sharing God's Word with others (your children, grandchildren, friends, neighbors, co-workers)?
 - Is the truth of God's Word evident in your daily life?

- Is there someone God has called you to disciple? Share with your group how this is going.
- **F = Fight (Ephesians 6:10-18, 2 Corinthians 10:3-6)**
 - Who are we fighting against, and what are we fighting for?
 - As an authentic community of believers, who are we *not* to be fighting against?
 - What example is set forth in **2 Corinthians 5:17-21** that we should imitate? Share other verses that talk about the idea of reconciliation and peace (Romans 12:18 and others).
 - **Read Psalm 18:34-35 with Psalm 144:1-2.** These verses tell us that God trains our hands for war and our fingers for battle. What should our hands grip in order to fight the battles of life? (**See Ephesians 6:17**)
 - Now **read Hebrews 10:36-39**. What does it tell us we are to do?
 - Does it give you inspiration and courage to know that God Himself trains us for the battles of life and helps us know we can persevere in Him?
 - Take a moment and share a battle you are currently facing. Talk with each other about ways you can Love, Instruct, and Fight for each other in the midst of these trying times. This is the heart of authentic community!!
- **E = Engage (Acts 2:46-47)**
 - Are you an island or a community?
 - What is the value in doing life together versus doing life alone?
 - Do you know someone who needs community? Will you invite them to be a part of yours?
 - Do you struggle with authentic community? Are you a “Lone Ranger,” trying to get through life on your own? If so, why? Is it pride, fear, shyness, hurt, anxiety? Think and pray through these thoughts and ask God to help you engage and do life together with other believers.

Living It Out

Has God placed someone in your path who is difficult to love?

Below are some steps to help you love and reconcile with others like Jesus would.

- **Confess** your lack of love to God and **ask** for forgiveness.
- **Ask** God to help you love the person and **make the choice** to love him/her.
- **Trust** God to help you love and **pray** the person into your heart.
- **Seek to change** your attitude toward the person and **make a plan** to do so.
- If needed, **go** to the person and **talk** to them.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. – Philippians 4:13