

### Week #2 – Community ... We Were Made for This!

#### Key Concepts:

God is "Community"  
We Need Others  
Isolation is Discouraged

#### I. God is "Community"

##### God's Nature is Relational

God has always existed as three **Persons** who co-exist eternally as one **God** (2 Corinthians 13:14).<sup>1</sup> The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit serve as the perfect example of relational unity, proving that God Himself is no "Lone Ranger." These three Persons are uniquely and intricately involved in carrying out the redemptive plans of God on the earth. They exist in perfect unity with one another. Thus, in His very nature, God illustrates and embodies loving relationship that is "community" (Romans 8:9-11).

##### Consequently, Our Nature is Relational too

As those who are made in the **image** of God (Genesis 1:27-28), we are created also to exist in life-changing **relationships** with one another. While the nature of our relationships with other people is different than the nature of the relationships shared by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we see the same bottom-line application: We were not created to be **alone** (Genesis 2:18).

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<sup>1</sup> The name Elohim (אֱלֹהִים; Genesis 1:1) is a grammatically plural term that refers to the one true God in the Old Testament.

## Questions:

1. Have you ever thought of God as having a “relational nature,” not just sharing a relationship with us, but a relationship within Himself? How does God’s relational nature impact our need for relationships with one another?
2. Why would God state that man’s loneliness was not a good thing (*Genesis 2:18*)? Do you believe that we were created to live life in the context of relationships?

## II. We Need Others (*Ecclesiastes 4:8-12*)

<sup>(8)</sup> There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother.  
There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth.  
‘For whom am I toiling,’ he asked, ‘and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?’  
This too is meaningless — a miserable business!

<sup>(9)</sup> Two are better than one,  
because they have a good return for their work:  
<sup>(10)</sup> If one falls down, his friend can help him up.  
But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!  
<sup>(11)</sup> Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.  
But how can one keep warm alone?  
<sup>(12)</sup> Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves.  
A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”

Those who have close relationships are infinitely better off than those who are all **alone**.

This is because:

- 1) Relationships provide us with the capacity to **produce** more (9).
- 2) Relationships provide us **assistance** when we need it most (10).
- 3) Relationships provide us with **comfort** (11).
- 4) Relationships provide us with **protection**. The more the merrier (12)!

The Book of **Proverbs** is also full of passages that speak to the important role that others play in our lives. This is because Solomon knew that we needed others in our lives to help us pursue wise actions as we seek direction in life:

“Where there is no guidance the people fall,  
But in abundance of counselors there is victory.”  
- **Proverbs 11:14**

“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes,  
But a wise man is he who listens to counsel.”  
- **Proverbs 12:15**

“Plans fail for lack of counsel,  
but with many advisers they succeed.”  
- **Proverbs 15:22**

“Listen to counsel and accept discipline,  
That you may be wise the rest of your days”  
- **Proverbs 19:20**

“Make plans by seeking advice;  
if you wage war, obtain guidance.”  
- **Proverbs 20:18**

“For by wise guidance you will wage war,  
And in abundance of counselors there is victory.”  
- **Proverbs 24:6**

According to David Blankenhorn, founder and president of the Institute for American Values:  
“[T]he human being is inextricably social. We are not isolated, unencumbered individuals. We need other people; we humans can only live in group.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> “Individualism and Connectedness in American Society,” by David Blankenhorn  
<http://www.americanvalues.org/html/adlerian.htm>

## Questions:

1. Do you believe that we need others (i.e. “community”) in our lives? Think back to a time when you desperately needed someone to be with you (a time of loneliness, depression, distress, or danger)? Did you have someone to whom you could turn? If yes, how did they help you? If not, what happened?
2. What are the advantages of “making plans” in the context of community? What are the dangers of “making plans” in isolation? How do “counselors” assist us with more than just plans?

### III. Isolation is Discouraged (*Hebrews 10:24-25*)

In order to grasp the context of Hebrews 10:24-25, we must go back to verse 19. The flow of thought might be summarized as follows:

Jesus has inaugurated the New Covenant<sup>3</sup> through His shed **blood**, now granting us access to share an everlasting **relationship** with the holy God of the universe (vv. 19-20). Jesus functions as the great high priest, superior to anyone and anything that God has created. This is because Jesus was not created by God at all. Rather, God the Son, has always existed, being one with God the Father (*John 10:30; Colossians 1:15-17*). Jesus has “offered one sacrifice for sins for **all time**” (*Hebrews 10:12*), something that no other high priest could ever do!

Thus, because of what Jesus has accomplished and because of who He is...

... let us deepen our **faith** (v. 22)

... let us strengthen our **hope** (v. 23)

... lets us promote our **love** for one another (vv. 24-25)

We are too “stimulate/provoke/irritate/spur” one another towards love and good deeds. The purpose of this “spurring” is so that our radical love for one another might be a testimony to those outside of the church.

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<sup>3</sup> Scholars debate whether or not Jesus’ atoning sacrifice on the cross actually “inaugurated” the New Covenant described in *Jeremiah 31:31-34* and similar passages.

This “spurring” is accomplished by:

- 1) *Not forsaking our assembling together* (lit. “upon synagogue”-ing). We must be engaged in fellowship through the development of deeper relationships with one another (i.e. “community”).
- 2) *Encouraging (one another)* as we wait for the return of Jesus Christ to earth.

Some of the recipients of Hebrews were tempted to **isolate** themselves from the church for fear of persecution from the local Jewish authorities. These individuals who were withdrawing from fellowship with others were also renouncing their **faith**. The author warned them (and warns us) that withdrawal from deeper relationships within the body of Christ is a very **dangerous** thing.

We cannot possibly carry out the “one another” commands of the New Testament by ourselves. We need other **people** in order to experience the Christian life as God wants us to experience it.

### Questions:

1. If isolation is so dangerous and discouraged in the Bible, why do we naturally gravitate towards it? How have you seen isolation harm you in your life? Is your isolation still harming you?
2. How has your network of friends (i.e. your “community”) benefited you in recent months? How have you seen God as work in the lives of your Community Group, ABF, etc.?
3. How do you reconcile the warning against isolation with the New Testament model of pursuing silence and solitude as a spiritual discipline?

## Key Terms:

Relationships  
Counselors  
Isolation  
Spur

## Key Verses:

Ecclesiastes 4:9  
Proverbs 11:14  
Hebrews 10:24-25

## Scripture Memory:

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”  
(*Hebrews 10:24-25, NIV*).

## Homework Assignment #2:

- 1) Know definitions for Key Terms
- 2) Memorize *Hebrews 10:24-25*.
- 3) Given that we are made in the image of God, explain how the Trinity supports our nature as relational.
- 4) **NextStep APPLICATION:** Think about how you may “spur” someone towards love and good deeds and do so before next Sunday.
- 5) Review class notes.

Next Week: – Community ... What Does it Take? (*Romans 12:1-18*)