

Community Is Essential

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Peter LaRuffa / January 10, 2021

- I. **You need to remember that God never intended your life with Him to be lived apart from others.**
 - A. God created you for fellowship with Him, but not with Him alone.
Genesis 2:18 “It is not good that the man should be alone...”
 - B. God chose the Israelites to be His people; to live, work, and worship together.
Leviticus 26:11-12 “I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.”
 - C. God instituted the local church as a community of believers who walk with Christ together as a family.
1 Corinthians 12:27 “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”

Take a look at just a sample of texts that show great ministry taking place in the lives of believers in the context of smaller communities of Christians, oftentimes meeting in homes, apart from the big gatherings of the church.

Acts 2:46 “And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

Acts 5:42 “And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.”

Acts 16:40 “So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed.”

Acts 20:18-20 “And when they came to him, he said to them: ‘You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time...how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house...’”

Acts 28:30-31 “He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.”

II. You need to understand the primary means by which believers grow - God's Word and God's people!

A. God has a purpose for us: to look less like ourselves and more like Jesus!

Rom. 8:29 "For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son..."

"Sanctification is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives."

~ Wayne Grudem

B. Spiritual growth is not presented in the Scriptures as an option, or a suggestion. It's a command!

2 Pet. 3:18 "...but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

C. Bible reading and preaching are essential to the Christian life...but you won't become more like Jesus by only reading and listening. It's the application of the information that is evidence of transformation!

James 1:22-25 "But **be doers of the word**, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

D. If you're a Christian "lone ranger," you are always in danger. You were not designed to live the Christian life by yourself!

"Your walk with God is a community project."

~ Paul David Tripp

Spiritual growth doesn't "just happen." Soul care doesn't "just happen." Both are fostered in times of fellowship with other believers.

III. Especially during difficult times, you need to be as active as you can in the body of Christ.

Heb. 10:24-25 "And let us **consider one another** in order to **stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together**, as *is* the manner of some, but **exhorting one another**, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."

- A. You need to consider whether your conscience convicts you or your preference prevents you.

Romans 14:23 “But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.”

- B. You need to know the difference between absence and abdication.

absent: to keep oneself away

abdicate: to cast off or discard a responsibility

The Greek term translated “not forsaking” doesn’t mean “Don’t ever miss a time to meet with Christians.” It refers to totally abandoning and leaving behind something in a helpless situation.

To absent yourself from the people of God isn’t necessarily sinful. However, if you’ve abdicated your responsibility to consider, stir up & exhort other Christians, you need to repent.

IV. So...where do you go from here?

- A. **Not in a Community Group?** Here’s what you can do!

- Log on to **graceky.org**.
- Find some Community Groups that fit your schedule and try them out. (No two groups are exactly alike, so feel free to try out a few before you settle in one.)
- Contact the church office if you have any questions:
Email: office@graceky.org | Phone: (859) 371-7880

- B. **Already in a Community Group?** Here are some questions for you to consider:

- What might God have you do this ministry year that can make your Community Group better than last?
- Is there an area of need in which you can serve your Community Group?
- Is there a way you can be “all in” to your Community Group more than you were last year?
- Is God calling you to prayerfully consider serving as a Community Group leader?
- Is there a way you can serve or thank your Community Group leaders for their sacrificial service and care they provide for you?

- C. **Not joining us in-person yet?**

- Prayerfully consider if that’s what you really need to keep doing, or if you’ve just gotten used to how you’ve been rolling for so long by now.
- Consider participating in a Community Group, even if it’s through a means you don’t prefer.

- Reach out to Josh Snell (joshsnell@graceky.org) if you need ways to be obedient to Hebrews 10:24-25 during this time when you're providentially hindered from being around others.