

Christmas Together

Intro.

Church is over you stay in the room
 Dinner is over you stay at the table
 Tears stop flowing you keep hugging

Look at person next to them
 You look good
 You look almost as good.

We have groups of three

One in three of us.
 A core group of intimate relationship.
 A normal group of three people endure ongoing of loneliness, isolation, longing to love and be loved.
 More than one in three know that something is missing relationally.

Illustration

How Loneliness Is Killing Us: A Primer from Harvard Psychiatrist & Zen Priest Robert Waldinger in Life, Psychology | January 19th, 2024

“In some studies, as many as 60 percent of people will say that they feel lonely much of the time,” a feeling “pervasive across the world, across all age groups, all income groups, all demographics.”

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (NIV)
 Go through the story of creation.

Genesis 2:18

Then the Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.” (NLT)

Genesis 2:22-23

Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man. “At last!” the man exclaimed... (NLT)

Genesis 1:26

Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness ..." (NIV)

Unpack

- Let us make man in our image
- Plural
- Trinity
- God himself is never alone
- God is a perfect community.
- Three distinct personalities in one.
- One but community
- One being but Father, Son, Holy Spirit.
- This community of God
- He created Man
- Why did he create man?
- He didn't create man because he is lonely.
- He created man because God is love.
- Love is not just what God does... Love is who God is...
- Go back to the most important command of all. Love God all heart, soul, mind, strength. And love your neighbor as yourself. The person next to you on both sides.
- NT church embraced this. They loved one another.
- How often did they meet?
- Every day.

I. **The first church was committed to the idea of being together.**

Acts 2:46-47

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (NIV)

Unpack Text

1. Every day
2. Broke bread ---- elaborate
3. Glad and sincere hearts

More than just physical proximity.

Emotional Unity

Straw Man

- Things were different then.
- Not like it is today. It was different back then.
- Cultural tension
- Political unrest
- Not like today when the economy is always good.
- Back then some of them got sick and needed prayer.
- Back then some of them had things happen and weren't able to work.
- Back then some of them had emotional problems and needed a friend to talk them through.
- Back then some of them were hurting and just needed a friend to be there for them.
- Back then they were persecuted and faced trials of many kinds and needed one another to get their back.
- Back then they would struggle through some of lives difficulties and needed each other to walk through with them.
- Back then sometimes they had problems with their kids and needed someone who had been through this already in their life to listen to them and be there to support.
- Back then it was different so they needed each other....

They created margin in their lives allowed time for relationships.

With Glad and sincere hearts.

Fundamental difference in 1st century and us.

- They desperately needed each other and they knew it.
- Today believers desperately need each other and they have forgotten it.

It is exactly the same today and many of us have forgotten it.

Illustration

- Today many people are intentionally seeking autonomy – independence.
- Live their lives intentionally disconnected.
- Social Media
- Scroll, scroll, double tap, double tap, forget you.
- Friends without real intimate interaction.

- Flexible schedule, limited accountability, you don't have the right to come into work, I'm gonna shop online, date online, friends online, watch my sermons online.
- People are intentionally pursuing a life that destroys their mental health and robs them of real joy and lasting fulfillment.
- That is the goal.

Illustration

- When we interact our most close and intimate feelings and thought through digital means it removes the personal interaction from the equation.
- I don't think that God intended for it to be that way.

A church that

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Illustration

Hispanic church that we partner with.

I will be one of the last ones to leave today. I will drive home and pass the Spanish speaking church. There is almost always people standing in the foyer and out in the parking lot talking.

II. Togetherness will never happen by accident.

- A. You will never wake up one day and say – wow how did this happen.
1. How did I get so many great close friends.
 2. That's weird there are so many people in my life that I love and love me.
 3. I wonder how that happened.
 4. I mean I tried to get them out of my life.
- B. Be intentional
1. We have Life Groups.
 2. Introvert – that sounds like torture.

Illustration

- There's going to be weird people there.
- Promise
- If you say hey there are no weird people here – then... well.... They're there... Promise.
- It's going to be messy.

- That's part of it.

Application

- It's always important.
- Always necessary.
- Always God honoring.

Intentional Christ Centered Relationships are....

1. A community of grace.

Philippians 1:7

... you have a permanent place in my heart! You have remained partners with me in the wonderful grace of God ... (TPT)

Unpack

- Getting together with other broken people – you will find that “this is a safe place to belong”
- “A safe place to believe.”

Illustration

- Yesterday –
- How did you hear about us?
- My parole officer told me to come here.

Application

I Googled the job description of a parole officer.

A parole officer's job is to help people who have been released from prison re-enter society by:

- **Monitoring:** Supervising parolees to ensure they are following the terms of their parole
- **Providing resources:** Connecting parolees to services like job training, counseling, and housing
- **Assisting with rehabilitation:** Helping parolees make a good transition to their communities
- **Acting as a liaison:** Working with parolees' friends and relatives, community service agencies, and law enforcement
- **Conducting investigations:** Investigating a parolee's legal case and personal background

- **Attending court hearings:** Documenting, testifying, and making recommendations at probation/parole compliance hearings

2. A community of healing.

- a. A lot of people think God does everything.
- b. God does a lot but the way God created is that God does a lot through his people.

James 5:16

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.... (NIV)

- c. Pray for one another and heals each other through this intentional relational community.
- d. One needs to receive and another needs to give and we all need something.
- e. The gifts of God in your life are primarily for the other person.

3. **A community of mission**

- a. Purpose and calling

Acts 2:46-47

⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

They made room for more.

Over 50 “one another” scriptures in the Bible.

Server one another	Galatians 5:13
Show hospitality to one another	1 Peter 4:9
Be kind to one another	Ephesians 4:32
Encourage one another	1 Thess. 4:18
Carry one another’s burdens	Galatians 6:2

Think of all that is possible with just the 5 things above.

Application

- Take a risk and get out of your world and love someone as God loved you.

- See someone who is in need you don't just leave a comment or send a text, you pick up the phone and call them.
- Or better yet you get way out there and drive across town and knock on their door and hug them.

We are the church.

We are the body of Christ

The hand and feet of Jesus

We are the feet that bring good news

When we love the least of these we are doing it unto Christ.

Matthew 25:45

“He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’