

## Together – Why People Need People

1. Warm up: At the outset of Sunday’s sermon, Jeff mentioned that life in community is not easy because, among other things, we all bring our own unique eccentricities. An eccentricity is defined as a recurring odd or whimsical behavior or way of thinking or being. What’s one of your eccentricities?
  
2. On Sunday we began a sermon series entitled “Called Together.” Given how challenging people can be, why was Jesus so adamant about calling us into spiritual community? In the weeks ahead, we’ll explore that question from various angles, beginning last Sunday with “why *you* need *us*.” Jeff suggested four critical reasons, beginning with the observations that who we hang with matters immensely because, for better or worse, we are powerfully influenced by the people around us. So, if we want to be genuinely spiritual people, we’ve got to spend regular quality time with genuinely spiritual people. ***Here then is the first critical reason why we need church community: This is where we immerse ourselves in the positive influence of spiritual friends.***
  - a. Have you ever found yourself spending lots of time with a negative person or running with a bad crowd? If so, how did that affect you?
  
  - b. The Bible says, “Iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” Proverbs 27:17. What do you think that means?
  
  - c. In his Ted Talk, forensic scientist John Sutherland describes the principle of Locard’s Exchange – every contact leaves a trace – then applies it to all human interactions. He says, “Every time two people come into contact with one another an exchange takes place. Whether between lifelong friends or passing strangers, we encourage, we ignore, we hold out a hand, or we withdraw it. We walk towards or we walk away. We bless or we curse. And every single contact leaves a trace.” Looking back over the past week or so, describe a contact – whether incidental or extensive – you had with someone and how it affected you.
  
  - d. When you hang out with genuinely spiritual people, do you notice that affecting you? If so, how?
  
3. ***A second critical reason why we need church community is: This is where we learn what it means to live our faith, taking it deeper and deeper.*** We learn from the preaching and teaching content shared in church community, but we might get that same content from a book or from watching preachers and teachers online. What’s unique to spiritual community is the opportunity to rub shoulders with deeply spiritual people and learn from their example. As the old saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words!
  - a. Jesus called his disciples to travel with him, so they could become a community of spiritual living and learning together. That gave them the opportunity not just to hear the words of Jesus – which was very important – but also to *watch* him live those words, so they could learn by example what it looks like to live like

him. It's the same with us when we encounter someone with a wonderful Christ-like spirit. We see Jesus in them. Who's someone in our church community whose example inspires, challenges, or encourages you? Tell us about them and what you see in them that calls to your spirit.

- b. Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom." Each of us has deep spiritual lessons we've learned in life that we can share with others in our church community. There are things you can learn from us and that we can learn from you. That's what makes spiritual community irreplaceable. Tell us something you've learned about spiritual life that you can share with us. And tell us how you learned it.

- 4. ***A third reason why we need church community is: This is where we find structure for our faith.*** If we need to spend time together to learn, that means we've got to find time to spend together. Left to our own devices, we're so over-busy, it's never going to happen – and we're never going to have a vibrant spiritual life – unless there are structured events at set times that we get in the habit of being part of. Church at its best does that for us through scheduled recurring events like Sunday Worship, Oasis Groups, Discipleship Classes, Service Opportunities, and LifeJourney Daily Meditations.

- a. Jeff compared coming to church on Sundays to Moses parting the Red Sea. Each time we come to church we're performing a small miracle by commanding the rush of daily demands to stop and stand in place while we participate in a spiritual event meant to renew us and grow our soulfulness. Why is it so hard for us to make regular time for spiritual practices?
- b. Paul Schrader says, "I like to go to church on Sunday mornings to organize my thoughts, organize my week, and be quiet. And you don't walk out of a church because you're bored. You go to church to *be* bored – to have that time, and that's what I enjoy about it." When we come to church, it's like we're stepping into an alternative reality where time slows and there is space – sacred space – to take a deep breath and get in touch with transcendent things. Do you experience church as a place of alternative reality? How would you describe it?
- c. Habits are powerful things that create structure for life. Jeff challenged us to make a sacred commitment to a regular schedule of spiritual events we participate in. Do you have a regular schedule of spiritual events? What does it look like? Do you keep it religiously? Do you feel you need to make any upgrades?

- 5. ***A fourth reason why we need church community is: This is where we find comfort and help in time of need.*** How have you found comfort and help in church in times of need in your life? Have you ever been able to offer comfort and help to a fellow church member in their time of need? What were you able to do?

# **Sunday's Scripture Medley**

*Spend some time pondering these verses this week.*

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God." Colossians 3:16.

"Encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing." I Thessalonians 5:11.

"Exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' so that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Hebrews 3:13.

"My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." Galatians 6:1-2.

"Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective." James 5:16.

"And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds. Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as is the habit of some, but encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:24-25.