

Each day we will look through some passages from the Bible to further look at a component of our in relationship with other Christians. Each day will also include some background on what was happening during the time that the scripture is talking about, some reflection or discussion questions and a prayer direction to guide you as you pray. In addition, one of our pastors will be doing a short podcast each day giving their reflection and some application. You can find it at www.iheardsomethingcooltoday.com.

Enjoy the Journey

Day 1 – Not Good to be Alone

From the Bible: Genesis 1:26-27; 2:18; Acts 2:42-47

Background: In the creation story of Genesis 1 and 2 we see a cycle of God creating something, looking at it and declaring it good. That cycle is repeated over and over again until it comes to a screeching halt in 2:18 as God declares for the first time something is not good. Sin is not the first thing declared not good; it is the second. The first is being alone. God said it was not good for Adam to be alone, that he needed a community to live in. This goes beyond the marriage relationship. It is not good for people to live outside of community; we were not designed for that. To a degree this is foreign to us because of the extreme individualism of the country and culture we live in. God doesn't tell us to do something that he isn't modeling for us. In 1:25-27 he says "let us create...;" either God is schizophrenic or he is living in community as the Trinity. The Trinity is difficult to comprehend, but it is revealed in scripture. God is three in one, and as a result he has eternally lived in community. In addition, his deepest desire is to have a relationship with us; he wants to live in community with us. Acts 2:42-47 reveals to us how the early Christians lived in community - they did life together.

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

- What is so bad about loneliness that God would declare it not good?
- Looking through Acts 2:42-47, what did the early church do together?
- Is it possible to still be alone or lonely even when physically with other people? How?
- Are you living your life alone? Who are the people that truly know you (your hopes, dreams, passions, fears) and are helping you become all you were created to be?

Prayer Direction: Ask God to reveal to you the depths of relationship he wants you to live in. Spend some time reflecting on who the community that you live in is and how well you are doing at being open with them and supporting them. Pray for those individuals that you are in community with.

Day 2 – Covenant

From the Bible: Leviticus 26:12; Ephesians 2:13; Matthew 22:34-40

Background: In Leviticus 26:12, God reveals the depth of the relationship we want to have with his people. It is a covenant and he says we are to be inseparable. He was saying to the Israelites, “When the world looks at you they will see me.” The words Paul uses in Ephesians 2:13 - “in Christ” - is his way of saying “the covenant of God and his people.” Covenants in the Bible times were a relational agreement, more than a contract. It was “a gracious commitment, fully identifying with one another, sharing all possessions, being loyal no matter the cost.” Jesus says our greatest pursuits should be to love him supremely and to love others as ourselves. We are to live in covenant with him and with other believers.

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

- Are you living in a relationship with any other followers of Christ that you would characterize as a covenant?
- What has blocked you from living in covenants in the past?
- What would be the benefits of Christians living in covenant relationships with other Christians?

Prayer Direction: Ask God to open your heart to a greater level for Him and for his people. Spend some time with God asking him to reveal what has blocked you from this type of relational living if you are not there. Ask him to cross your path with a community that you can commit to.

Day 3 – Living in love

From the Bible: John 13:35; 15:12-13

Background: The words of someone on their death bed are usually what they deem most important. Jesus was coming to the end of his ministry on earth and preparing for the next steps that would take him to the cross. He was spending one last evening with his disciples and has supper with them, talks to them, teaches them and prays for them. He wants to remind them of the most important things, one of which is to love each other. In 13:35 Jesus tells them that the world will know they are His disciples by how they love each other, not by how well they teach or the crazy miracles they will do, but by how they live in community with each other and treat each other with love. The ultimate evangelistic tool to reach the missing is how

we treat each other and live in love. Jesus goes on in 15:12-13 to give his disciples a picture of the love required, it is the same love he had showed to him and was going to show them - to lay down your life for another. Jesus says true love is to sacrifice yourself for the good of the other. If both live in that way, the world will take notice.

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

- Have you ever been loved in the way that Jesus commanded his disciples?
- Have you ever witnessed it in others' relationships? If so, what were your reactions?
- How are you doing at loving those you are in relationship with in the way Jesus commands?
- Who are you struggling to love?

Prayer Direction: Begin your prayer time by repenting of all disobedience you know exists in your life to the command to love others like Jesus loves us. Also ask the Holy Spirit to empower you to love others in that way and to reveal practical expressions of what that love looks like. Remember the outward expressions should flow from the inward love you have for that person or people.

Day 4 – Receiving

From the Bible: Luke 5:1-11; John 12:1-8

Background: I have heard it quoted many times, "It is easier to give than to receive." At first I thought they were lying, but I have come to know this to be true. It would seem like Jesus, coming down to earth to reveal the Father to us, would not need anything, but would only be concerned with giving. Jesus realizes true relationships require giving and receiving. He receives from his disciples as they allow him to use their boat as a platform for teaching, and he receives from Mary as she anoints him with expensive perfume. In fact Jesus in his ministry was continually in a position that he needed to receive from others for his basic needs. Self-sufficiency was not his goal. This doesn't mean he was a mooch; he also returned by giving to others. He was modeling a key component of living in relationship.

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

- What do you think would have happened if Jesus came with everything he needed and didn't allow anyone to give anything to him?
- How are you at receiving from others you are in relationship with?
- Have you ever blocked others from giving to you?
- When you have a need, do you let those close to you know of it? Why or why not?

Prayer Direction: Realize that receiving from God is essential to be in His Kingdom, so this has great importance. Ask God to reveal any areas of ungodly self sufficiency that exists in your life. Ask God to show you how your relationships are to interact together and how to give and receive from each other.

Day 5 – Taking care of each other

From the Bible: Acts 2:42-47; 4:32; 6:1-6; James 1:27

Background: Somewhere in our nation's history, the church missed it. God says that it is our job to take care of the underserved, but our government has stepped in to fill the void that we left. James 1:27 gives us the feeling that there is all sorts of stuff we have put under the banner of Christianity and religion that God does not include in his understanding of it. He says the pure version, the right version, is to take care of those that cannot take care of themselves. Acts gives us a picture of this as the believers willingly gave up their possessions so that others wouldn't be in need. They did this because they understood the triangle. They understood their relationship with God, that he is the owner of all and blessed them with what they had; they understood the body of Christ, that the whole is more important than the individual and to think in the "we" especially when it comes to possessions; and they understood their relationship with the missing, that if they don't meet physical needs they won't be open to the help we can offer for their spiritual needs. Now don't read too much into this, God is telling his people to take care of a group (widows and orphans) in that day that had absolutely no way to provide for themselves (except through prostitution). He never says to provide for the lazy and system players. Starting in the garden we are commanded to work and to be fruitful, but some situations put us in a place where we or someone else is in need and the body of Christ is to meet that need.

Reflection/Discussion Questions:

- Does God ever show you a need someone else has that you can meet? What do you usually do about it?
- Why do you think that James says religion that is pure is taking care of the widows and orphans? Seems like there could be a lot of other things to make the focus, what would taking care of the widows and orphans reveal about the heart of the people?
- Do you know of any needs that you can meet or you could team up with some friends to meet?

Prayer Direction: Start off your prayer time by thanking God for all that he has given to you and acknowledge that it is all his. If God shows you any areas of selfishness or times you did not

meet a need when you should have, repent to him. Ask God to show you needs that he wants you to meet today and this week.