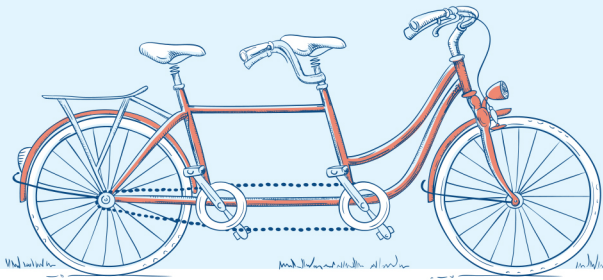


BETTER
Together



Week 3 Member Guide

SERMON RECAP: WHAT DID THE TEXT MEAN? WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

We learned this week that we were created for community. God made a way for you to experience community. Community requires commitment. But when you break through the commitment barrier, God brings blessings you can't even imagine.

WARM UP

Describe a time in your life when you needed community the most. During that time what level of commitment were you willing to give in order to experience community?

THE TEXT: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

Please read through each case study and answer 2 questions:

- 1) Would you leave the group or stay in the group?
- 2) Messy people make messy groups because a messy life doesn't wear a mask. If an outsider were to attend our group would they see a mess or a mask?

1. Think Again

You have a somewhat connected group, there's always room for improvement. You like the group and are interested in leading the group to a more substantive level relationally. However, this week Will (zoo keeper and father of 3 boys) revealed in group that his oldest son Jeff who is turning 16 next week has been asking about alcohol. He says that he keeps getting invited to parties but he thinks alcohol is there and is unsure about whether or not to attend. While Will is proud of his son for his honesty, he wants Jeff's first experience with alcohol to be in his presence. Will says he knows that in time Jeff will probably go to parties with alcohol behind his back and that he wants to use this opportunity as a teaching time. This leaves Steve (school teacher and father of 2 boys) in shock! Steve cannot believe Will would do something so "reckless" he then begins to lecture Will on the way he would handle the situation. As the leader, how would you handle this?

2. Football Follies

Your group is going great but has only been meeting for about 4 months. You tell the group that you will be late this week as you have been asked to go to a football game. Additionally, you have been asked by the ticket holder to bring 2 guys along. Wanting to continue cultivating these budding relationships from your group you ask 2 of the 4 guys in your group to come to the game. On the way home, you don't realize until you are about 10 minutes from being at group that one of the 2 remaining guys could not attend group that night which left 1 guy (Rick) with all of the women! You arrive at group and can immediately smell anger in the air. Rick is not talking or looking at anyone. Meanwhile, Rick's wife Shelly has texted all of the "atrocities" committed against her husband to her mother, Beth. Beth is best friends with your mother and now your phone is silently buzzing off the hook throughout the entire group meeting. How do you handle this mess?

3. Neighborhood Affair

You've just started a neighborhood group and have been able to recruit your neighbors on the left and right of you to begin as the core group. Things are going really well. Your kids are playing together, everyone is hanging out together multiple times per week, and the chemistry is awesome...maybe a little too awesome. The day before your group meeting you get a call from Roger (lives to the right of you). He's irate and emotional. He says to you that his wife, Ally, has been having an affair with Jason (lives to the left of you). After talking to Roger you hang up to share with your spouse all that has transpired and how you think this will have a negative effect on the group. Minutes later you hear shouting in the front yard! You go out to find Roger screaming at Jason's wife Amy. You hear Roger yell "your husband is 100% responsible! He's a dead man if I see him!" Amy responds "well your wife is 110% responsible! That hussy is dog meat when I get a hold of her!" The police arrive and calm everyone down. Later that evening you get a call from Amy. She asks "so what about group tomorrow? I will be dead before I'm around Roger and Ally ever again!" How would you handle this?

4. Smoker's Lounge

It's your first meeting as a group and while you're a bit nervous, you're really excited about what God has in store for you and the people you'll be doing life with for the next year. At seven o'clock arrives the couples begin to arrive as well. You've never met any of them except Jim and Beth who are helping you launch the group. After all of the couples arrive and about 20 minutes of fellowship time, you begin the meeting with a time of talking about your vision for the group, heart for community, and desire to see everyone from close friendships. Things are going really well! People are responding with engaging comments that point towards a healthy outlook for your group. At about the middle of the meeting Trina (a recovering speed addict) speaks up and asks "So are we going to have smoke breaks in this group?" You are stunned and unsure of what to say. Just then Margaret (a mother of 4 who struggles with yearning for others' approval) pipes up and says "Yea, I'm able to concentrate better after I've had a smoke." The group is staring at you waiting for a response. How do you handle this?

CLOSING THOUGHT

Many Christians think that having a personal relationship with God through Christ is all there is to Christianity. They are sorely mistaken, for there is that other dimension to the cross. The vertical trunk by itself does not make a cross. There is also the horizontal beam, appropriately called the crossbar. The arms of Jesus were stretched

on that horizontal rack, and the servant hands were nailed to it. But because Christ died for all of us, and because we all matter equally to him, his extended arms reach out from the crossbeam to all who want reconciliation with God in order that we may be reconciled also to one another and be brought together to form one body in his embrace of love.

Gilbert Bilezikian, *Community 101*, p. 34.