



Why We Need Each Other

Today, we're beginning a revolution. And I don't say that lightly. It is going to be a revolution that will start here and will spread literally all over our community.

And we're going to start with a message today that really is pretty radical. It's pretty *counter-cultural*. It's the exact opposite of what you've been taught your entire life. But God says, *"If you will do what I tell you to do, you will never again have to deal with loneliness. You'll be able to overcome fatigue, fear, failure, and frustration. Your life will be so much easier if you'll just do it the way I planned for you to do it."* The anecdote to all of those things is the concept, not the practice of community.

Now we Americans, man we love our independence. Our nation was founded on the **Declaration of Independence**. And so we really love it. You know, "I got to be me." "I did it my way." "Have it Your Way."

And we have been taught that happiness is the result of independence, so that if I'm financially independent, if I'm relationally independent, if I am independent in every way, then I will be the happiest. And yet, we have never had more unhappy people, and suicide rate continues to go up. Why? Because that's not the answer. The truth is, happiness does not come from being independent, isolated, living your life with all the barriers up and all the masks and keeping people at an arm's distance. That's

not the way to be happy. Happiness comes from inter-dependence, from community.

Notice what the Bible says here in **Romans 12:5**. Let's read it aloud together, *"Since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other and each of us needs all the others."* Turn to the person next to you and say, "You need me." Go ahead. "You need me." All right. Now also, I want you to say, "I need you." Go ahead. "I need you."

We just had probably 5 marriage proposals just then. I'll be doing a two for one special on weddings after the service.

And before we're done today I want to give you a chance to make a **Declaration of InterDependence**.

In the next 6 weeks we're going to look at **RELATIONSHIPS**. We're going to look at why do relationships go bad? And how do you turn a bad relationship into a good one? And what does it mean to really love and be loved? And what does it mean to really have intimacy with somebody? To have soul-to-soul fellowship and what is the purpose of God's church in all of this?

Now, today I'm going to give five reasons why you need a church family, and more than that, five reasons why you need to be in a small group with a few other friends who you get to know on a deeper level than just casual acquaintance.

The Bible gives us at least five reasons:

I. NUMBER ONE, I NEED OTHERS TO WALK WITH ME.

I need others to walk with me. In other words, I need people to help me grow spiritually. The Bible says in **Colossians 2:6-7**, *"Just as you receive Christ Jesus the Lord,"* read it with me, *"so walk in him."*

Now the Bible often calls your spiritual life, your *walk*. It calls it "the Christian walk" or "the spiritual walk." Why? Because life is not just a sit-down thing, it's a journey. You're always growing. You're always moving, and your life is a journey. There is a destination to get to. And the Bible says that as you walk through life, God wants you to do certain things.

Now all through scripture, it tells us, particularly through the New Testament, we're to walk in the light, we're to walk in love, we're to walk in obedience, we're to walk in the Holy Spirit, we're to walk as Jesus walked, we're to walk in wisdom. **But one of the important things is this: God never intended for you to walk through life alone.** Never. God never intended for you to walk through life alone. Now let me make it really clear, this has nothing to do with whether you're single or married.

Now some of you say, "Well what's wrong with walking alone? I like to walk alone. I prefer to walk alone. I get my own way when I walk alone." Well, that's part of the problem... is you're not learning cooperation. You're not learning relationships. You're not learning love. God says, "I want you to walk through life with other people close in relationship with you," and he says it for several reasons. You might just write this in the margin.

Number one: It's SAFER. It's safer when you walk with others through life. There's safety in numbers. It's a whole lot less risky.

Have you ever had to walk through a dark alley at night by yourself in an inner-city area or some other place, maybe even in the country? It can be quite frightening to you. It's safer when you walk with others.

Second, it's SUPPORTIVE. It keeps you from giving up. When other people are walking with you, they keep you going.

Have you ever done a **marathon** where you're going through this marathon and as you're going through it, all of a sudden you get a ache in your side and you got this pain and you want to give up? (For me, about mile 20. Yeah, how about Step 20.) And you want to give up but if other people are walking or running with you, then you keep on going.

There's an old Zambian proverb, "*When you run alone, you run fast. But when you run together, you run far.*" The life that you live is not a 50-yard dash, it is a marathon and you want to run far.

We need each other. It's supportive.

Now look at this next verse, Genesis 2:18, read it with me, "*It is not good for man to be alone.*" That's the first thing God said after he created Adam. Everything was perfect, but he said, "*It is not good for man to be alone.*" **God hates loneliness. God hates loneliness.** You can bank on that for the rest of your life.

And so, he created two groups. He gave you a physical family and a spiritual family. The physical family that you grew up in, and the spiritual family that you live your life in, because your physical family doesn't last. They move away and things like that. So you need a spiritual family, and that is the church. And actually, your spiritual family is going to last a whole lot longer than your physical one because it's going to go on for ever and ever and eternity.

Notice **Hebrews 10** says this, "*Let us not give up the habit,*" that means you do it all the time, "*The habit of meeting together, instead let us encourage one another.*" I need people to encourage me in my daily walk. And he says, "How do you do that?" He says, "*By meeting together.*"

Now that verse there, he's not talking about what we're doing right now. He's talking about community. Folks, *this* is not community. This is a crowd. And so, you don't have community in coming here to worship. Community is what happens when you're with four or five or six or maybe eight, maybe at the most ten or so. You see, you could be in a crowd, you could come to church every week for years and still be lonely because you never know anybody.

This week, I was in Manhattan -twice. And I walked out by myself, I was in a crowd of, maybe 100,000 people. It was very crowded, but I felt pretty lonely. You can be lonely in a crowd.

Now would you write this down: **Community is God's answer to LONELINESS.** Community is God's answer to loneliness. We need a few people in our lives that we know really well, and they know us really well. And we all need a place, we need a group, where we can practice relationships and really learn to love. So let the revolution begin.

SMALL GROUPS - And how do we do it? We get in the situation where everybody can help each other on a personal basis. Now that's what '40 Days of Community' is all about and during '40 Days of Community,' I want everybody to get in a small group. I'm talking about 100% of our church.

Now I'm not asking you to do this the rest of your life. I'm asking you to just do it for 40 days. That's six times. Just get in a group and go six times. Why? Well, you're going to get several benefits.

First, you are going to learn. Each week you will watch a 20-25 minute lesson that Rick Warren prepared especially for this series on community. And, you will have a chance each week to discuss what key will be teaching.

The **second thing** that happens is that everybody in a group, gets this **book**, called *"Better Together, What On Earth Are We Here For?"* And it is 40 daily readings on how to get better relationships, how to build better relationships. Now, you can't buy this book in any bookstore. The only way you can get it is by being in a small group. That's because learning about community is worthless unless you're in a community. You've got to experience it. And so, you'll be reading through this every day.

[**Today**, you need to go to the Welcome Center right after the service and Sign up for a Group and take a book with you and begin reading it.]

All right, that's the first reason why we need each other because *I need people to walk through life with me.*

II. NUMBER TWO, I NEED PEOPLE NOT JUST WALK WITH ME BUT TO WORK WITH ME

... to work with me. Do you know that the Bible says God put you on earth to do some certain things? And you need other people to help you do those certain things? The Bible says in **Ephesians 2:10**, *"God made us to do good works, which he planned in advance for us to live our lives doing."*

Before you were even born, God decided what talents you were going to get, what natural abilities, what gifts, what background. He decided what country you would be born in. He decided all of these things because he has a certain thing that he wants you to do with your life, "your good works." And that is called your ministry. Anytime you use the talents God has given you to help other people, that's called ministry or service. It's helping other people. But God doesn't want you to do it by yourself or you'll get worn out, he says you need other people to work with you.

And remember, I've told you this many times that *life on earth is practice for heaven*, for eternity. When you're in heaven, one of the things you're going to do is serve God.

God says, "I want you to practice serving while you're on earth." When you get to heaven and you didn't practice, well what kind of job are you going to get there?

Now God tells us why we need others to work with us. Look at the next verse, **Ecclesiastes 4** says, *"Two people are better than one because they get more done by working together."* You know that's true. You always get more done by working with other people.

God gives everybody a **ROLE** (with butter). Everybody has a role to play. Everybody has a position, and they do it **BETTER** together.

Now I can't do a whole lot on my own, and you can't make a very big impact on the world on your own either. But you know, you get enough of us together, and we can do something amazing.

The reason why you're so exhausted is you don't have anybody helping you. Would you write this down on your outline: **Community is God's answer to FATIGUE.** Community is God's answer to fatigue.

Have you ever seen on TV or maybe you saw the movie Witness, where the Amish build a barn together in one day? The whole community turns out. Everybody does a little bit and the thing's done like that.

During '40 Days of Community,' **we're going to take on a Big Project as a church:** to feed many of the homeless and financially strapped persons person in the towns around the church. Now that is an overwhelmingly huge project, but not really. If everybody in our church got in a group and every group gave about two hours to this project, it'd be over in a week. It'd be done in a snap. It just isn't that hard.

Galatians 6:10 says this, *"Every time we get the chance, let us work for the benefit of all, starting with the people closest to us in the community of faith,"* that's the church. You see, God uses ordinary people

All right. I need people to walk with me and I need people to work with me. The third thing is:

III. I NEED OTHERS TO WATCH OUT FOR ME.

I need people who will defend me, who will protect me, who will stand up for me when I need somebody to stand up for me, who will help me stay

on track, who will warn me. I need people to watch out for me.

Philippians 2:4 says this, *"Look out for one another's interests, not just for your own."* Now that's a counter-cultural statement because in America, everybody says, *"It's all about me. It's all about my needs, my interests, my hurts, and the rest of you, forget you because really it's all about me."* And yet the Bible says, *"Look out for one another's interests."*

Have you ever seen any of these 'Neighborhood Watch' signs in some areas? That's a sign of community. It says we watch out for people here. We take care of each other.

If you went on vacation this summer and you were gone for a week or a couple of weeks, you probably told your neighbor, "I'm going to be gone for a while. Would you look out for my stuff?" Because we all want our stuff looked out for. So we ask our neighbor, "Would you mind just keeping an eye open and watch out for my stuff?"

Well, let me ask you, do you have anybody looking out for your soul? Because your soul is more important than your stuff. Is there anybody who is helping you out in your spiritual journey? Who's watching out for you? To make sure that you're still growing? To make sure that you're not getting discouraged and depressed and feel like giving up?

You see, the fact is we all have blind spots. There are things in our lives that we can't see, that only other people can see.

I mean if you have a taillight that goes out, you're never going to know it. Somebody's got to tell you, "You've got a taillight out."

Hopefully, somebody tells you when you're unzipped. Please if I'm ever unzipped, will you tell me? Don't let me go the whole sermon, okay? Just stand and go, "Pastor Dave, zip up!" Okay? If you've got lettuce in your teeth or taco, friends don't let friends have taco in their teeth.

That's why we need each other. Get it? Good. The Bible says this in **Hebrews 13**, *"Keep being concerned about each other as the Lord's followers should."* Christians ought to take care of Christians. People in the church ought to take care of other people in the church. It says, "Keep being concerned about each other." Circle the word, 'Keep.' That means be vigilant. You don't just do it once. You just keep on doing it.

Question: Who's watching your back right now, spiritually? Who's watching your back? Is there anybody in your life who is so close that they are helping you and making sure you don't fall into the

typical traps that mess us up? Anybody like that? If you don't have that person, I pity you because you've got a big bull's eye on your back for the devil.

Here's another question: Who's back are you watching out for? You can't expect anybody to watch out for you if you're not watching out for anybody else?

Would you write this down: Community is God's answer to DEFEAT. Community is God's answer to defeat

I need people to walk with me through life and I need others to work with me and I need others to watch out for me. Number four,

IV. I NEED OTHERS TO WAIT AND WEEP

WITH ME

...to wait and weep with me. What am I talking about here? I need people who are going to be there in the inevitable crises of life. When I'm waiting for the bad news or when I'm weeping, when I got the bad news, I need people in my life.

Now as a pastor for over 25 years, I feel this one really deeply because I see it every day in our church. There are many situations in life that nobody should ever have to go through alone. Nobody should ever have to sit alone in a hospital, waiting during a life or death surgery. No woman should have to wait alone while she's waiting back for a lab test from a problem pregnancy. No one should ever have to sit in the home, waiting for the coroner to identify the body of a loved one who just had a heart attack in your home. They shouldn't have to wait alone.

No one should ever have to stand at an open grave alone. No man or woman should ever have to spend the first night alone when his wife dies or her husband dies. And no man or woman should have to spend the night alone when the wife walks out, or the husband has walked out. I could go on and on and on.

We were not meant to face the crises of life alone. Now, the fact is some of these things are going to happen in your life. They are going to happen, some of them will. *And only a fool would go through life unprepared for what they know is inevitably going to happen.* You need the support network in your life now because you don't know

when the crisis is going to come, when the earthquake's going to happen... you need that support group, those three or four... you don't need a lot, you don't need a hundred but you do need five or six people in your life who are going to be there when you need them. And the time to prepare is now.

Now God says that the safety net he planned for your life is a group of believers who are committed to you. The Bible says this in **1 Peter**, "*You should be like one big happy family, full of sympathy toward each other.*" Now when you get in the hospital, you don't want the whole church to visit you. In fact, that would not be a good idea. But it would be nice to have a few people visit you, and to say, "We're praying for you. We're going to be here."

Here's God's plan, **1 Corinthians 12**, "*If one member suffers, all suffer together.*"

You know, just recently there was that woman in CT who they found dead in her home and nobody discovered her for two years! I thought, "How tragic that she had no relationships in life who missed her." She died alone... imagine the despair, nobody should ever have to die alone.

Would you write this down: **Community is God's answer to DESPAIR.** Community is God's answer to despair. The Bible says, "*Be happy with those who are happy and weep with those who weep.*" You party when people have a celebration and you weep when they have a tough time.

You don't have to fix people's problems. When they're going through a crisis, they don't want advice anyway. They just want somebody to be there. You don't have to say anything profound, usually we get in trouble when we start talking. Just be there with them. They don't need a lot of advice. Just be there with them.

The Bible says in 1 Thessalonians 5, "*Encourage each other and strengthen one another.*"

There's one other reason why you need other people in your life and it is:

V. I NEED OTHERS TO WITNESS WITH ME.

What does that mean? Well, God has a plan for your life and he has a purpose. And you have a life message that God wants you to say to the world and your life message, if you don't share it, it won't get shared.

But how do we witness? What's the best way to witness to people who don't know the love of Jesus Christ yet? Well I'm going to tell you and it'll surprise you. It's by loving other believers. That's what Jesus said. Look at the Bible. Jesus said in **John 13**, "*Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.*" Notice he said, "Your love," not for me, not for God, he said, "*Your love for one another,*" for other people in the family of God, is the proof that you're in the family of God. If you don't love other believers, you have every reason to doubt 'Am I in the family?' Because he said, that's the proof. One of the ways you know that you've stepped across a line and you're in God's family is do you love the other people in it? He says, "That's how you know."

You see, the thing that proves to the world that we're Christ's followers is not our buildings, not our music, not our sermons, it's our love for each other. And during the next 40 days, we're going to start a revolution of love right here that is going to reach out to the community around us. **2 Timothy 1:7** says this, "*The Holy Spirit doesn't want you to be afraid of people, but to be wise and strong and to love them and enjoy being with them.*"

Now, you've heard me say this many times, I've asked you, "Is anybody going to be in heaven because of you?" I've asked that many times.

Would you write this down: **COMMUNITY is God's answer to FEAR.** God's answer to fear is community.

We all need each other. We all need each other. We need other believers to **WALK** with us, to **WORK** with us, to **WATCH OUT** for us. We need other believers to **WAIT AND WEEP** with us, and we need them to **WITNESS** with us.

I want you to say this with me: "**I really, really, really need a group.**" That is your *declaration of inter-dependence*. It wasn't that hard, was it?

Now this church is all about community. And I have been praying for you, and we are going to make history. And I'm praying for you in 100% participation. I don't want you sitting on the sideline. God didn't bring you to this area, to this church, at this time to watch it happen. He brought

you here to be a part of what's going to happen. He brought you to this church for this purpose. Let's bow our heads.

Father, it's time for the church to be the church. It's time for the revolution of love and fellowship and community. Please begin in our hearts today. With all my heart, Lord, I believe that our church will fulfil your purposes in community and that in that, we'll see a new reformation in the church and a new spiritual awakening and boy, do we need it.

Now you pray. *Dear God, forgive me for the times I've felt I didn't need other people in my life. I want to be a part of what you're doing on earth through your family, the church. I want to experience real community. I'm tired of superficial relationships. I want to learn to love and be loved in a deeper way. I open up my life to you, Jesus Christ. I want to be a part of your family. Thank you for bringing me here, for this place to belong and grow in fellowship. And serve and share and worship. I don't want to be a passive follower anymore. I want to get in on what you're going to do. So today, I commit to getting in a small group so I can learn about real community. Please bless our church as we do 40 days together. In your name, I pray. Amen.*

Let the revolution of love begin.