

## “Better Get-Together”

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Portions contributed by [James E. Parks](#).

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Psalm 147:1-11

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

Last week we began a 40 day focus on community. I know I have been inspired by God’s Word and by what I see God is doing to grow in our community. And, I want to learn to be more interdependent alongside all of you.

Because, we need each other...and “NO”, that is not a sign of weakness. It is reality and it is a blessing. If I had to go through life on my own, it wouldn’t be much fun.

During our next 5 Sunday mornings, well really 4 more after today. I will be teaching about the 5 purposes we have as a community. These 5 purposes are the answer to the big question, “What on earth are we here for?” Or, “What is the meaning of all of this?”

I believe God has given us meaning and purpose as individuals and as a community. Now, this series is built from Rick Warren’s book, “40 Days of Community”. The 5 purposes Rick Warren lays out for us are Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Worship and Evangelism. We will be specifically looking at each of those over these next 5 weeks.

Today we are going to start with the last one, the purpose of evangelism. You see, evangelism is the sharing of your faith with other people. We each are called by God to share our faith with others.

Now, this can be difficult for some people, because our faith is an intimate piece of our lives. It is bearing our soul to someone else. And the good thing is that we do not have to do this alone. As a group, as a community, we are called to share our faith.

And we share our faith because we believe we are better together. And, if we are better together, then the more of us together is even better...Right?

We share our faith also as an act of love. God loves all people and desires to have them in his family. God wants all people to come to him and God wants us to invite people to join the family.

One way for this to happen is for us to love each other. If we really create a true Christian community where we love and care for one another, people will be drawn to get together with us. When we act out of love towards each other in the church, others will see that and want to be a part of it.

Now, to me that is the easy way to draw people to Christ, and yet we still have difficulty doing it. We still have a hard time treating our Christian brothers and sisters with love and respect. And if we can't even do that, then why would a non-Christian be interested in God's family.

I hope you understand I am not just talking about us in this church, because there are plenty of other Christian churches that we need to treat with love and respect. We need to encourage and support them because we are not in competition with each other, rather we are to be compassionate to one another, and to be encouraging to help one another.

So, the first thing to work on, is loving our Christian brothers and sisters. Next, I want to give you some encouragement, on how to share your faith with other people.

First, pray. Pray for yourself that you can be a witness for God. Pray you would see opportunities to share. Pray you would be filled with compassion for others.

Pray also for the person, or people, you have the opportunity to witness to. Pray God would open their hearts to you and God's message. Pray they would see that they too need to depend on God and others.

Pray their desire for love would draw them to the Lord. And don't just pray alone, but pray with others. Invite others to pray for that person as well.

And as you pray for them, love them, care about them. If you are just out to share your faith because I gave you this assignment, chances are they will probably not really hear you. Your words won't matter if you have not shown genuine love and concern for them.

I think that is a good reminder that people can ignore your words and arguments, but they can't stop you from loving them and they can't stop you from praying for them.

Now, I know that with the pandemic upon us, and all that is going on, it is going to be hard to reach out to people who are in need. I was planning on getting with each of our groups and committees, and challenging them to come up with a way to reach out in love to our community.

But with the pandemic, our groups are not even getting together just yet. So, from here, I am going to ask our groups and committees to start praying on ways to reach out to our community in love, when we are able to get back.

Some idea's that I have thought of, as we have a couple of individuals that help already with taking the elderly or the handicapped, to doctor's or therapy appointments, or classes.

I remember when Miss Norma was here and she needed help getting to her cancer treatments. We had a group step up and help organize transportation for Miss Norma.

So, maybe a transportation ministry can be a thought and idea, to help those unable to drive to get to the grocery store or to doctor appointments.

Maybe we have a few people interested in crocheting, or are seamstress'...that can be a way to show love to others. Whether that is by crocheting hats for newborn babies at the hospital, or making some clothes for the homeless.

Those are just a couple of great ideas. I am excited about what you all can think up, and I can't wait to see how we can start sharing the love of Christ to our community.

The ultimate goal is this, that we are focusing on being better together...we are focusing on being woven together in God's love...we are focusing on being the quilt for our community.

Okay, so here are the steps. First, we need to pray. Then, we need to love. And then...then we can start to speak. After you have done those first two things, then it is time talk. I want you to be God's witnesses. Notice I said be a witnesses. Because you see, that is what God calls us to be, His witnesses.

Think of it this way, we are in a court room and we are the witnesses who testify to what they have experienced. We are not the judge who decides whether someone is doing something right or wrong. And we are not the lawyer laying out the argument. Our main calling is to be a witness...just share what we have experienced.

Just share your story and what God has done for you. Getting to that conversation can make some people nervous, so I want to share a few ways to bring your faith into a conversation if it is not a common topic.

One way, is to listen for a problem that Jesus has helped you with. If someone else is going through what you have experienced, you can share how God helped you, and how you know that God can help them.

Well, how does that work...well, we have all had a broken heart...right? So we can all relate to that, and many other issues people face today. If God has made a difference in your life share that with someone.

Another way is to relate to a current situation that everybody is facing or a current event. There are many to choose from today. But to keep it as nonpolitical as I can, let me use gas prices. We all struggle with the stress of rising gas prices. I know, because that has been a topic of many men's Wednesday breakfasts'. We can do that. We can relate to what is going on in life around us.

Another situation we can relate too. This situation is for a long time relationship you have had, and you have not really shared your faith.

It can be awkward because you have wanted to tell them, but the right time never appeared and now it is long overdue, but you aren't sure how to do it. A great way is start with an apology.

Just apologize saying you wanted to share but never found the right time, but you need to do it because it is important to you.

Of course your conversations could go in many different directions, but that's okay. The point is to have these conversations with those who do not yet know Christ.

And they do not have to be one on one conversations, with no one else around. They can happen in a group. Inviting non-Christians into times of Christian community is a great way to show our love.

In the passage I read from 1 Corinthians Paul says he became what others needed in order to hear the message of God. Now, he was not being fake, but rather he was finding that common ground to begin the conversation.

He had been Jewish, so he could speak from that perspective. We too can find common ground to speak to others about Jesus. Use sports, use hunting or fishing, use shopping, or use crocheting.

Whatever you like to do, get together with others to do it, and invite some non-Christians along as well.

In that get-together, in that community, you will enjoy the activity and then conversations about Christ can take place. Get together with one another. Have fun enjoying life and one another, and use that as an opportunity to share God's love.

I am very passionate about us doing this for two reasons. One, it is *amazing to see a life changed by Jesus Christ. I have seen people ready to give up on life transformed into compassionate, joy-filled people because of God's presence in their lives.*

I have seen people who appear to have it all together on the outside, but broken on the inside, be freed from their masquerade because someone shared Christ with them. If you really love someone, don't you want to invite them into the greatest love relationship they will have?

The second reason, that I am passionate about this, is because it changed my life. Someone took the time to invite me into a community that loved me...and I found Christ there. Before I became a Christian I was invited into a Christian community of young people. I was invited into this group, I think...probably just as a simply favor for my aunt.

You see, I was a shy, quiet kid, but for those that I was comfortable with, they got the "me", you all see and hear from today. Which, apparently, I wasn't as interesting back then?

Well, I was invited to a Christian camp even though I wasn't even a Christian at the time, because it would give my mom, or my aunt, some free time from dealing with me. My aunt and uncle were there at the camp also, but I could go off with the other kids and do the fun activities of the camp.

But, quite honestly, no one had a talk with me about believing because they assumed I was a Christian, but their actions and how they loved each other, well that said enough for me. I wanted in. Without that invitation into a community, I probably would not be here today.

Who invited you into Christian community? And aren't you glad they did?

Our memory verse for this week is from Colossians, chapter 4, verse 5, **“Be wise in the way you act with people who are not believers, making the most of every opportunity.”**

Make the most of sharing your love and faith with others. You have the greatest gift to give someone. Don't hold it back. Share with everyone you come into contact with and when you get the chance, use your words as well. **Amen!!!**