

*Introduction:* You were made for community. Your life was given not to be spent in isolation and withdraw from others. God made us to experience deep relationships and drawing near to others that we might journey together in life.

God made us for community because he is a communal, or relational, God. This is part of what it means to be made in his image. We have great capacity for relationality because we are made in the image of the relational God. This is how it was in the beginning: man made in the image of God experienced deep and unbroken friendship with God and with one another.

Our fall from that grace actually exposes how sin draws us away from community toward autonomy. Adam and Eve wanted their own way. They withdrew from God, and the consequences of their sin brought devastating effects in our relationship with God and one another. Now, our relationships are broken and imperfect. Now, though we have desire for relationships, we often pull away and walk alone. Now, rather than seeking to depend on God and the help of others, we live the American way, like an the old Frank Sinatra song says: we have to do it “our way.” Sociologists would tell you that we live in one of the most individualistic cultures the world has ever known.

But the very reason Jesus died was to repair and restore our relationship. Part of the work of the cross is to save us from our autonomy and bring us back into a right relationship with God *and* right relationships with one another. This truth is one of the prominent features of our passage this morning.

Look in Hebrews 10. The book of Hebrews was written as a letter of exhortation to Christians who were tempted to fall back in their faith because of persecution. The central message is: Jesus is Supreme. Christ is better. He is greater than the angels, better than Moses, a greater high priest, a superior sacrifice. Everything we see in the OT is a shadow pointing to the substance to be realized in him.

Beginning in v. 19, we have a great word on the work of Christ, which leads us to encouragements on how we should respond to his work. Read 19-25. Relationship! “God wants you there.” He wants to have a relationship with you! Do you doubt it? Doubt no more! “Keep out!” Welcome in... Blood... curtain is torn...

Drawing near to God will naturally move us to want to draw near to one another. The work of Christ in the gospel not only radically reorients our relationship with God, but also reorients, in radical fashion our relationships with one another. So as we continue on this journey in our Rhythms series, I want to encourage us to . . .

**The Point: Experience the grace of God through the rhythm of community with the people of God.**

How do we do that? The writer of Hebrews gives us a few ways in these two short verses: #1 . . .

**I. Consider one another with the goal of motivating toward love and action (10:24).**

**HEBREWS 10:24** (note the different words used in each translation)

- “**And let us consider how to *stir up one another to love and good works.*” (ESV)**
  - “**And let us consider how we may *spur one another on toward love and good deeds,*” (NIV)**
  - “**and let us consider how to *stimulate one another to love and good deeds,*” (NASB)**
  - “**Let us think of ways to *motivate one another to acts of love and good works.* (NLT)**
  - “**And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works” (KJV)**
- The KJV actually captures the word order of the Greek. The emphasis is on considering one another. It does not necessarily make for smooth English, but it does help us get a sense of the emphasis. “Consider one another to motivate each other toward love and good works.”

- CONSIDER – means to “notice, consider, pay attention, look closely at.” It has a bit of a scientific feel to it. Through careful thought and observation, know one another well enough that you might have the wisdom to move one another toward love and good deeds.
- The words “*one another*” carry the idea of mutuality, reciprocity. This is the norm for the NT Christian. In other words, in my humble but correct reading of the New Testament, it is impossible to be a follower of Christ and not love those who belong to Christ. Countless times we find these “one another commands” popping up. Love one another, serve one another, pray for one another, bear one another’s burdens, forgive, bear with, encourage, be kind, teach & admonish, build up, live in peace with one another and on we could go. So, look around. We are responsible for one another.
- What happens we do this? The simple answer. We change. We grow. We as the community of Jesus will look a lot more like Jesus.
- Do you care how your brothers & Sisters are doing spiritually? We should give consistent attention to how we can see others progress in the faith. God graces us with one another to build each other up.
- Proverbs 18:1 says, “**Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.**” (Proverbs 18:1). We need one another.
- Have you ever seen the giant redwoods of the Western United States? **Pic 1** When I went to San Francisco on a vacation with my family in high school, we went to Muir Woods National Park. I was amazed by how enormous redwoods trees are! The Giant Sequoia can reach heights of 311 feet with a diameter of of 40 feet! The Coast Redwood can grow even taller, stretching up to 370 feet with a diameter of 22 feet. Simply amazing! **Pic 2**
- Now, you would probably assume their root system travels down hundreds of feet into the ground, but you would be wrong. ☺ They actually have a shallow root system, sometimes only 5 or 6 feet deep. So how do they tower hundreds above the ground? Their roots expand up to 100 feet from the trunk and they interlock with those of other trees around them, so they receive the support and strength they need to resist high winds or floods.
- This is how it must be in the church. Every church should be like a family whose lives regularly intersect for the good of one another. As we interlock and connect with one another, the goal is that we would motivate one another to love expressed in good works. To follow Christ is to live a life of action and love. Christianity is an active faith. That’s one of the things that I believe people notice and appreciate about our church. We are actively helping others and serving our community. But we should consistently ask: does love define our community?

*Trans:* We must consider one another with the goal of motivating one another to love and good works.

## II. Establish the rhythm of meeting together consistently (10:25a)

- One of the natural outworkings of this is regularly gathering to worship God, pray together, hear from God’s Word and encourage one another. That is why verse 25 says, “not neglecting...”
- God commands the gathering together of his people.
- Jesus worshiped with the community of faith on the Sabbath. **Luke 4:16 “And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day,”**
  - **“And they devoted themselves to . . . fellowship. . . . And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47, ESV)**

That is why many pastors have used this phrase almost exclusively to refer to the gathering of Sunday worship, sometimes, I’m sure, to see a boost in Sunday attendance. Well, is that embedded here? Sure. But these words are so much deeper and robust than that.

- Our involvement in Christian community must not be reduced/truncated to a once a week gathering, significant as it may be.
- As Paul Tripp says, **“Sunday celebration should be the continuation of the intense community**

**that is going on throughout the week!” – Paul Tripp**

- Listen: we really try to keep the calendar simple at RHC. Worship together on Sunday. Join a CG and attend the weekly meetings, and go be a missional Christian who lives in community with others the rest of your week. Sure, we sprinkle in other opportunities, but that is the plan.

Pic: I love a nice campfire... Each log... Remove the log... (Attend church.) No, fan that flame throughout the week, so that you stay on fire for God and watch your worship, and your witness be changed!

- We need to spend time together! How will we know how to provoke one another unless we know one another, and how will we know one another unless we spend time together? “You can only minister to that which you know.” – Tripp
- We need to know each others strengths & weaknesses (anyone have a weakness?). We need to know the trials, sorrows, and temptations, as well as the joys, interests, and victories of our friends.
- If I don’t know you’re going through a really difficult time vocationally, relationally, personally, then I will not be able to encourage you.
- We have to be interconnected. We have to spend time together. We have to check in with one another throughout the week. We have to have each other into one another’s homes. We have to find times to pray together, share burdens, laugh and cry, chill and work.

App: Do you need to establish some new rhythms that will foster greater community? Grab coffee in the morning ... Have people into your home for a meal. Go exercise, watch a game. Shop together. Drop in unexpectedly! Do life together!

- Marsha & I try, we have been really bad at it lately, but we try to plan our week every Sunday night.
- If you don’t plan your month, your week, your day, and to a degree, your year, the tyranny of the urgent and whatever is convenient at the time will drive what we do.
- There is no doubt, many people at different points in their life, “get out of the habit” It was the practice of some in their church of the Hebrews to neglect the practice, the rhythm, the habit of meeting together. And the writer of Hebrews is saying, “Don’t go there!”
- We need to establish godly habits and rhythms....
- That is what this series is all about! We are pursuing growth in godliness through dependent discipline for the purpose of delighting ourselves in God and becoming more like Christ, and community is a huge means of grace.
- This is also one of the primary reasons we establish Community Groups is so that it can provide a context for people to come together, live out the one another commands, and grow in Christ. I guarantee if you will implement these spiritual rhythms of grace, you will see a qualitative difference in your life. (Bible, Prayer, Community)

*Trans:* We have to get together in order to experience the gracious rhythm of motivating one another to love and good deeds. So he says, do not neglect meeting together, and then finally.

**III. Encourage one another increasingly in light of the end (10:25b).**

“but encouraging one another, and *all the more* as you see the day approaching...”

- Do this more, not less. . . . growth... abound... (2 thess.) Don’t be stagnant. Don’t rest spiritually content! Press on. Grow! We should want to be an “all the more” kind of church. We’re only scratching the surface of what God can do and what God, I believe, is going to do in the life of this church. We’ve only just begun, you feel?
- *Encouraging: parakaleo* (alongside, call) support them, PARACLETE... Holy Spirit, comforter, encourager,
- Picture: come alongside... put your arm around someone, and help them in their journey. If you don’t think you need the help of others, you are a fool.
- “To encourage means to inspire with courage, spirit, and hope; to hearten; to urge forward.” We need encouragement when life is really difficult (think about the Hebrews).

- “Is there anyone in this church that you are intentionally encouraging or receiving encouragement from?”
- Paul Tripp says we are called to “intentionally intrusive, Christ-centered, grace-driven, redemptive relationships.”

We need encouragement when things are tough, but we need it when life is good too. Why? Because we want to advance. We’re not here to stay in the same place. I want to be pushed. I want to be held accountable. I want to be provoked to greater love and good deeds. And an encouraging word is usually a great means to that end: I know God can use you in that city. Encouragement. I’m praying for you today. Encouragement. “You really did an awesome job serving....” Encouragement.

In light of where we’ve been in this series, let me provide two specific encouragements on encouragement:

**1) Encourage others with the Word.**

- And as you encourage others, provide Biblical encouragements. Speak the words of Scripture to your friends. Let them know the hope and promises of God are for them!
- One small way I seek to accomplish this is by using my devotion times to spark encouragement to others. This can be planned, but usually it just happens naturally.

**2) Encourage others through prayer.**

- Pray for others and pray with others. I have never been prayed for by a sincere brother or sister and thought, “Man, I’m discouraged!” Have you? I have never walked away and thought, “What a waste. I wish they would not have prayed for me, or I wish I would not have prayed for them.” You feel me!?
- What happens if we’re this kind of community? I mean, I believe we are, but let’s become more and more like this!
- Some of you have the gift of encouragement. You are naturally inclined as God’s Spirit works in you to offer words of encouragement to others. There are two ladies from our sending church in NC, that without fail, every time we send an update, they are the first to respond. Kristy Bible and Carrie Armstrong. Every time. If I were to send out an email right now, they would be the first to respond. Why? Because, I believe, they have the gift of encouragement.

Now, does this mean the rest of us are off the hook? No! Spiritual Gifts are meant to build up the body. Those gifted in a particular area may carry a heavier load, but that does not exempt any Christian from any of the commands of God. So you may say, I don’t have the gift of mercy, or the gift of evangelism, or the gift of hospitality no one has all the gifts, and yet, we are all responsible to be merciful, to share our faith, and to have people in our homes.

Do you encourage others? Here’s a tougher question: Do you receive encouragement? We prefer words of flattery, rather than words of honesty. But here’s a newsflash: we are often blind to our own sin. We don’t think we need it. “I AM NOT ANGRY! Why would you think that I’m angry?!”

This is why Tripp says we need two **ingredients** to accomplish this kind of **biblical community**:

**1) Humility of Approachability:** We have to open ourselves to others because we need help. God has placed people in your life that can help you on your journey, and he has placed you in the lives of others that you might help them in their journey.

**2) Courage of Loving Honest:** Community is always a two-way street. Not just receiving but GIVING! The outward facing nature of community... Are you in relationship with someone else for their sake or your sake? We want to do our best to undercut the consumeristic mentality in the church.

Someone has said there are basically three kinds of people:

**Takers: “What’s yours is mine and I’m going to take it.”**

**Keepers: “What’s mine is mine, and I’m going to keep it.”**

**Givers: “What’s mine is yours, and I’m going to give it.”**

Let's be a church of givers. What if God was more interested in you coming on Sunday and plugging into a Community Group not simply for what you could receive (and we do receive a lot), but primarily for what you could give?

*Conclusion:*

My exhortation: Commit your life to a group of believers for the sake of mutual encouragement and growth in godliness.

Don't let church be another ball you juggle. Let your commitment to God and his people be the central priority of your life.

### **Two Great Steps toward Deeper Community**

#### **1) Join this church through pursuing membership.**

- Why join this church?
  - Family makes family decisions...
  - Family members have greater responsibility (we expect more)
  - Family members receive greater investment (
- How? Connections Class...

#### **2) Join a Community Group to grow in grace.**

- Why join a small group?
- How? Prioritize Geography & Relationship...