

COMMUNITY

#5

A SPIRITUAL PRACTICES DEVOTIONAL

B/P



Community

The spiritual discipline of community or fellowship may not always be as comfortable and pleasant as it may sound. It involves committing to people and remaining steadfast in our relationships, regardless of our current challenges. Community is strengthened by actively engaging in other spiritual disciplines, such as confessing our shortcomings, praying, serving others, and studying the Scriptures together.

Community can be cultivated in diverse settings, whether within a family, among friends, in a small group, in a local church, or even in a work or volunteer environment. However, simply attending a local church does not automatically mean that one is actively practicing *genuine* community.

Sharing our lives with others is always risky as it requires authenticity, vulnerability, and a willingness to sacrifice for others. As Jesus told us in John 15:13 that greater love has no one than to lay down his life for his friends, biblical community is a practice and discipline that helps us continually deny ourselves for the betterment of those around us.

Day 21: Can't say community without unity

READ: Ephesians 4:1-6 “I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

THINK: Pride seems to be a virtue in today's culture. To put oneself above another might get you ahead in this world, but it certainly won't get you far in the Kingdom of God. The body of Christ must be unified for it to stand (Matthew 12:25). It must also be unified in order to fulfill the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:37-39) and Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). Jesus prayed that we would be one as He and the Father are one (John 17:20-26). Paul, in this passage, reminds us how much we have in common with each other, much more than might divide us.

DO: Reflect on the importance of the Christian community in your life. In the left column below, consider writing at least 5 ways Ephesians 4:1-6 encourages us to act towards one another. In the right column, consider some things all believers have in common.

How Christians should act

What Christians have in common

“Biblical community is a gift from God, where we are called to lay down our masks and come as we are, broken and flawed, but still dearly loved.”

Day 22: Loving One Another

READ: **John 13:34-35** "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another."

THINK: For the world to embrace the life change that God has for them, they need to first see it in the church. Christians must love with words and actions. The new command wasn't just to love each other, as the Old Testament commanded that as well. The 'new' part was *how* we were to love each other - as Christ loved us. He sacrificed Himself and gave up His life so that we may have life; He washed the disciple's feet as an act of service and told them to do the same. When one realizes how God has loved them, it becomes more apparent that we are to follow His example and love others.

DO: Consider practical ways in which you can demonstrate love to your Christian community. Here are a few of the 'One Another's' in scripture. Consider which value is most important to you and what the church would look/feel like if we practiced these more often..

1. "Be at peace with each other" (Mark 9:5)
2. "Love one another" (John 13:34a)
3. "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love" (Rom. 12:10)
4. "Stop passing judgment on one another" (Rom. 14:13)
5. "Accept one another, just as Christ accepted you" (Rom. 15:7)
6. "Instruct one another" (Rom. 15:14)
7. "When you come together to eat, wait for each other" (1 Cor. 11:33)
8. "Carry each other's burdens" (Gal. 6:2)
9. "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other" (Eph. 4:32)
10. "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph. 5:21)
11. "In humility consider others better than yourselves" (Phil. 2:3)
12. "Encourage one another and build each other up" (1 Thes. 5:11)
13. "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other" (James 5:16)
14. "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling" (1 Peter 4:9)
15. "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others" (1 Peter 4:10)

"In biblical community, we discover that we are broken, but loved; sinful, but forgiven; imperfect, but accepted."


Day 23: Open Homes...Open Lives

READ: Romans 12:9–13 “Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.”

THINK: This passage shows how we should love and honour one another. Paul ends this section by encouraging believers to practice hospitality. Hospitality means being friendly to strangers, not just having friends over. Christian hospitality differs from socializing. Entertaining focuses on the host—the home must be spotless; the food must be well prepared and abundant; the host must appear relaxed and good-natured. Hospitality, in contrast, focuses on the guests prioritizing their needs and making them feel welcomed and valued. Some cultures do this better than others, but whenever we practice hospitality and open our homes to others, we are more likely to open up our lives to them as well.

DO: Here are some reflection questions you may want to consider as you grow in practicing hospitality:

1. How comfortable are you with practicing hospitality? How do you feel about having guests come to visit?
2. Who has most modelled hospitality to you in your life and how did that make you feel?
3. Could people spontaneously drop by your house or would you struggle with needing to have everything perfect in your home first? Why is that?
4. What persons or families could you invite into your home in the next few weeks to practice hospitality?

			
GUEST:	NAME	NAME	NAME

“Hospitality is not something we do all by ourselves. It invites others in. When you offer hospitality, let your guests help.”

Day 24: Bearing Each Other's Burdens

READ: **Galatians 6:2** "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ." / James 5:16 "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working."

THINK: This can be one of the scariest practices we do in our faith - to make known our struggles to others. The temptation to manage on our own is so powerful many will never open up about the hardships they are going through or the unbelieving thoughts they battle with. Accountability partners offer exceptional value to individuals who struggle to open up about their personal challenges or temptations, who feel stagnant in their spiritual journey, or desire to deepen their understanding of the love within the body of Christ. Paul calls us to carry each other's burdens, which can only happen when we acknowledge them to others first.

DO: Whenever you're ready to find an accountability partner, seek God's guidance for the right person. Remember that an accountability partner doesn't necessarily have to be older or wiser than you; they should simply share the same desire to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the transformation process. Once a name comes to mind, approach the individual with your request for accountability. Together, decide on the frequency, and as you continue to meet, increase your level of vulnerability with each other. Don't forget to pray for each other throughout your journey.

You may also want to take this time to seek the Lord and "*cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you*" (1 Peter 5:7). What burdens are you carrying right now that you can release to the Lord?

Financial Burden: Struggling with debt, financial instability, or inability to meet basic needs.

Mental/ Emotional Burden: Dealing with stress, anxiety, depression, or other emotional challenges.

Health Burden: Coping with chronic illness, disability, or managing health conditions.

Relationship Burden: Facing conflicts, challenges, or difficulties in personal relationships.

Work or Career Burden: Dealing with job-related stress, job loss, or dissatisfaction in one's career.

Family Responsibilities: Balancing the demands of family life and caregiving responsibilities.

Spiritual Burden: Wrestling with questions of faith, purpose, or existential concerns.

"God wants us to live in biblical community because He knows we need each other."

Day 25: Forgiveness

READ: Matthew 18:21–22 “Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.”

THINK: Forgiveness involves letting go of resentment towards others who have wronged or offended you and seeking the restoration of these broken relationships. Forgiveness is an act of God where He pardons sinners, releasing them from judgment and freeing them from the divine penalty of their sins. Since only God is holy, only He possesses the authority to forgive sins (Mark 2:7; Luke 5:21). However, forgiveness is also a human act towards one’s neighbour, because God has forgiven us through the death of Christ. As a result, forgiveness must be extended to others. It’s not always easy, but remember how God forgave you when you are tempted not to forgive others. That can free us from holding people in a ‘prison of unforgiveness’ because we know that God released us from ours.

DO: Read the two scriptures below and ask yourself:

1. Is there anyone I haven’t forgiven yet?
2. Is there anyone that I haven’t yet asked for forgiveness?
3. As far as it concerns me, am I at peace with all people?

“So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”
(Matthew 5:23–24)

“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”
(Romans 12:18)

“Unforgiveness is like drinking poison yourself and waiting for the other person to die.”

- Joyce Meyer

“To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.”

- C.S. Lewis

