

SESSION TWO

Community

Even in the perfect, sinless environment of Eden, God said "It is not good for man to be alone." We are created for community, fashioned for fellowship, and formed for a family, and none of us can fulfill God's purposes by ourselves.

—Rick Warren

INTRODUCTION

From Fellowship NWA's very beginnings, small groups have been a core value. As the church grew from a single community group into a larger body of believers, the original vision of small groups of believers gathering in a home to share a meal, open God's Word, and process truth and life in the context of authentic, Christ-centered relationships has remained a central part of the Fellowship Bible Church experience.

The Biblical evidence for community (or fellowship) as a function of the church is found throughout scripture. In the very first chapter of the Bible, God says, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). We can make two important observations from that verse. The first is that God refers to Himself using the plural pronouns "us" and "our." This is the first hint of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity that we find in scripture. God is three; God is one. The doctrine of the Trinity is complex and is covered in greater detail in Appendix A, within our Doctrinal Statement. It tells us that God, as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, has eternally existed in community within Himself. The second big observation we can make is that we are made in God's likeness. This means that just as God exists in community, we are created to exist in community.

Moving to the New Testament, we see that Jesus modeled living in community as He engaged in small group ministry. In Mark 3, Jesus had become so popular that He told the disciples to prepare a boat

for Him because the crowds were pressing Him. But Jesus knew that the best way to reach the crowds was to disciple a few, and in Mark 3 we see these words recorded: "And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him." (Mark 3:13). Just as Jesus had existed for all of eternity in community with the Father and the Spirit, He gathered people into a small community of faith.

At Fellowship, we make it a high priority for people to experience Christ-centered community. We believe that there are three essential ingredients in healthy community: BELONG, GROW, and SERVE. Take some time to reflect and prayerfully consider the following questions which will be discussed during your time together.

Have you ever felt like you were part of a group or a team? What was it like? What made it special? Share with the group.

BELONG

Read Hebrews 10:24-25:

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

1. What does it mean to stir one another to love and good works?

2. How does meeting together help to stir one another?

1 Peter 3:8

Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

1 John 4:11-12

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

What are some places outside of church that people are looking for community? Will these places offer them a chance to belong, grow, and serve? Why or why not?

How could a community group or other small group be an effective tool for evangelism?

How could a community group on your street change the spiritual temperature of your neighborhood?

This lesson has attempted to demonstrate how community, as expressed through small groups, accomplishes two of our Membership Covenant points: Participation and Care. It is our prayer that members of Fellowship accept the challenge of living life in Biblical community.

MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

Participation:

To trust and support the mission, vision, strategies, and philosophy of Fellowship Bible Church of Northwest Arkansas through active and consistent involvement.
—(Phil 1:3-5)

Care:

To take responsibility for personally meeting the needs of others within the church, the community, and the world.—(2 Cor 1:4)