

REAL LIFE: Community As It's Meant to Be "Love One Another"

John 13:34-35; Genesis 2:18

THE BIG IDEA

It is woven into the very fabric of who we are: WE ARE MADE FOR RELATIONSHIPS. We are made to love God and we are made to love others. Love God, love people--this is the message of the Bible. Over the next several weeks our church will be learning and practicing how to love each other. 50 different times in the New Testament we find the "mutuality commands" that teach the church how to love. These commands include "bear one another's burdens", "pray for one another", and "welcome one another" to name a few. Each of these commands teach us how to live out the root command, "Love One Another".

OPEN WITH PRAYER

GETTING STARTED

1. Take a few minutes to write down your best and worst moments of 2008 on a piece of paper--but don't put your name on your paper. Put everyone's papers together and try to guess who wrote what in your group.

LEARNING & APPLYING GOD'S WORD

2. Why is love important to followers of Jesus?

Together, read John 13:34-35 and Genesis 2:18.

3. Jesus gave his disciples this new command to love one another just before he went to the cross to die. What does this say about the importance of love for one another?
4. Jesus said, "As I have loved you, so you must love one another." How did Jesus love his disciples? How then are we to love each other?
5. Throughout Genesis 1 we find a formula to God's creative activity: "God spoke", "...and it was so", and then God says, "It is good". How does the formula change in Genesis 2:18?
6. Steve said that based on Genesis 2:18 God wasn't enough to fulfill man, even though sin was not even introduced yet. In addition to being made for a relationship with God, people are made to have relationships with other people. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

LIVING OUT “REAL LIFE”

7. Loving others is a high calling because, as Steve said, “People are weird!” Everyone has quirks and hang-ups. Yet, according to scripture, loving each other is not an optional activity. What do you generally find difficult about loving others? Past hurt? Fear? Loss? Weird people?

THE “EXTRA MILE”

8. Everyone has a different “love language”—a way that they experience love the most. Below are the 5 love languages:
 1. Words of affirmation
 2. Gifts
 3. Physical touch
 4. Acts of service
 5. Quality time

What is your primary love language?

What are the love languages of those in your group or family?

This week choose one other person in your group or family and love them in the way that means the most to them.

SHARING AND PRAYER (Prayer Requests)

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Read “The Five Love Languages” by Gary Chapman to learn how to love others more effectively.

REAL LIFE: Community As It's Meant to Be "Encourage One Another"

1 Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 3:13; 10:24-25; 12:1-2

THE BIG IDEA

What does it mean to love one another in the church? It means to encourage one another. Encouragement is vital because most of us experience discouragement each week in broken relationships, stress, and the economy, news about war, parenting, work, and yes, even church. Most people are hurting far more than we realize. But God has a strategy! His strategy for helping his people through these discouraging times is the church—that group of people who are called to walk alongside one another, offering words and acts of encouragement along the road of life. As the church, we are called to be sources of encouragement to one another, helping each other see what we cannot see in ourselves, and calling each other on to greater maturity in Christ.

OPEN WITH PRAYER

GETTING STARTED

1. Has there been anyone in your life who has been a constant source of encouragement? Share about this person and how they have encouraged you, and what difference their encouragement has made in your life.

LEARNING & APPLYING GOD'S WORD

2. Recap, in a few sentences, the main message from Sunday's sermon.

Together, read 1 Thessalonians 5:11, Hebrews 3:13 and 10:24-25.

3. Steve said in his sermon: "If only we could somehow see the world through God's glasses and fully see the anxieties, fears and struggles that people around us are experiencing, I think we would be more motivated to get beyond ourselves and encourage them more than we do."

Do you agree with Steve's statement? Do you think people tend to put on a "good front" when they are experiencing discouragement or difficulties in life?

4. Read Hebrews 12:1-2 together. What do these tell us about the Christian journey?

What are sources of discouragement in your faith?

01/11/2009

Do you feel that as a Christian in our society you are swimming against the current of the culture? In what ways?

5. The word for encouragement in Greek is the word *parakaleo*. It means “to call alongside.”
When do you especially need others to “call alongside you” words or acts of encouragement?
Reflect on occasions in your life when you desperately needed encouragement. What did it feel like to receive such encouragement—or not to receive it?
6. The philosopher Martin Buber wrote, “*The greatest thing any person can do for another is to confirm the deepest thing in him, in her – to take the time and have the discernment to see what’s most deeply there, most fully that person, and then confirm it by recognizing and encouraging it.*”
According to this quote, what are the elements of encouragement?
How is encouragement an art that we can learn?

LIVING OUT “REAL LIFE”

7. In his message, Steve said that we have the power to change people’s lives by encouraging them and calling out to them, helping them to see what they cannot see in themselves.
In your group, take a couple of minutes to encourage each person in your group—help them to see their beauty, their gifts, and their potential.

THE “EXTRA MILE”

8. Be an encourager this week. Who is the one person who needs encouragement this coming week? Make a specific plan to encourage that person through words, actions, and prayer. When you come back to your group next week tell your group about your experience being an encourager.

SHARING AND PRAYER (Prayer Requests)

Sunday January 18, 2009

REAL LIFE: Community As It's Meant to Be "Welcome One Another" Romans 15:7; Matthew 5:43-48

THE BIG IDEA

"There you are!" is the cry of a welcoming person as they walk into a room. Both Paul in Romans and Jesus in Matthew's gospel tell us that one of the greatest marks of love is how we welcome others—especially those who are different than us. Jesus said that when we are able to welcome those different than us we are becoming perfectly mature like God is perfectly mature. God's dream is for us to be a "There you are!" kind of church!

OPEN WITH PRAYER

GETTING STARTED

1. What was one of your favorite traditions in your family when you were young? Why did you like it?

LEARNING & APPLYING GOD'S WORD

2. What are some key ideas you remember from Jim's message on Sunday?

Together, read Romans 15:7 and Matthew 5:43-48.

3. What does it mean, according to Jesus in Matthew 5:43-48, to take initiative and to be generous in our greetings?
4. What reason does Paul give for welcoming others in Romans 15:7? How have you experienced God's welcome of you? Give a specific example of how God has welcomed you.
5. Jesus used Gentiles and Pharisees as negative examples of welcoming. Have you ever met people like the Pharisees who expected greetings before they gave them? Or like the Gentiles who only gave greetings to those who returned the favor? Have you ever behaved similarly?
6. The apostle Paul was a master at greeting people, as his letters demonstrate. Read Romans 16:1-16. How does Paul acknowledge people in these verses? What can we learn from his example?
7. Jim talked about extending "refrigerator rights"—the right we give certain people to open our fridge and help themselves to anything they like. This is a symbol of familiarity, comfort, relationship, safety, and welcome. Who has "refrigerator rights" in your life? Describe this relationship to your group.

Sunday January 18, 2009

If no one has “refrigerator rights” in your life, who might you welcome into this kind of relationship?

8. What barriers exist among people (strong from weak, insider from outsider, rich from poor, racial, etc.)? How can the church break down these barriers?

LIVING OUT “REAL LIFE”

9. The ultimate test of love is our ability to welcome those who are different than us, to accept them as they are, and to love them regardless of their performance or behavior.

Who has extended this kind of love and welcome in your life?

Take a few moments to consider whom God may be calling you to extend this kind of welcome and love.

Share with your group who you feel called to welcome and love (you may need to keep names confidential here!). Pray for one another for God’s help to welcome those people the way God welcomes you in Jesus Christ.

THE “EXTRA MILE”

10. Make a specific plan to express welcome or greeting to the person you thought about in the question above. Then live out that plan before your next group meeting. (You might want to ask your group to pray for you on this one!)

SHARING AND PRAYER (Prayer Requests)

REAL LIFE: Community As It's Meant to Be "Carry One Another's Burdens" Galatians 6:1-6

THE BIG IDEA

There are no short-cuts to community. It takes time and energy—especially when we consider caring for each other's lives. Life is full of surprises and curve-balls, and the call to bear one another's burdens comes at the expense of our personal agendas, yet is it one of the keys to experiencing community as it is meant to be.

OPEN WITH PRAYER

GETTING STARTED

1. If you could go anywhere in the world and money was no object, where would you go? Why?

LEARNING & APPLYING GOD'S WORD

2. What are a few main ideas from Steve's message on Sunday?

Together, read Galatians 6:1-6.

3. What should be our attitude when we restore someone who has been tripped-up by some sort of sin (vs.1)?
4. What is the "law of Christ" (see Galatians 5:14)?
5. How can we avoid being prideful when we help another person who is struggling under a burden (vs. 3-4)? What does it mean to "test your own actions" and "watch yourselves, or you may also be tempted"?
6. What does it mean to carry one another's burdens?
7. Have you ever carried someone else's burden?

Has there been a time in your life when someone carried your burden?

Are you more likely to carry someone else's burden for them or to allow someone to carry yours? Why?

8. What are the perils of burden bearing? Have you ever experienced any of these perils?

LIVING OUT “REAL LIFE”

9. The goal of burden bearing is to get people back on their feet. What does that mean in practical terms?

What burdens are you bearing now?

How can your group help you get back on your feet?

THE “EXTRA MILE”

10. Steve said in his message that “The requirement for true intimacy is blocks of available time.”

How does your schedule help or hinder you from entering into deeper community?

What is one way you can create a block of available time this week so that you can pursue greater relational intimacy?

SHARING AND PRAYER (Prayer Requests)

□

□

□

□

□

□

□

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

“There is no ideal community. Community is made up of people with all their richness, but also with their weakness and poverty, of people who accept and forgive each other, who are vulnerable with each other. Humility and trust are more at the foundation of community than perfection.”

-Jean Vanier

Sunday, February 1, 2009

REAL LIFE: Community As It's Meant to Be "Be Subject to One Another" Ephesians 5:21-33

THE BIG IDEA

Our goal is to learn and live-out what Jesus meant when he said, "Love one another as I have loved you." Today, we hear Paul's words in Ephesians that loving each other means mutually submitting to one another. Paul uses the marriage relationship *as an example* of Christ's relationship with the church. CAUTION! Don't get sidetracked by talking about the roles of husbands and wives in your discussion! Remember what Paul's goal is in Eph. 5:32, "This is a great mystery, **and I am applying it to Christ and the church.**" Paul is writing to help the church understand how to love one another, not to give a prescription for married couples!

OPEN WITH PRAYER

GETTING STARTED

1. Describe for your group the perfect meal start to finish.

LEARNING & APPLYING GOD'S WORD

2. Briefly retell the key points from the message about being subject to one another.

Together, read Ephesians 5:21-33.

3. How is a marriage relationship a reflection of Christ's relationship with the Church? How is it different?
4. According to these verses, what does being mutually submissive mean? Are there limits to it?
5. Paul points us back to Christ as the reason why we ought to mutually submit to one another throughout these verses. Ultimately, Paul is reminding us that Jesus Christ is the Lord of the Church.

What does it mean for us to say that Christ is the Lord of the Church?
How ought this truth change how we relate to each other?

Sunday, February 1, 2009

6. Jim mentioned 3 specific ways to mutually submit to one another in the church: **Committing** to unconditionally love one another, **valuing** each other, and **sacrificing** for one another.

How does each of these contribute to mutual submission in the Body of Christ?

Give examples of each one from your own experiences.

7. What impact can living out the command to “be subject to one another” have for your relationships (marriage or friendships)?
Your Real Life Group or small group?
For our church?
For those outside the church?

LIVING OUT “REAL LIFE”

8. Choose one of the three practical ways of mutually submitting (Committing, Valuing, or Sacrificing) and make a specific plan of living this out for one person this coming week. Write that commitment down, tell your group about it, and be ready to report back to your group next time about how it went for you. Make this part of your prayer for one another today in your group, too!

THE “EXTRA MILE”

9. Practice **active listening**. Throughout this coming week make the conscious choice to submit to others in your conversations. Do this by being aware of being completely present and attentive to others as they talk and share with you. Ask probing questions in order to fully understand them. Suspend your desire to solve problems, make comments, or insert your own agenda into the conversation. *Seek to understand before being understood this week!*

SHARING AND PRAYER (Prayer Requests)

04/02/2009

REAL LIFE: Community As It's Meant to Be

"Serve One Another"

Galatians 5:13-14
Mark 10:35-45

THE BIG IDEA

Our culture tells us to promote ourselves, advance our own cause, look out for #1, push our agenda at the expense of others. Jesus turns all of this thinking upside down. He tells us that true life is not found in getting but rather in giving, that the greatest in his kingdom will be the servant of all.

OPEN WITH PRAYER

GETTING STARTED

1. When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up? Why?

LEARNING & APPLYING GOD'S WORD

2. What are a few main ideas from Steve's message on Sunday?

Together, read our biblical text for this week: **Galatians 5:13-14** and **Mark 10:35-45**

3. What do John and James ask Jesus for in Mark 10:37? How does Jesus respond to them?
4. What do you think Jesus means in verses 42-44? If you were going to explain to someone what it means to be a servant, what would you tell them?
5. In his message, Steve said that it is important to realize that Jesus served us before he called us to serve others, Jesus loved us before he called us to love others—in short, Jesus empowers us to serve others. Why is this an important point to remember?
6. Both Paul and Jesus would agree that real life is found when we give our lives away and serve others. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
If you agree, tell about a time that you have found this to be true for you.
7. Steve said that serving together with others creates community. What is it about serving together that creates community?

04/02/2009

LIVING OUT “REAL LIFE”

8. Serve somebody! Rather than just talking about serving, let's do it!
 - Take a few minutes of silence in your group to individually ask God to reveal to you whom you are to serve this week.
 - Then, in the space below, write the name of the person you will serve and how, specifically, you will serve him or her.
 - Finally, share what you wrote with your group and pray together for Christ to empower you to serve this week.

THE “EXTRA MILE”

9. If your group is ready for the extra challenge...we are encouraging all RLG's to get involved in some sort of service. What are some possible ways that your RLG could serve together?

Some possible opportunities for service are:

- Serving in the Sunday School Program on Sundays
- Serving at the Jesus Center
- Working on Bidwell's Habitat House
- Welcome Ministry on Sunday Mornings (Ushering, patio ministry, etc.)
- Serving at Citrus School
- Serving in the kitchen
- Serving a Sunday meal at the Salvation Army
- Other:

As a group, make a plan to carry out this service together. If you need help getting connected to these service opportunities, call the church office and they will help!

SHARING AND PRAYER (Prayer Requests)

REAL LIFE: Community As It's Meant to Be

“Confess Sin to and Pray for One Another”

James 5:13-16

THE BIG IDEA

Perhaps out of all the mutuality commands we have studied thus far, this one is the riskiest. To confess our sin to and pray for one another is risky business. It forces us to let our guard down, be vulnerable and allow others to see the “real us” without any pretenses or false appearances. The risk is great but so is the potential benefit for us and for the church.

OPEN WITH PRAYER

GETTING STARTED

1. In the space below write your definition of the word “freedom”. Share your definition with your group.

LEARNING & APPLYING GOD'S WORD

2. What are one or two things that you walked away with after Steve's message on Sunday?

Together, read **James 5:13-16**.

3. What do these verses tell us about prayer and about the place of prayer in the church?
4. According to Steve, what is the difference between sin with a capital “S” and sin with a little “s”?
5. Steve said that confession isn't necessarily making a list of all the things we've done wrong as much as it is getting real about who we are and admitting that God is God and we are not God. How is this definition like or unlike your previous definition of confession? Is this definition freeing to you? Why or why not?
6. What benefits are there for us to confess our sin to another person? What can we lose by not confessing our sin to our brothers and sisters in Christ?
7. Why do we often resist admitting our sin to God, others, and ourselves? What makes it risky?

04/02/2009

LIVING OUT “REAL LIFE”

8. Is your RLG a place where you would feel comfortable confessing your sin? Do you want it to be that type of community? What steps do you need to take as a group to arrive at a place where you might feel comfortable with this type of vulnerability?

THE “EXTRA MILE”

9. Who in your life can you confess your sin to and ask for prayer? If you have this person, talk with him or her this week. Confess your sin to that person and ask for prayer.

If you don't have this kind of person in your life, ask God to lead you to that person. If God has called us to this mutuality command, he probably has someone in mind for you to live this out with!

SHARING AND PRAYER (Prayer Requests)

As you enter your time of prayer, remember that confessing our sin to one another and praying for one another go hand-in-hand. If someone is willing to “get real” about their sin in your group, be sure to pray for that person asking God to touch them with his mercy and grace.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

Everything in spiritual community is reversed from the world's order. It is our weakness, not our competence, that moves others; our sorrows, not our blessings, that break down the barriers of fear and shame that keep us apart; our admitted failures, not our paraded successes, that bind us together in hope. A spiritual community, a church, is full of broken people who turn their chairs toward each other because they know that they cannot make it alone.

-From *The Safest Place On Earth* by Larry Crabb

REAL LIFE: Community As It's Meant to Be

"Forgive One Another"

Colossians 3:12-13

THE BIG IDEA

Our greatest need as human beings is forgiveness, that's why God sent us a savior. Both receiving and giving forgiveness is very important. Yet, forgiveness is complex and difficult. Forgiveness may be the most difficult act of love. Perhaps more than with any other "one another" command, we are dependent on God for both receiving forgiveness and giving forgiveness.

OPEN WITH PRAYER

GETTING STARTED

1. What would be your dream vacation?

LEARNING & APPLYING GOD'S WORD

2. What was one new idea you learned about forgiveness from Steve's message?

Together, read **Colossians 3:12-13**.

3. According to verse 13, what is our motivation for forgiving others?
4. Verse 13 says we are to "Forgive as the Lord forgave you." How has the Lord forgave you? What are 4-5 words you would use to describe God's forgiveness to a friend?
5. Steve said that forgiveness is often misunderstood. He listed 3 things forgiveness is not: (1) Forgiveness is not the same thing as excusing (2) Forgiveness is not forgetting (3) Forgiveness is not the same thing as reconciling. Discuss these things that forgiveness isn't. Do you agree with them? Why or why not?
6. Steve also mentioned 3 characteristics of forgiveness: (1) Giving up the right to get even (2) We begin to see not only the hurt that was caused, but the humanity of the person who hurt us (3) You begin to hope the best for the person who hurt you. Discuss these characteristics of forgiveness. Do you agree or disagree with them?

04/02/2009

7. Why is it hard to forgive? What factors make forgiveness especially difficult?
8. What makes it possible to forgive? What is the cost of forgiveness? The cost of unforgiveness?

LIVING OUT “REAL LIFE”

9. Are you in circumstances right now that require forgiveness? What would it mean for you to forgive? What steps should you take?

THE “EXTRA MILE”

10. During your quiet times this next week, ask God to show you if you need to forgive someone or seek forgiveness from another person. Then ask him for the power to do the right thing.

SHARING AND PRAYER (Prayer Requests)

Praying for one another is one of the greatest gifts we can give each other as Christians. Be sure to leave time for praying for one another.

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

I never find forgiveness easy, and rarely do I find it completely satisfying. Nagging injustices remain, and the wounds still cause pain. I have to approach God again and again, yielding to him the residue for what I thought I had committed to him long ago. I do so because the Gospels make clear the connection: God forgives my debts as I forgive my debtors. The reverse is also true: Only by living in the streams of God's grace will I find the strength to respond with grace toward others.

From *What's So Amazing About Grace?* by Philip Yancey

04/02/2009

REAL LIFE: Community As It's Meant to Be

"Forbear One Another"
Ephesians 4:1-3

THE BIG IDEA

The essential meaning of the word forbear is to bear with, to give room to, to give slack to. God is great at giving us forbearance. He calls us to give forbearance to others just as He has given us forbearance.

OPEN WITH PRAYER

GETTING STARTED

1. What three words would you use to describe yourself as a junior higher?
2. If you had to give a couple of sentence summary of Steve's message to a friend, what would you say?

LEARNING & APPLYING GOD'S WORD

Together, read Ephesians 4:1-3

3. According to Ephesians 4:1-3, what are the characteristics of a person who is living a life worthy of the calling that they have received from God?
4. How has God demonstrated forbearance? How has God done that in your life?
5. What does it mean to "give people room" to be who they are? How does humility help us to give others slack?
6. What does it mean to give fellow believers "room to become" what God wills? How does patience help?

04/02/2009

7. Read together Philippians 1:6. How does this verse help us to forbear with others?
8. When was a time when you failed or erred and someone offered you acceptance instead of the condemnation you expected? How did this affect you?

LIVING OUT "REAL LIFE"

9. How can forbearance play an important part in the fellowship of your Real Life Group? What are some very real ways that you can bear with one another?

THE "EXTRA MILE"

10. Is there someone in your life that just annoys the heck out of you? How can you demonstrate forbearance to that person this week?

SHARING AND PRAYER (Prayer Requests)

-
-
-
-
-

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

What does it mean to accept someone? It is a remarkable action, difficult to define, yet unmistakable when we experience it. To accept people is to be for them. It is to recognize that it is a very good thing that these people are alive, and to long the best for them. It does not, of course, mean to approve of everything they do. It means to continue to want the best for them no matter what they do.

-John Ortberg

REAL LIFE: Community As It's Meant to Be

"Admonish One Another"

Colossians 3:16; Matthew 18:15-22

THE BIG IDEA: God calls us into community where we confront one another directly, honestly, and lovingly.

OPEN WITH PRAYER

GETTING STARTED

1. If your neighbor asked you to summarize Greg's sermon in one sentence, what would you say?
2. How did you respond to his message of admonishing one another? Did it feel challenging, comforting, or something else?

LEARNING & APPLYING GOD'S WORD

Together, read Colossians 3:16 and Matthew 18:15-22

Note: In Colossians 3:16, *admonish* means to "instruct," "correct," "set right," or "gently reprove." In Matthew 18:15-18, Jesus tells us how we ought to admonish one another.

3. Last week Steve said that admonishing always works best within a community or friendship where there is forbearance and acceptance. How is forbearance critical for admonishing?
4. Why is admonishing one another so difficult? Have you seen it done poorly or done well?
5. Read the Dietrich Bonhoeffer quote below. Do you think it's true? If so, why do people often practice "cruel leniency" in refusing to confront or admonish one another?
6. Greg talked about Jesus' words and how they prevent us from triangulation in relationships. Why is it so easy to triangulate? How does Jesus keep us from triangulation in Matthew 18:15-18?
7. In Matthew 18:21-22, why does Jesus remind Peter that forgiveness is critical in admonition?

8. Using Jesus' words in Matthew 18:15-22, what does the combination of admonishing (or confronting) and forgiveness look like in Christian community?

LIVING OUT "REAL LIFE"

9. How can you admonish one another in your Real Life Group? What are some good guidelines for admonishing? What are some things to avoid?

THE "EXTRA MILE"

10. Is there someone you have to confront and/or admonish and you're not willing to do it? How can this group help you take that step with love and forbearance?

SHARING AND PRAYER (Prayer Requests)

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

*Nothing can be more cruel than the leniency which abandons others to their sin.
Nothing can be more compassionate than the severe reprimand which calls
another Christian in one's community back from the path of sin.*

20th century German theologian and Christian martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer

REAL LIFE: Community As It's Meant to Be

"Stir Up One Another"

Hebrews 10:24-25

THE BIG IDEA: Inertia is perhaps the greatest obstacle to living the abundant life Christ wants us to experience. We need other people in our lives to challenge us out of our comfort zones.

OPEN WITH PRAYER

GETTING STARTED

1. What was one of the biggest risks you ever took? What was the outcome?

LEARNING & APPLYING GOD'S WORD

Together, read Hebrews 10:24-25

2. Our mutuality command for this week is *stir up* one another. The word for *stir up* is also translated as *spur* or *provoke*. In the Greek language the was used to describe the effects of a high fever, things like frenzy or delirium. The New Testament applies the term to how people influence each other. What do you think it means to *stir up* one another?
3. Last week Greg taught about admonishing one another. How is stirring up one another different from admonishing one another? How are they similar?
4. Steve outlined some steps to take in stirring up one another. What are these steps?
5. Why is it important to have people in your life who can regularly stir you up?
6. What is the problem of *comfort zone Christianity*? Why is it easy to fall into this comfort zone? Can you identify the comfort zones of your life? Of our church?

03/20/2009

LIVING OUT "REAL LIFE"

7. Are you a person who tends to settle into routine and not take chances? Or, are you someone who always likes to always step out of your comfort zone?
8. How can you begin to apply this command? How can your Real Life Group? How can our church?

SHARING AND PRAYER (Prayer Requests)

03/28/2009

REAL LIFE: Community As It's Meant to Be

"Love One Another"

John 13:34-35

THE BIG IDEA: Today we wrap up our series on community. God has created us for community. We need each other. We need each other to make it through the storms of life. We need each other to get beyond ourselves, to learn to get our eyes off ourselves and serve others. We need each other to live the big Christian life.

OPEN WITH PRAYER

GETTING STARTED:

1. Have you ever experienced Christian community as it's meant to be? Describe the situation. Why was this situation unique as compared to other situations you have experienced? What factors contributed to the members of the group experiencing deep community, or *koinonia*?

LEARNING & APPLYING GOD'S WORD

Together, read John 13:34-35

2. Briefly re-cap Steve's message for those who haven't heard it yet. (And remember, you can always listen on the web!)
3. How can community help us when we experience the storms of life?
4. Jesus said "Love one another as I have loved you." What are some of the characteristics of *agape* love that Steve mentioned in his message? In what mutuality commands is this self-giving love most clearly demonstrated?
5. Do you agree with Steve's statements that the Gospel has big promises but also big demands? What are some of the big promises of the gospel? What are some of the big demands? How do we help each other believe the promises and fulfill the demands?
6. Steve said "Community is where we experience God's love and power most clearly." Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

03/28/2009

LIVING OUT "REAL LIFE"

We want to encourage you to spend some time evaluating your past 10 weeks together as a RLG by discussing the following questions:

7. What are some new truths about community that you have discovered or learned anew during these past 10 weeks?
8. What are a few things you have most appreciated about your RLG experience?
9. What could be better? Do you have any suggestions as to how to improve you RLG?

SHARING AND PRAYER (Prayer Requests)