

Present Yourself: Part 2 - Loving Community

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[0 : 00] Okay. Am I on? Hey, yes. Sorry. Just, I'm excited because, one, you're all here, and that's really cool. Happy to see you. Thanks for being here. But we were just having a little bit of wondering if this mic was going to work, so it looks like the demons got exercised, so we're good to go. All right. That's awesome.

Again, thanks for being here. First-timers, so glad that you're with us. The start of 2019, it's an awesome privilege to be together, start out strongly, coming together.

And if you are listening to this later on during the week, you're on vacation still, you're away on deployment or training or sick, wherever it may be, we hope that you have an opportunity to listen to this online or on the podcast and find it beneficial and staying connected in with us. But we also just look forward to seeing you in person once you're back.

Okay. Last week, we looked at the privilege that we have as believers in Christ because of what God has done to present ourselves to God.

Right? His presence. The fact that we get to go into his presence is a gift of grace. He made a way through his son Jesus to come back to him. And we looked at how there's two big motivators. There's fear and there's love.

[1 : 11] And sin, what it does, it makes us afraid of God. It makes us want to run from him in guilt and shame. But God's gracious love overcomes our sin. It removes our fear and calls and brings us back into his presence where we experience his love.

But love and fear, it doesn't just affect our relationship with God, right? It doesn't affect just how we act, think, and relate to God. It also affects how we act, think, and relate to others. See, sin compels us to run and hide from the other great gift that God made us for, which is community.

Last week we looked about how when Adam and Eve sinned, their natural reaction was to run and hide from God instead of presenting themselves to him when he came. And they did, before they even hid from God, what did they do?

They sowed fig leaves and they hid themselves from each other, right? And so we see sin does that. Sin doesn't make us want to push into relationship. It makes us want to pull ourselves away from relationship.

And today what we're going to do is we're going to look at what it means to present ourselves in community. So you might be thinking, hey, Jess, I got you covered. I got friends. I've got family.

[2 : 22] I'm good to go. I'm all set. But I would ask you don't check out, right? I would ask you to lean in a little bit because I guarantee you the passage that we're going to look at, we're going to look into God's design of community.

And it's going to open our eyes. I think it will. It's going to challenge us. I think we'll see something more real and more deep and more interesting than what we think we know about community. And before I jump into proving this, I realize that there are two presuppositions that I'm working from that you guys need to know about.

These are the two underlying truths from which I am saying this is why I believe what community is. And the first one is this, right? I'm a Christian, so I believe in God and I believe what he says about himself according to the Christian faith.

And this is what the Christian faith believes. God is one God, but he's three persons of one God. He's three persons. So that means God is a community himself. God is a perfect community.

He's the perfect eternal community of love, right? The second presupposition is that humanity, we are all made in God's image. At the beginning of Genesis, he says, let's go.

[3 : 26] Let us, plural, go make man in our image and in our likeness. And it said he created them male and female. And that's what he did. And so we said, according to that, God's community.

He made us like him. And so he made us for community. In fact, he made us to bring us into that perfect community of love of Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit that we get to experience. And therefore, we see that from the get-go, who we are as people is that we are people made for community.

We are wired that way. God made us that way. It's built into our very nature and DNA. And it's why we are people that long for community. And this is why Genesis 2 is such a powerful example.

And if you have your Bible with you, you can turn to Genesis 2, verse 18. We're going to get there in a second. Because it shows us God, the community builder and community designer, and how he made community and what he intended it to be.

It is, we're going to see, the most authentic person-to-person community before sin came in and interrupted and destroyed and broke everything. And again, when we look at what was lost because of sin, we get to look at what God is renewing through Jesus' redemption, right?

[4 : 35] That's what Jesus came. He came to restore and to renew what is lost. And by God's grace, we're going to look at how we now get to present ourselves in community. So Genesis 2, verse 18, let's begin.

Then the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him. At this point, Adam was all by himself. There was no Eve, right? Now, out of the ground, the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them.

And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens, to every beast of the field. But for Adam, there was not found a helper fit for him.

So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man. And while he slept, took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man, he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

Then the man said, This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

[5 : 43] And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. Now, this is a really common, popular text to use during wedding ceremonies, right? And it is a great text to learn about God's design, desire, and purpose for marriage.

But it is more than just that. It's more than just a marriage primer, right? It lets us in on what real, authentic community looks like. When you think about your life, think about this.

Think about your life. Who are your close companions? Who are your friends? Now, why are they your friends? What brings you together?

And what keeps your friendship together? See, what we often pass for community today, I would call companionship. And I think the Bible would consider just companionship.

But community isn't companionship. Community is deeper than companionship. So you think companionship is defined as this, the enjoyment of spending time with other people. Companionship, man, it could be a great thing.

[6 : 45] And companionship can solve our loneliness problem, right? I don't like to be lonely. I want to be with people and enjoy people that are like me, that we share interests in, all that kind of stuff.

But companionship can solve that loneliness problem. Only community can solve our aloneness problem. God didn't look at Adam and say, you know, it's not good that Adam's lonely. No, no. He said, no, it's not good that Adam is alone.

Community solves our aloneness problem. It's fascinating. We'll look at this text that God brings first all the animals to Adam to name them. And then it says something very interesting. I want to draw our attention to verse 20.

The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens, to every beast of the field. But for Adam, there was not found a helper fit for him. See, a friend, a person can be a faithful companion.

But you know what else? A dog can be a faithful companion too, right? In fact, a dog, dogs make way better companions, if you think about it. They're less opinionated.

[7 : 48] They obey our commands sometimes. They're easier to care for. They're super loyal. We can be absolute jerks to them, and they stick by our side and never challenge us.

If we're looking for the perfect human companion, the perfect human friend, that's what we'd really want, right? In fact, if you think about the show Friends, which is all about friends, what does it present to us?

It presents to us this friendship that looks a lot like cheerleading without any real challenge. See, our sinful nature, it doesn't want community that challenges us. We just want companions that are there to cheer all our decisions and all our choices.

We'd much rather prefer that, wouldn't we? Our cultural moment today, when it speaks to us, it's saying the big message is, man, you be you. You be you. And surround yourself with people that's going to support that and cheer you on to that end no matter what.

Think about what that reduces our relationships to. It puts me on the throne and requires all those around me to be my loyal subjects, right?

[8 : 56] I get to be my autonomous authority saying, this is who I need to be, and you don't get to challenge me and tell me otherwise. You just have to support me and cheer me on no matter what. That's why so many sociologists and psychologists today consider our present generation to be one of the most prideful and vain generations ever.

We are constantly connected to one of the most dangerous vehicles of narcissism that has ever existed, right? Our phones. They offer all these things, social media platforms that we can get into.

I'm not implying that social media is bad on its own merit. No, it can be used for good, but if we're honest with ourselves, we would agree that, man, what it is and what people use it for, it's really just promulgating a generation that's becoming more and more self-centered.

We get to post the best version of ourselves to our friends who can like and comment on how amazing we are, right? We get to constantly put our best foot forward, our most edited version of ourselves so people can like.

And our gluttonous egos are being overfed at this social media buffet. But God's community, we look at it and it's so much different to that, right? It's so much different. It said Adam needed a helper, not a companion, not a companion that would root him on and cheer on his personal greatness and self-actualization.

[10 : 22] Now think about it. Think about what that says. It said Adam needed a helper. You know what that means? That means community humbles us and makes us realize our need for each other.

Now this gets confusing because we often look at relationships and we see a lot of hierarchy throughout them, right? The Bible said husbands are meant to lead their wives, their homes.

Parents are meant to lead their kids. Pastors lead a church. You have community group leaders in our church that are leading their group, right? And doesn't that make the people at the top more important than those below them?

And maybe so in our sinful world. That's kind of what we gravitate to when we look at hierarchies like that. But that isn't how God designed community. In verse 21, it says, The Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man.

While he slept, he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man, he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Have you ever stopped to wonder, if you're familiar with this story, or maybe it's your first time hearing it, have you ever stopped to wonder why God chose the rib?

[11 : 31] Right? Man, why didn't God just clip Adam's toenail or pull one of his hairs if he just needed a DNA sample to make Eve from, right? He could have done that. Or he could have simply, like he did with Adam, he could have made Eve from the dust of the ground.

But he didn't. He pulled out from the side of Adam one of his ribs. And many theologians believe that the reason God did it this way and he took from Adam's side is to point out that true community is standing together side by side, not one over the other.

See, we're called to help each other. We're called to love each other. We're called to care for each other. And it says that God, he took it from the side. He formed Eve and that he brought her to him, right? Community is this gift.

Community is this thing of God bringing us all together. Not that you chose our church or God chose, you know, I chose you to be here or anything like that. It's like, man, we're here because we're a gift to one another.

Community is a gift. Community is a thing God creates and God brings together. It's a beautiful thing. And then when you think about, like, the relationships that we can have within community, Jesus takes it even a step further and he talks about how what it looks like for leaders in his community, his kingdom community, right?

[12 : 45] He says, man, if you're going to be a leader, what it looks like, it means that you are a servant to everybody. So we think, you know, the world says, like, okay, there's different relationships.

There's those who are important, those who are less important, right? And God flips that on his head. If you think you're important, you've got to be down here. You've got to be serving and supporting everyone else.

So the world places leaders above everyone else. Jesus' kingdom places leaders below everyone else. God didn't make community to exist with people clamoring for the top to be the most important, to be the king of the hill.

We're meant to stand side by side together under God's authority, under his love, under his grace, under his rule. God looks at us and he sees us equally in value, each one of us.

That means that we don't see ourselves as more than others and we don't see ourselves as less as others. Both of those are sinful distortions that negatively affect our relationship and ruin community.

[13 : 45] See, when I feel too important, I tend to think that I don't need others. And when I do that, I pull away from community. But when I feel unnecessary, the same thing happens.

I feel that I'm not needed. And so, well, if people don't need me, I'm just going to pull away from community as well. See? Both of those fight against what God's wanting to create, a community that he's bringing together, a community of love, and the distortions are, you know what?

You're too important. You don't need other people. Or the other distortion is, you're not important enough. Just bow out. Tap out. Nobody needs you. But in God's community, we're mutually dependent on each other.

Community isn't independence. Community isn't codependence. Community is interdependence, where we realize our need for one another and our dependence upon one another.

A great example of this just happened. If you guys know, Robin and Diane Rice, they lead a community group. And last Sunday, suddenly Diane's sister, Jackie, passed away.

[14 : 51] I was with Robin sitting at 9 a.m., me and a few other guys. And he got the call very suddenly. And as he was running out, we hugged him, prayed for him. And then they hit the road. And it was amazing.

I was talking to Robin on Thursday. And he said, man, Jess, I just, I can't tell you just how blessed we are by the community of One Harbor, the care that they receive.

Their community, my community group, somehow found a way to get us dinner all the way down in Florida. They had clubbed together. And they had figured out, you know what? We're going to support them and love them whatever way we can.

Why don't we just get them dinner? And they just felt so loved and cared for and appreciated by that, you know? A dog can be an excellent companion, but a dog can't express genuine love, care, and empathy like that, right?

I mean, we need each other. It doesn't matter who we are in the church. It doesn't matter what role we play in God's kingdom. There are no small people. There are no small roles. We need each other.

[15 : 49] I need you. You need me, right? And together, we're one big happy family. All right. Now, it's really easy. I hope we see now that we need each other.

And that is a huge step toward getting into and being a part of real, authentic community. But I would hold out to you. That is a first big step, but I want to say it's not the hardest step.

Man, I would say the hardest step is this one, to present who we really are to each other, to present the real, authentic person of who we are. Community is meant to be a safe place to present the real you.

Verse 24, it says, Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. Now, this scripture, people often think it's talking about physical intimacy, and it's not.

It's describing the way we are meant to relate to one another in community. This idea of being naked and unashamed means this. It means that I so fully trust the people around me that I don't need to hide myself from them.

[17 : 01] I don't need to hide who I really am. And that is what it means to present yourself into community. Now, it's easy to live behind pretense.

In fact, I would say it's more natural for us to do that. We've learned through life that people can hurt and wound us. So then, if that's the case, why trust them? This is probably one of the most difficult parts of presenting ourselves to community.

See, we can give ourselves to helping each other, to serving one another, to be busy about doing those kind of things. We can be committed to giving our time and being present. But until we are willing to take off our masks and to trust each other with our real authentic selves, we don't have gospel-centered community.

We're not experiencing gospel-centered community. We're not stepping into that design, that original design that God had meant and that Jesus is restoring it, what he's redeemed and brought back to us.

And what he means for his church and how we're meant to relate to one another. And can I be honest? I get why we don't do that. I totally get that. Heck, I find it extremely hard to trust people.

[18 : 10] I do. That's my personality. I want to present a certain image of myself to others. I want people to see me in a certain way. It looks more like an impressive statue of a general on a horse.

That's how I want people to see me. It looks a lot more like this. Right? And you might think like, Jesse, ha, ha, ha, that's really funny. Honestly, that is, if I'm honest with myself, this is how I wish people would see me all the time.

Some conquering, amazing hero who's worthy of a statue exalted at some square, right? You can take that down now. Thank you. Man, I so want you to be impressed with me all the time.

I so want my wife and my kids to be impressed with me all the time. I so live for the praise of man. But then there's the real me, right?

There's the real you. I'm afraid. I'm anxious. I'm moody. I'm sinful. I'm lust-filled. I'm bitter. I'm begrudging. I'm lazy. I'm confident. I'm petty. And before you run out the door thinking like, you are not worthy to be a pastor of a church, trust me, this list is just like a short part of all the things that I am, that God's working on in my life.

[19 : 23] Those are the parts that I don't like to confess and bring into the light and show to others. I'm so tempted to just keep putting up this false image and trying to create this false image, this false statue, that makes me look heroic and honorable and dignified.

But that's not the real me. And that doesn't lead me into experiencing God's grace and understanding God's grace. And you know what? If I lead that way, it's not going to help you be free to understand and experience and be yourself so that you can be transformed by God's grace as well.

So you can experience God's grace one-to-one with God in your own personal relationship with God. You can. And I want to add this. You can experience his grace through his community.

And I can say this with integrity from what the Bible says and through personal experience. When I've presented myself, the real me, to community and received grace in return, when I've said this is who I am and now I know that I'm fully known and I wasn't shunned, I wasn't shamed, I wasn't made to feel guilty, but I was received with grace and acceptance, man, I experienced breakthroughs in understanding and knowing God's grace.

And at this time, I want to call up and let you hear a story that's not my story. Blake and Brooke, if you guys, where are you guys at? And they're going to talk about their story of healing through experiencing authentic community.

[20 : 50] I'm going to have that. Just Blake and Brooke Taylor, by way of introduction, they are community group leaders.

But before they became that, I just, they had to go through a process of learning how to trust community again and receive healing. So just a brief, give us a brief thing on how you guys landed in the Mercers community group.

Okay. So six and a half years ago, Blake and I, we got married and we moved to this area because of jobs that we had. And we actually were in a church.

Blake was on pastoral staff there. And after being there probably about a year and a half, two years, we, it was just made clear to us that we kind of needed to move on and that we needed to leave. And just a long story short, when we left, we were really broken, bitter, just really hurt and felt really alone.

And just not in a good place. And we stayed that way for several months. And then I think after we'd been gone maybe for about five, six months, just a mutual friend said, hey, there's a couple I want you guys to meet.

[22 : 08] You just, you need this couple in your life. And so they set it up and they introduced us to Freddie and Rebecca Mercer. And they just, they came over to our house one day for lunch.

We had never met them before. Yeah, talk about like, that could be awkward. But it really wasn't. If you know Freddie and Rebecca, they were just so great. They, after talking with us for five minutes, they asked us to be a part of their community.

Great. Also, if you know them, you know they're going to do that to you after they meet you. And at that time, Blake was working like a retail job. And he knew like he wouldn't be able to attend and stuff.

And I was just thinking like, uh-uh, not doing it. Not going by myself. I don't know anyone. And Blake was like, of course, Brooke would love to go, you know, before I could say anything. And I was thinking like, okay, well, it's a few days away.

I'm not going to go. And they got our numbers. Rebecca, you know, texted us and was like, it's going to be fine. So that first night I went. And I think it was like probably like dry even in the car on the way there.

[23 : 10] I was so nervous. And I was like, I can't believe I'm doing this, putting myself in this situation. Like it's going to be so awkward. I don't know anyone. And then we went and it was fine. And we met the Deeses and some other families that are just such dear friends.

And I just remember like going home that night. And Blake was asking me, he's like, how was it? You know, like you didn't die. Like you're fine. And I just told him, I remember like having tears in my eyes and saying, you know what?

They were just real. And looking back, like just hearing just the sermon and stuff, like for the first time in my life, I saw and was able to experience like that real gospel center community for the first time.

And I longed for that. And I wanted it so badly. And so, you know, long story short, we ended up, you know, going and continuing to go. And I think that brings us like.

Yeah. Yeah. So I guess my next question for you guys, what was kind of what were the process God brought you through the big moments that led to your healing that led to you start trusting community again, being in a community group?

[24 : 18] And now you guys are leading one. Yeah. So I think the biggest like trigger for me in the beginning was knowing that Brooke was taken care of. Even though I wasn't far away and I was just working a job where it didn't make sense.

It wasn't feasible for me to be there. Knowing that she had found something that she was longing for was a big deal to me. And it made me realize that I was longing for the same thing. And I didn't know it.

There was a void in my life for genuine gospel community that I didn't know was there. And during this time when we were walking through a lot of the things that we were walking through, I was recommended a book called Redemption by Mike Wilkerson.

If you remember our sermon series to Exodus, a lot of his material kind of came up in those sermons. And I just remember studying through that book. And when I got to Exodus chapter 14, the children of Israel are about to cross the Red Sea.

And Moses looks at the children of Israel there in verse 14. And, you know, Moses has no idea what's on the other side. They're facing the Red Sea. The Egyptians are coming behind them. And Moses just says, just stand still and God will fight for you.

[25 : 18] And at a time in my life when I needed to hear that, because fear is going to cause you to do two things. Fear is going to cause you either one to turn around and run. And honestly, that's where I wanted to be. I didn't want to be a part of a church anymore.

We had become like church hurt, if you will, for lack of better words. I didn't want to be involved in the community. I didn't want people to know the real me. I didn't want to do that. Because for so long I had kept my mask on and I was okay with that.

And when I began to realize that, number one, my fear was either causing me to run or it was causing me to become impatient and try to take things into my own hands. And that's where I was picking up that mask.

I wasn't taking off the mask and laying it down. My fear was causing me to put up walls. And within those groups just week after week of just seeing just what genuine gospel community was about.

And we were introduced to Haley and Jesse and just continuing the process of getting to One Harbor. How we just continued to see God's grace just move through something that we didn't know that we were missing in our lives. And God just really began to just break those chains that were binding us.

[26 : 15] Again, I'm not even sure that at the time I knew they were chains that were holding us back. But as we were just constantly involved and surrounded by people who were letting us know that it was okay to not be okay.

We didn't have to put up a facade. It didn't matter. God loved us in spite. And it just really began, God really just began to chip away at a lot of the hurt and the anger and the bitterness that we were holding on to.

Again, a lot of it we didn't realize that we were holding on to it. And so when we started coming to One Harbor, they just, again, just added to the healing process of our life.

And we were in a holding pattern, if you will. I think in the beginning we were a little bit upset, man. We wanted to lead a community group because it had been so valuable to us. But we just kept getting the pause button. And I see now that God was still healing us and still getting us to that point where we could stand and lead a group and say, you know what?

In our group and in these groups, it's okay to not be okay. And that's not an easy thing to get to. You know, if I could challenge you with anything on that, it would just be to go in with that mindset.

[27 : 17] Take that mindset in. It took us two and a half years to learn that, that we could just lay down our mask and be real with these people. But here, it's okay to not be okay.

And in a community group, you know, it's okay to not be okay on a Sunday morning. But when you're surrounded by 12 to 14 people who love you and who know the ins and outs, I tell our community group all the time, iron sharpens iron.

But there's also friction sometimes that comes with that iron. So you get to see the good and the bad, you know. We don't get to pick whose mess we step into and whose mess we don't. God just works through all of those things and just drives genuine gospel community and just drives us together and allows us to be real.

And it's scary. Sometimes it can even be a little bit awkward. But I'm telling you, the benefits of that far outweigh any of the fear or resentment that I ever carried for just laying that mask down.

Cool. Just a final thing, man. Any encouragement that you guys can give to those of us that are in community and those of us who aren't in community right now? Yeah. So I would say to those who are in a community group, yeah, just keep pressing in and just, you know, be those life-giving people for other members in your community group.

[28 : 30] You know, we just going to community group each week wasn't really, like, the, I mean, it helped and it was a healing process. But really, it was, like, the members in the community group just texting throughout the week, like, being part of our lives and stuff was just, you know, having a relationship with us and stuff.

So there may be someone going in your community group that's going through a hard time. There may not be. Just look for those people that you can just really, like, press into and just be genuine with and real with.

And then for those who aren't in a community group and you're thinking about it, you know, you may be wondering, like, do I really want to, you know, go through the hassle? It's awkward.

Do I want to make the time? Like, I understand that. But I really believe that you would benefit and that you would just, and when you experience that gospel-centered community, that you would just, you know, just be freed from just kind of, and also it's just talking and hearing the sermon.

So if we're not meant to do this alone, and so, like, just life is hard. Even if you're not going through, like, a hard time, everyday life is hard. I totally know that. We just, we have a newborn, and so we are just in one of those, like, everyday life is hard right now.

[29 : 44] And just the community that we have behind us and stuff just makes that just so much more easy. And, yeah, it just helps, you know, us just keep sight of what's really important, and that's just, like, pointing each other and our community to Jesus.

Yeah, I'd echo what Brooke said. As far as if you are in community, just be those life-giving people. Look for those people in your group. You know, again, there's going to be mess, and there's going to be greatness.

Yes. And gospel community, we aren't meant to decide which one we want to be a part of. We get to be a part of all of it. And we get to be a part of the mess. It sounds kind of counterintuitive, but it actually, when you can see brokenness and just healing come when you're involved in that, man, it's such a blessing to be a part of that.

And if you're not in community, again, I'm probably not the guy to be saying this. I am a closeted introvert is what I call myself. So community groups, like, for me, like, I get it.

I get the tension of, especially if you're walking into a community group where you don't know anyone, I, you know, run to that tension and embrace it because I can promise you, the people that are in that community group, they want to be there for you.

[30 : 58] They want to love you. They want to open their homes to you, their hearts, and they want to open their lives to you. And that's the beautiful part of community is we get to see each and everybody's life, and we get to point them back to Jesus.

In the good times, which is a lot easier to point people to Jesus when things are going great, you know, but even in those hard times, even in the darkness, as Haley was talking about earlier, we get to point people to Jesus in those times.

And it's so much easier to do that in a gospel-centered community when you have a rally of troops around you that are there for you and who want to see you succeed and who are telling you that it's okay to not be okay, but they're not forgetting the ultimate reason, and that's pointing you back to Jesus.

Cool. All right. Thanks, guys. Appreciate it. All right. Let's give them a hand. Thank you.

Thank you.

[32 : 40] Thank you. Thank you. And that spills over into the rest of your life.

So it's phone calls. It's keeping up with texts. It's checking in. It's different things like that. Okay? So I just want to encourage you guys for that before I move on. So hopefully we've seen by comparison to companionship, community seems a lot harder, and it is.

It absolutely is. Community will cost you, but you will be richer for it. In Genesis 2, when we looked at what happened, it cost Adam a rib, right? Literally, it cost him a rib.

And again, it said a man must leave and hold fast. There's a cost implied to that, what he has to do, right? When we have to be a part of community, it means we have to let go of something to hold fast to another thing, right?

We have to look at our calendars and we have to say, okay, what is standing in the way of me living life with people, sharing my life with people. And some of those things are legitimate things.

[34 : 06] Some of those things are not legitimate things that we could shave off and say, okay, now that I have more time to give to people, to be a part of people, to be in people's lives and to be together with them in a real meaningful way.

And not only costs Adam a rib, it costs him a surgery, right? It's hurtful. Sometimes it costs in pain and sometimes it costs in losing things that we don't have control over.

And you know what? We live in an age. We live in an age where we expect to get what we want fairly easily. And our Western world, it sets us up for that.

Credit cards and loans help us to buy what we want right now. You know, gone are the days where you had to like save up for something before you actually bought it. We live in what has been called the porn generation.

Sorry to be crass. But this affects our carnal gratification and our lust and what we desire, right? It's instantaneously accessible and costs us nothing.

[35 : 06] We're allowed no-fault divorces. If you get bored or tired of your spouse, you don't have to try to work it out. You can turn it in like a car lease and get a newer, better version, a newer, better model.

But God's community, man, it doesn't work that way, right? You don't get to call the shots. We don't get to run away whenever it isn't working for us anymore. We don't get to spread the love around church hopping from one church to another, consuming the various styles and flavors of what different churches and their meetings can give to us, all the while keeping people at a distance, not pressing in and presenting ourselves to community.

God community, his gospel community, what he calls us to, what he sent Jesus to earth to redeem, man, it is a costly but a beautiful thing. You have to put in your pound of flesh.

If you think of what it cost Adam, it cost him a rib. It costs us. You have to put your commitment and your yes on the table. It's deep partnership. It's deep fellowship with each other.

That idea of fellowship is talked about like there's a knitting together of who we are. There's a oneness that God brings us together with. It's not a consumer relationship with how we understand things.

[36 : 16] It's not transactional, you do for me, I do for you. It's a covenant relationship. It's saying no matter what you do, I'm committed to loving you and caring for you and serving you.

That's what God's community of people is supposed to be like and how we're supposed to care for each other and relate to one another and think about each other and act toward one another. But then how do we do that?

How do we do that when we know there are churches with toxic doctrine, toxic leadership, and toxic relationships, right? That is a reality. And I would say first that those are exceptions that prove the rule.

And I want to say to you, if you've come out of those situations or are currently in that type of situation, man, I would ask that you would carefully walk that through with God and come to him with it.

Ask him what it looks like to leave that place well and if it's time for you to leave, right? But leave that well. And if available to you, reach out for some wise counsel to help you through that.

[37 : 15] And if you've come out of any of those toxic places, environments, you're probably going to have some PTSD when it comes to community. I totally get that. Our motivation, my motivation isn't to manipulate you into being committed as quickly as possible so that we can feel good about, like, you know, how many people are in community groups and all those measures of success.

That isn't our measure of success. I want you to know that this is a place where you can be and belong and just heal. Just heal from that PTSD and move towards community by God's grace.

That's what we want for you. But I also want to encourage you, the greatest healing from bad community that you've experienced is experiencing healthy community. I can teach you all about community today.

But, you know, these things are better caught than taught sometimes. And the only way you can catch that is just being in healthy, good community. I grew up in a family.

My parents didn't have a good relationship. They got divorced. I wasn't shown what a good, healthy marriage looked like. And I was taught a lot about marriage in church. But you know what helped me the most is being around healthy marriages.

[38 : 23] That's what helped me to learn what it looks like to be a good husband. What it meant to love my wife in a covenantal, self-sacrificing way, unselfish way.

I had to see that. I had to learn it that way. So community. Community, it's going to cost us all something. It's costly to every single one of us. It costs us time. It costs us energy.

It costs us money. It means denying what we want for the sake of others. But you know what? In the end, we receive more than we give. Just like our relationship with God. What we give for the sake of community is nothing in comparison to what God gave to bring us back into his community.

Jesus died so we could be restored into God's community. God formed the first community by piercing Adam's side and took of a rib. God brought us back and made a new community in him, in Jesus, because Jesus' side was pierced.

His body was broken. His blood was shed for us. Jesus paid it all. We are a blood-bought community purchased by him who gave it all.

[39 : 31] If you're here and you're not a Christian, I want to say Jesus is calling you to join this rich community of love called the church, to be a part of it. This takes faith. You don't have to earn your way in.

It just takes faith in him. Faith that through Jesus' death and resurrection, your sins are forgiven. And you are called back into a relationship with God and with his people.

Now, if you're here and you are a Christian, man, I want you to remind, I want to remind you of this amazing privilege that we get. That we get to be a part of God's community.

That he called us out of something and into something. He called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. He called us out of isolation and aloneness and all those things into this amazing community of love.

A community of grace and forgiveness of truth and love. It's a place where we can grow up in Christ together, where we get to share our lives. We're both known fully and we get to know others fully.

[40 : 31] And I want to encourage you, if you're here today, you're not in a community group yet, man, this is a great step for you. This first step, man, just sign up and commit to joining and getting into one of these groups.

Commit to being part of something that's deep and meaningful and real. And as we come to take communion, let's consider what it took for God to renew his community. The privilege of community was paid in Christ's blood.

It's a place where broken relationships are healed because Jesus' body was broken for us. It's a place where our sins against each other can be forgiven. It's a place where we can come without guilt or shame and repent when we sin against one another.

And we can all do that because of Jesus' blood that was shed for us. The Bible says that through Jesus, we are one body. We have one faith, one Lord, one baptism held together by one spirit, which holds us together in the bonds of peace.

And today, if you are a believer in all this, man, I invite you to come to take a piece of bread and a cup. And what we're going to do is we're going to take it back to our seats. And what we're going to do is we're going to take communion together as one body, as a signal of the oneness that we have in Christ.

[41 : 50] So come and grab some bread. Grab a cup. Come and just wait. And we're going to do this together. I'm going to lead us in that. Okay? Thank you. Thank you.