

Abide in Me

John 15:4
*Bible studies for disciples
who make disciples*



Volume 9 - Number 13

The Week of January 28, 2024

A Strategy for Sanity
The Power of Community
Selected Texts

Spiritually healthy people crave community. It is possible to practice a handful of spiritual habits like Bible reading, prayer, and mindfulness all alone. Even public worship can become a private experience—just between you and God. But the Christian life is not a solo act. It is not intended to be lived out in isolation. Immediately following the explosive infusion of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, the newly baptized believers were gathering with one another for fellowship (see Acts 2:42 below where the word fellowship or *koinonia* is used). Without fellowship, all the spiritual habits we practice can lead to spiritual illness. We become spiritually anemic without community. Community is a big deal.

This week's format for the *Abide* will be a little different. You will still reflect on some key passages related to community, but then we want you to practice it. Some of you may be going through the hardest period in your life right now and no one knows it. We want to urge you to drop your guard and open your heart to one another.

READING

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 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

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 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." ~ Hebrews 10:24–25

"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken." ~ Ecclesiastes 4:9–12

"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load." ~ Galatians 6:1–5

REFLECTING

1. The early church was devoted to fellowship (Acts 2). What risk does our church face, and each of us personally, if this area is neglected?
2. Community flows out of worship (Read Hebrews 10:19-23). What kind of fellowship is experienced where Jesus Christ is prized? (vss. 24-25).
3. Read Galatians 6:1-5. How do you square the two statements: "Bear one another's burdens ... For each will have to bear his own load?"

BUILDING

At this stage in your Group's existence, trust and confidentiality are esteemed qualities. As you and others share, please cover all that is expressed accordingly.

1. What have you seen God do lately?
2. What do you feel encouraged about in your spiritual growth right now? Where are you struggling?
3. What's the most important decision you are facing in the near future?

4. What burden have you been carrying by yourself for too long?

5. What hard but hidden battle are you fighting right now?

6. How can we pray for you?

A prayer from George Matheson (1842-1906) a Scottish pastor and hymn writer, who was blind from youth.

Son of Man, give us a common interest in you: it is the only thing that will make us one. Help us through a common love to forget our individual desires. It is my individual desires that make me a dull companion. Often in the social hour I sit silent, not because I am ignorant, but because I am uninterested. Crucify my world, Oh Christ. Crucify my spirit of isolation, my desire to be alone. Give me power to come out from myself into the community of men, into the common love.

