



March 8, 2020 2020 Vision

The Church : We Need Each Other

Portions Adapted From "Why We Need Each Other". 40 Days of Community Part 1 Rick Warren October 2-3, 2004

The Book of Acts reveals for us that God's Mission here on earth is to be carried out by The Church. The Church is the body of true believers who have trusted in Christ as Lord and Savior and have aligned themselves with the Kingdom of God. The Church is composed of those who have been Saved, Filled with the Spirit, Adopted into the Family of God, Gifted, Called, Empowered to Bring Christ to all the world.

The Church should be a "haven, a home, a harbor for those in need; a family for the needy, the lonely; a school for the untaught; a fortress for the fearful; an open door for those who are shut out; offering love for the unloved; peace for those in chaos; acceptance for the rejected; forgiveness for the guilty; hope for the hopeless; bringing light to darkness; giving life for death". (John MacArthur. <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/1284/the-calling-of-the-church>)

SLIDE: As Americans we often emphasize and almost idolize independence. In America we have the Declaration of Independence. We like songs like "I've Got to Be Me," "I'll do it my way," I don't need anybody to tell me what it's all about. We have bought into a myth that says that the key to happiness is independence. If I have relational independence, financial independence, independence in every other area of my life, if I don't let anybody get too close to me but I'm totally self sufficient, then I will be happy. And yet every year the suicide rate tends to rise. Obviously that's not true. God says that the key to happiness is not independence but inter-dependence. We need each other. We belong to each other. We need community in our lives. God wired you to go through life not as a solitary individual but in community.

Acts 1:8... *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

Acts 1:14... *All these were continually united (in one accord) in prayer along with the women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brothers.*

Acts 2:1-4...¹*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.*

Acts 2:38-41 ...³⁸ *"Repent," Peter said to them, "and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call." ⁴⁰ And with many other words he testified and strongly urged them, saying, "Be saved from this corrupt generation!" ⁴¹ So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about 3,000 people were added.*

Acts 2:42-47...⁴² *And they devoted themselves (steadfastly) to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to the prayers.* ⁴³ *Then fear came over everyone, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles.* ⁴⁴ *Now all the believers were together and held all things in common.* ⁴⁵ *They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as anyone had a need.* ⁴⁶ *Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple complex, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with a joyful and humble attitude,* ⁴⁷ *praising God and having favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to them those who were being saved.*

Acts 4:23,24;31-34a...²³ *When they had been released, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them.* ²⁴ *And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord....*³¹ *And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.* ³² *And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.* ³³ *And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.* ³⁴ *For there was not a needy person among them,*

“The Bible says in **Romans 12** “*Since we are all one body in Christ we belong to each other and each of us needs all the others.*” We need each other. (you need me, then, I need you) God says community is not optional. You may not feel it. You may feel like “I'm very self sufficient. I don't need other people in my life.” But the truth is you absolutely have to have other people in your life if you're going to be all God wants you to be.

There's no way you can be all God wants you to be, do all God wants you to do, fulfill the purposes that you were put on this planet to fulfill by yourself. You have to do it in relationship to other people. We need each other and we belong to each other in the body of Christ. We're going to focus on the greatest lesson in life. That is, learning how to love. Why do relationships go bad? How do you turn a bad relationship into a good one? What is it that God does when He uses other people in our lives and how does He do it to make us what He wants us to be? So we're going to discuss and discover what it really means to develop true, intimate relationships.

Today I want to give you a little introduction. We're going to look at why we need each other. Why we need God's family specifically the five reasons God says you need other people in your life and why you need a small group.

1. We need others to WALK with us.

What does that mean? It means I need you to help me grow spiritually. **Colossians 2:6-7** says “*Just as you received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk in Him.*” Did you know that the Bible often compares life to a walk? Why? Because you're on a journey. You don't just sit still in life. You're not where you used to be. You're not where you're going to be. You're on a journey. So it calls the spiritual life, the Christian life, a walk. Throughout the New Testament we're told to walk in wisdom, to walk in love, to walk in light. We're told to walk in obedience, in the Spirit, walk as Jesus walked. Many, many other ways the Bible tells us that we are to live life.

But one of the key ways that God tells us to walk is this: you were never meant to walk through life alone. This has nothing to do with whether you're single or married. Nothing at all. We have thousands of single adults in our church who are very involved in deep, intimate, meaningful community. We also have married couples in our church who are desperately lonely. Marriage does not solve the issue. Community does”. (R. Warren)

“Some of you say, “what’s wrong with walking alone? I like waking alone. In fact, I prefer it. I can go at my own pace, my own speed. I don’t have to wait for anybody. Whatever. I like walking alone.” You may like it but you need others to walk with you.

Let me give you three reasons.

1. It’s safer. Walking through life with other people in your life is safer. It’s less risky. Have you ever had to walk through a dark alley at night in the inner city by yourself? It’s a little scary. Or a walk down a long road in the countryside by yourself. It can be scary. It’s safer to walk through life with others.

2. It’s supportive. What I mean by that is it keeps you from giving up. When you’re walking with other people you get the energy to keep on going that you wouldn’t have. Have you ever been in a marathon where you’re running this marathon and you start getting a stitch in your side, a little pain there and you want to give up. That usually happens about mile twenty! Actually *step* twenty is when it happens to me. Step twenty! You start going, I can’t go on. I’m not going to be able to do this. I want to give up. But if you have other people walking with you, you can keep on going.

There’s an old Zambian proverb that says, “*When you run alone you run fast. But when you run together you run far.*” Good words. Life is not a 50-yard dash. It is a marathon. You want to make it to the end of life. The only way you’re going to make it to the end of life the way God wants you to is by having other people involved in your life.

If you’ve ever watched in the fall when a flock of geese are flying south and they’re in “V” formation. Do you know why they do that? Because it creates an uplift in the back draft and it makes it easier and they can fly farther and longer when they fly together. The same is true in your life. You’re going to burn out in life if you go through it without any meaningful intimate relationships. It’s safer. It’s supportive. Not only that but...

3. It’s smarter. It’s just smarter to go through life with a few really close deep friends. You learn more by walking with others than you do by yourself. **Proverbs 28:26** says “***Only fools trust in what they alone think.***” The Bible tells us “*In a multitude of counselors there is safety.*” One of the things that’s very important that you learn when you walk with others is you learn how to get along with other people. If you go through life isolated, never let anybody get close to you, never cooperate with anybody you don’t learn how to cooperate. The Bible says this in **Genesis 2:18** “***It is not good for man to be alone.***” That’s the first thing God said after He created Adam. He looked down at a perfect environment, the Garden of Eden, and said, “It’s not good. It’s not good for man to be alone.” God did not design us for loneliness. So what’s His antidote? He created two groups. Physical family and a spiritual family. The physical family is the one you grew up in. The spiritual family is the one you have the rest of your life. It goes on into eternity. The physical family eventually moves apart, eventually dies and doesn’t go on. But the spiritual family, God’s church, is going to go on forever and ever and ever. So God says I want you to be connected in My family, the church. BE THE CHURCH

Hebrews 10 “***Let us not give up the habit/discipline of meeting together instead let us encourage one another.***” He says you’re created for community and I want you to encourage each other by meeting together.

The Church is God’s answer to LONELINESS. We all need a place where we can practice love. It’s what the world needs. We need to learn how to love. So we’re going to begin a revolution of love today. The Bible says that I’ve got to have other people in my life as I’m walking through life. I need other people to grow. I can’t grow without others. The Bible is very clear about this. **I cannot grow without other people in my life.** Why? **Because life is about relationships not about achievement.** God is love and He wants me to learn to love Him and to love others. Those are the two greatest lessons in life”. (R. Warren)

“The Bible gets very specific about this. **1 Corinthians 14**, the Message paraphrase. It’s pretty clear. *“When you gather each one of you be prepared with something useful for all. Sing a hymn, teach a lesson, tell a story, lead a prayer, provide an insight. Take your turn with no one person taking over. That way you all learn from each other.”*

Does that sound like something we do here on Sunday morning? No. I don’t stand up here and say, “Anybody got a poem? What happened to you this week? Who has a prayer request? Who learned something from God this week? Who needs to be prayed for?” We’re too big to do that. This can only happen in a small group. That’s why to be a healthy believer you need large group worship and small group fellowship. Temple courts and house to house. That’s why in our church we ask everybody to come on a Sunday service and be in a small group/Bible Study Sunday School. If you’re only getting half of that you’re only getting half the benefit of this church. You need to walk through life in a small group of believers.

Ephesians 4:16... *“As each part does its work, it helps the other parts grow, so Christ’s whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.”* That’s what God wants in your life and He wants it for all of us. He wants us to be healthy and growing and full of love. That’s my prayer for you as your pastor. I want you to be healthy and I want you to be growing and I want you to be full of love. There’s only one way you can do that. You’ve got to get with other Christians to walk through life with you. So that’s the first reason to get in a group. We need people to walk with us.

2. We need others to WORK with us.

I need people to work with me. The Bible says God put you on earth to do a certain work that only you can do. **Ephesians 2:10** says this *“For we are His creation, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them.* Before you were even born God decided the talents that He was going to give you. The natural abilities He was going to give you. The background. He even chose where you would be born, who your parents would be, when you would be born, and all of this. Because He has a purpose for your life and part of that purpose is He has some work for you to do.

Anytime you use your talents or your abilities to help somebody else there’s a word for that. It’s called *ministry*, or service. All of us are ministers. Not pastors – ministers. What that means is when you use your gifts and what God wired you to be to help others you’re doing what God wants you to do. He says these are your good works. Remember we’ve talked about this many times. Life on earth is practice for eternity. You get 80-90 years at the most on earth, you get trillions of years in heaven. In heaven you’re going to do four things and one of the things you’re going to do in heaven is you’re going to serve God. So what God wants you to do while you’re here on earth is spend some of that time practicing. Practicing serving. He says I want you to learn to serve, but not to do them just by yourself. God never meant for you to go through life walking alone or working alone. You need to be in relationship with others who help you get done what you need to do. Otherwise you’re going to be worn out and fatigued all the time.

God tells us in the Bible why we’re supposed to work together. **Ecclesiastes 4:9** *“Two people are better than one. Because they get more done by working together.”* They get more done by working together! Everybody knows this. You get more done as a team than you do as an individual. It’s also a whole lot more fun. It’s also less tiring. You learn to cooperate together. There’s all kinds of benefits to working together. Nobody’s good at everything. Because when you share together it lightens the load. Snowflakes are frail but if enough of them stick together they can stop traffic. Individually we can’t make that big a difference in the world. Together we can make a difference if everybody does just a little.

The Church is God’s answer to FATIGUE. If you’re tired it’s because you don’t have the relationships built in to support you that you need in what God has called you to do. Have you ever watched on TV or a movie *Witness* where the Amish build a barn together. They do it in a day. The whole community shows up and where there was nothing, at the end of the day there’s a barn standing. How? Everybody has a little part to play”. (R. Warren)

“The Bible says this in **Galatians 6:10** *“Every time we get the chance let us work for the benefit of all starting with the people closest to us in the community of faith.”* What’s the community of faith? It’s our church family.

I need people to walk with me through life and I need people to work with me through life, but also...

3. We need others to WATCH out for us in life.

“I’m talking about people who’ll defend me, stand up for me, protect me. Who will help me keep staying on track, watch my back, warn me. We all need this because we all have blind spots.

The Bible says in **Philippians 2:4** *“Look out for one another’s interest, not just your own.”* If you want a counter culture verse that’s it. In America, the general idea is it’s all about me. It’s all about my needs, my interest, my wants, my desires, my ambitions. Forget you! I live for myself. Forget everybody else. This verse says don’t just look out for your own interest, look out for others too.

Have you ever seen these Neighborhood Watch signs. Sometimes you see them out in an area. That’s a sign of community. It says we watch out for each other here. We’re looking out for each other. My guess is if you went on vacation this summer, you were gone for a week, maybe two weeks, you probably told your neighbor you were going to be gone. You said, “I’m going to be gone for a couple weeks. Would you kind of keep an eye out on my house. Look out for my stuff.” We all want our stuff looked out for! That’s a good thing to have your stuff looked after, watched out for.

But my question is not is anybody watching out for you. It’s is anybody watching out for your soul. Your soul is a whole lot more important than your possessions. Is there anybody in your life who helps you stay on track spiritually? Is there anybody who loves you enough to say, “I’m not going to let you get discouraged. I’m not going to let you drop out. I’m not going to let you get tired. I’m here with you. Let me support you.” And they encourage you in your spiritual life. If you don’t have anybody like that, that’s sad.

The fact is we all have blind spots. Things we can’t see.

You get a tail light out. You’re never going to know it. Somebody’s got to look out for you. Somebody’s got to say, “You’ve got a tail light out!” Hopefully somebody tells you when you’re unzipped! Friends don’t let friends get tacos in their teeth. That’s what people who care about you do. We need to watch out for each other because there’s some stuff we just can’t see.

The Bible says in **Hebrews 13:1** *“Keep being concerned about each other as the Lord’s followers should.”*

We should care about each other. We’re family. We’re in God’s family. As brothers and sisters I should defend you and you should defend me and I help you stay on track and you help me stay on track.

It says, “keep being concerned.” That means not just once. You’re vigilant. In a war everybody has to take time on sentry duty. While everybody else is sleeping somebody stays awake and makes sure the enemy isn’t crashing in.

Since 911 we’ve all been a whole lot more vigilant for each other with terrorism and things like that. But did you know that you have an enemy far more destructive than terrorists? Oh yes! You have a personal enemy. And he hates your guts. He wants to defeat you. His name is Satan. Satan wants to mess up your life. Satan wants to bring problems into your life. Satan wants to ruin your relationships. He wants to hurt you as bad as he can.

Why would he do that? Because he can’t hurt God. What Satan wants to do is hurt God but he can’t. When you can’t hurt somebody what do you do? You go after their children. If you couldn’t get to me you’d go after my wife or my kids. Satan can’t hurt God. So he tries to hurt God’s children”. (R. Warren)

“He doesn’t care what it will take, how badly you get hurt. He wants to mess you up anyway. The moment you wake up in the morning he’s already been plotting how to get you to waste that day, to blow it with anger or worry or fear or guilt or shame or depression. Or any other resentment or bitterness. He’ll just try to get you all messed up.

Ecclesiastes 4:12 *“A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated but two can stand back to back and conquer. Three are even better for a triple braided cord is not easily broken.”* That’s a small group. He says you watch out for each other.

Here’s my question. Is there anybody watching your backside? Anybody who’s watching out for your spiritual welfare? Do you have anybody close like that? Are you in small group where that group of guys if you’re a guy or women if you’re a woman, who are saying, We’re there when you’re going through the tough times. We’re not going to let you get discouraged. We’re not going to let you get depressed. We’re not going to let you get worried. We’re going to be here with you. If you don’t have anybody like that I pity you. You’ve got a big bull’s eye on your back for Satan. It’s like, “Here’s a loner. They’re not connected. They’re not in a group.”

I know this is hard to believe but when I was young I was a lifeguard for three summers. Actually they fired me because every time I’d see a hand I’d go, “Yes, I see that hand. God bless you! Yes, God bless you. Yes. Many are raising their hands!” *I made that part up.* But I was a lifeguard. Everybody knows you never go swimming by yourself in the ocean. You might catch a riptide. You never go by yourself.

The Church is God’s answer to INSECURITY. The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 4:10 *“If one person falls another can reach out and help. But people who are alone when they fall are in real trouble* All of us have something in your life you can’t get control of I guarantee it. You’re never going to be able to change it on your own. If you could have, you would have but you can’t so you won’t. So you need other people. Some problems in our life only get solved by team tackling together. I need people to walk with me and work with me and watch out for me.

4. We need others to WAIT with us and to WEEP with us.

To wait and weep. I’m talking about they wait while I’m waiting for the bad news. And they weep when I get the bad news. I need people with me in the inevitable crises of life, when the tragedies hit. I don’t want to face that alone.

As your pastor I especially feel this one. I see it on a daily basis. There are situations that nobody should ever have to go through alone. Nobody should ever have to wait in the hospital while a loved one is in a life and death surgery. Nobody. No woman should ever have to wait alone waiting for the lab report back on a problem pregnancy. Nobody. Nobody should have to wait for news from a battlefield alone. Nobody should have to stand at the edge of an open grave alone. Nobody should have to wait at home alone for the coroner to come and publicly identify the body of a loved one who just died. Nobody. Nobody should have to spend the first night alone after their husband has died or wife has died. Nobody should ever have to spend the first night alone when their wife has just walked out. Or their husband’s walked out.

The fact is some of these things are going to happen to you. They’re inevitable. You’re going to have loved ones die. You’re going to go through tragedy. You’re going to get bad health news. You’re going to find out one day that you are dying. You need other people in your life. Only a fool would go all the way through life totally unprepared for something that you know is inevitably going to happen. The time is now to build the safety net, the network of supporters, of friends. Get it in place now because at some point the tragedy is going to happen. You don’t know when. The time to prepare is now”. (R. Warren)

“What is God’s safety net? It is a group of other believers. You don’t need a hundred. You only need five or six. But it’s a group of other believers who are committed to you.

The Bible says this in **1 Peter 3:8** “*You should be like one big family full of sympathy toward each other.*” When you’re in the hospital you don’t want the whole church to visit you. In fact, it’d be kind of bad if all of us came. But it would be nice to have four or five come see you and say we’re praying for you.

Here’s God’s plan, **1 Corinthians 12** “*If one member suffers all suffer together.*” I read recently about a guy who died at home in his bed and nobody discovered it for two years. I thought how tragic! That a guy was not even missed for two years. Can you imagine the despair in that man’s heart as he was dying in bed? Nobody should ever die alone. Nobody should ever have to go through that kind of despair.

Community is God’s answer to DESPAIR. **Romans 12:15** says “*Be happy with those who are happy and weep with those who weep.*” We do that in the group. Somebody has a good thing a promotion or celebration, a graduation, we party. We have a good time. We have fun. Somebody has a tough time, we weep with them.

The fifth reason I need other people in my life is...

5. We need others to WITNESS with us.

You have a life message that God wants you to share with the world. It’s part of your mission. The Bible says that God put you on earth to do a mission. There is great power in group witness. God never meant for you to do your mission alone. God would never send soldier out by himself. He says we go out together. What is the way you witness best to people who don’t know the love of God? How do you witness best to them? God says it’s by loving others in the family of God. Jesus said in John 13 “*Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are My disciples.*” What impresses the community the most? When Christians – believers – love each other. The one thing that proves to the world that you’re in the family of God, that you’ve stepped across the line, that you’re headed for heaven is that you love other people in the family of God. If you do not love other people in the family of God you’ve got a reason to doubt, “Am I in it?” Because that’s one of the things. When you’re truly in God’s family you start loving others in God’s family.

2 Tim. 1:7,8... ⁷ *For God has not given us a spirit of fearfulness, but one of power, love, and sound judgment.* ⁸ *So don’t be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me His prisoner. Instead, share in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God.*

Have you ever thought about this question: *Is anybody going to be in heaven because of you?*

Community is God’s answer to FEAR.

Philippians 1:27 says “*You are working together and struggling side by side to get others to believe the Good News.*” That verse has the two goals of what we’re going to do. First, deepen community within our church. And then reach out to community around our church

We all need each other. We need other believers to walk with us, to work with us, to watch over us, to weep with us and wait with us when we need to wait, and to witness with us. Say this, “I really, really, really need a group.” That is your declaration of interdependence.
Say no to Loneliness, fatigue, defeat, despair and fear

Community starts with a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ, then develops by pursuing a right relationship everyday! (Rick Warren)