SERMON TRANSCRIPT

How To: Build Community

Matthew Shoults

How To: Growing in your faith | November 10, 2026 | Genesis 2:18; Ecclesiastes 4:9-10; Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 Corinthians 12; John 14:16-17; John 16:7-8; John 16:12-15; Proverbs 18:1

Prepared from the spoken message and lightly edited for readability. Scripture quotations and spoken phrasing are preserved as delivered.

Hey guys, thanks so much for listening to today's teaching from The Grove at Champion Forest. We pray this message helps you grow in your love for God and His Word.

My name is Matthew Shoults. I'm one of the residents here at Champion Forest. I'm the other young adults resident who's also named Matthew and also works in young adults, except I'm taller, so that helps out. And I don't have a mustache. I envy that mustache, Carnes.

We are continuing our How To series. We're on number four in the series. First, we've learned how to lead, we've learned how to repent, and we've learned how to share the gospel. Today, we're learning how to build community.

Community, and learning how to build it, is something that I've been really, really passionate about from my early days in the faith, when the Lord was really bringing me up, to now being in ministry. Community is something that really means a lot to me.

I hope that through these topical series we've done in each of these subjects, it has taught you as well that when you're studying God's Word and you have questions about certain topics, certain practices, or certain things, you would know, by learning from these sermons, how to study your Bible in a topical and systematic way. You can see what all of Scripture says about this one thing so that you can know how to understand it, because God's Word has something to say for just about everything.

You may remember a couple of weeks ago, when we were in our Acts series and Cal was teaching, that we concluded at the end of Acts 2, and it was about community. So it's been a month. I hope you didn't forget. There is a quiz at the end of this, and you're getting two sermons now on community, so you really better get it down this time, guys.

We learned a lot about a Spirit-filled community of believers that is devoted to Scripture, devoted to eating together, devoted to spending time together, to prayer, and to serving and meeting each other's needs. That's what we learned literally a month ago.

Today, I'm going to get a little more practical for you guys. Cal taught mostly on the concept and the construct of community, but my hope today is to help you learn more of the practicality of how to actually build it.

Raise your hand if you've ever dealt with a difficult friend. Wow, that's a lot of us. Okay, people are difficult. Community is not easy.

I also realize that there are people walking in here who are dealing with church hurt, people who have had really bad experiences with people in the faith. Cal said this a couple of weeks ago: It wasn't the Lord who hurt you. It wasn't the church that hurt you. It was people at the church who hurt you, okay? Just remember that. I'm not going to go into that beyond that.

I also realize that we've had some awful relationships with people, from families growing up to some friends who might have betrayed us at some point. Community is really, really difficult, and I hope that through this message today you're encouraged.

My goal is to tell you the truth and to encourage you that there is a way to practically build this in a way that is feasible. This is doable. But I'm also going to tell you the truth, because sometimes there are things about ourselves that we have to learn, because we're a factor in the community. It's a two-way street.

I'm really convinced that when community is done right, real biblical community is the biggest game changer of your life. It has been for my life.

How Community Changed My Life

A little story about me. Growing up, my family was what you would call "Christers" - Christmas and Easter Christians. Some people call them Cheasters or CEOs. I like Christers better, but we were a Christmas and Easter family.

My mom grew up Catholic. My dad is of the Protestant faith. They got married, they had kids, and then it was like, "Okay, where do we go to church?" They did not agree. They butted heads, and praise the Lord, we made it out okay. But it was really difficult getting plugged into a church when we just couldn't agree. Doctrines didn't align. Views of Scripture and how services were supposed to go just didn't line up. That was really hard.

My dad shared the gospel with me when I was eight years old. I came to faith then, pulling out of a grocery store parking lot. My mom taught me how to pray. She taught me to get on my knees and have a sense of reverence before the Lord, which has a lot to do with the Catholic faith. They did teach me some things. I had a Bible, but I didn't know how to read it. They equipped me to learn how to pray and seek the Lord, but I didn't know how to do it because I'd never seen anyone else do it.

I didn't know anyone my age who was doing this. In fact, the friends I did have who went to church made fun of me because I didn't know a lot of things about the faith. For example, I did not know that in the Bible there was John the disciple and John the Baptist. I thought that was the same person. I got brutally made fun of for that one time, and I was like, "You know what? I'm done. I'm out of here."

The only thing I knew was that my name was in a book of the Bible, and I was like, "You know, that's a cool one."

But I wanted to work at this camp growing up. It was a small camp called Camp Thurman up in Arlington, Texas, and I really wanted to go there. My cousins and I went there. It's a Christian camp, and I knew that every time I stepped onto that property, I just felt the peace of the Holy Spirit. I felt so much joy, and I had friends who were encouraging me in the faith. I was like, "This is where I want to be. This is my peak career."

I started there at 15 years old, and I said, "Life is never getting any better than this, okay?"

In order to get there, I had to get a pastoral reference. I had to get a letter from a pastor, and I was like, "Mom, I've got to go to church. I need you to get me there so I can get this job."

She took me to church. I started going on Wednesday nights. I started making friends. We started doing community and life together. We started texting each other. Eventually, I started coming on Sundays. All my baseball buddies were bringing me into this. I started serving in kids ministry. They started teaching me how to read the Bible. Those kids were like, "Yay, hi!" They thought I was Goliath because I'm this tall, but I was learning how to read the Bible.

I had small group leaders who would call me and send me Scripture and encouragement. Eventually, my family started coming to church with me, slowly but surely, beginning with my dad. My dad was like, "Hey, it's time for me to go. God's nudging me to come back to the faith." It ended up being the church he grew up in.

Then my sister decided to come along, and then my mom. Slowly but surely, God brought my whole family back to church, little by little.

What drew me in there was community. I needed this. I had this hole in my life from a lack of intimacy and a lack of accountability. There weren't words of life being spoken into me. It was through community that God really did that for me.

Fast-forward: I had small group leaders encouraging me. They were like, "Hey, I think you should really consider this call to ministry. I think God's calling you to a sense of leadership."

I was like, "No way. I'm going to Texas A&M, and I'm going to be a doctor. I'm not doing that."

God closed that door for me to go to A&M. At the last second, I went to Dallas Baptist University because everything lined up by God's providence. I started studying. I started taking religious classes. I started getting internships. I started moving up in leadership in camp ministry and even getting to go to different camps around Texas.

I joined this fraternity to help build up this Christian organization of guys who were serious about their faith and accountability, and so on. I became the chaplain and then the president. Eventually, I got connected to someone on staff here at the church, and then I moved here.

Looking back, I'm like, "Man, God has done so much in my life." But looking back to where it clicked and where it hit, yes, it was God's Word. It was God's providence and His sovereignty in my life. But what gave it that little kick-start? It was community.

I know that is absolutely true for all of us in our lives, whether you grew up in the church or not. Community is something that fuels you. It moves you in the right direction. It's like we're supposed to be together. The trajectory and the train tracks for my following God came from community.

It's pretty fair to say that relationships with people are difficult. I'm not even going to get into dating relationships. That's its own thing. I'm just talking about friendships, friend groups, coworkers, family members,

and all of that. It's difficult.

The world also thinks of community a lot differently than the church does. You can take examples of their community. It's run clubs. It's my friends who go to the bar. It's my fantasy football group chat, which I'm doing really well at right now. Pray for me. It's things like Dancing with the Stars watch nights. I know some of y'all do it.

Those things are great - some of them, not the bar - but some of those are great. But the world advertises a lie to you about what great community is, because it usually stops there.

Two Needs

I'm going to talk to you about two needs and then four action steps, okay? We're going to make this really applicable. I'm going to ask you to take screenshots because there's a lot of Scripture and a lot of notes. I'm sorry, your hand is going to cramp, so just pull out the phone and take pictures. I'm warning you now.

There are two needs that every believer, and every person, needs in their life.

The first is that you need fellowship with others.

Fellowship in the Greek is the word *koinonia*. It's this idea that the people of God would come together, fellowship, and do life with each other. It's made clear in Scripture that man is not supposed to be alone, especially God's people.

This can be traced to the very beginning of Scripture in Genesis 2:18:

> *Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."*
> — Genesis 2:18

I don't think this is just saying, "Get a wife." I think this is saying that even though God said man was very good and was a great creation that He made, it's incomplete without other people.

Hebrews 10:24-25 says:

> *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

God's people are commanded in Scripture to gather together and not neglect meeting together. What does that mean? We've got to get together. We've got to meet together.

This is speaking more to the whole congregation of God's people, the *ekklesia*, the church, the gathering of the saints. We're supposed to meet together.

In other places in Scripture, especially in 1 Corinthians 12, Paul refers to the church as a body. The body is

supposed to be together: the eyes, the ears, the hands, the feet, the mouth - all of it. We're pieces of the body of Christ together, and we work together to accomplish the same mission, God's mission for the world. God uses the church, and He puts us together.

Now, The Grove, while it's a great Christian community, is not the church. The church gathering happens through Champion Forest Baptist Church on Sunday mornings. We've got a service at 8:00. We've got a service at 10:45. That is the gathering of the body, multigenerational, at the start of the week. I know some people do it on Saturdays. It's all right. But they do it together. That's where discipleship and life happen.

Scripture warns us what happens if we aren't in community and if we neglect it. Proverbs 18:1 says:

> *Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire;*
>
> *he breaks out against all sound judgment.*
>
> — Proverbs 18:1

You seek the things you want when you're alone, and you're not even thinking right.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 says:

> *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!*
>
> — Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

There is a great benefit to being together, but there are also consequences to being isolated and alone.

There's a difference between solitude and isolation. Solitude is withdrawing to be with God. Isolation is trying to get away from both God and people, typically through your phone. There's a difference between solitude and isolation. Solitude is a discipline to get closer to God because you're withdrawing from people to get to God. But isolation is trying to withdraw from God and from people.

If we're not careful, we will drift into sin. We're also easier targets for the enemy when we're alone and isolated.

Did anyone watch Animal Planet growing up? Y'all remember Steve Irwin, the GOAT? I loved watching Animal Planet growing up. I loved all the fishing videos because my dad is a big, big fisherman. We watched all the herds in Africa and all the crazy wildlife.

But there's one scene I specifically remember that keeps popping up in my head. There was this herd, I think it was zebras, and they were grazing in the grass. Then there was this lion who popped in out of nowhere and started chasing them. He was chasing this herd, and the second one of the zebras tailed off, who did the lion go for? The one, because it's a lot easier to get the one than it is the herd.

The second we leave the herd is the second we become a bigger target for the enemy. He is a roaring lion seeking to devour you, to steal, kill, and destroy your life. He always tries to isolate you. He's trying to make

you question things. He's getting in your head. He's trying to confuse you, discourage you, deceive you, and distract you.

He is after you, and it is impossible to survive on your own. You and I stand no chance against him by ourselves. We have to be in community, lest we fall into sin, apathy, and love for the world. Without God and His church, you stand no chance. No chance.

Your second need is that you need fellowship with God.

There is nothing and no one in life that can replace the relationship you need with God. Nothing and no one. We can all testify to this. We've tried to fill that void of a lack of intimacy, that loneliness, that sense of, "Man, I just don't feel it. I need something to make me happy. I need fun." Nothing fills it like God. You need that fellowship with Him.

That fellowship comes from the Holy Spirit, who is a member of the Trinity, coequal with God the Father and God the Son. He is also a person, and He dwells inside of you when you confess that Christ is Lord and believe in His death and resurrection for your sins. Then the Holy Spirit lives inside of you, and you can have a meaningful relationship with God, who now lives and dwells inside of you.

When Jesus walked the earth just about 2,000 years ago and His presence was made known here, Jesus talked about how it is better for us to have the Holy Spirit - not Jesus in the flesh, but the Spirit inside of us. It's better that we have Him.

I'm going to list a couple of Scriptures for you. John 14:16-17:

> *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever,*
>
> *even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him.*
>
> *You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.*
>
> — John 14:16-17

John 16:7-8:

> *Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away,*
>
> *for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you.*
>
> *But if I go, I will send him to you.*
>
> *And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.*
>
> — John 16:7-8

He is our Helper. He's our Spirit of truth, and we receive Him. He dwells in you forever. We're at an advantage having Him in our lives. It's just the best. He convicts us of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

John 16:12-15. Jesus tells His disciples:

> *I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.*
>
> *When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth,*
>
> *for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak,*
>
> *and he will declare to you the things that are to come.*
>
> *He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.*
>
> *All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.*
>
> — John 16:12-15

I had a pastor friend of ours who told us that the things the Holy Spirit was promised to tell us are the Epistles in Scripture. That is Romans all the way through Revelation. That is the continuation of the canon of Scripture that God has made known to us. The Holy Spirit still speaks to you, but those are the things He tells you.

Blaise Pascal, a pretty famous dude, says that there is a God-shaped hole in your heart that only God can fill. Sometimes we have loneliness and a desire for intimacy, and we try not to let God have that spot. But there is a part of your soul that is uniquely open to where only God can fill it. Nothing else will fill that.

Although the Holy Spirit can reside in us, there can still be a lack of intimacy with God. Some of us know that. Your relationship with the Spirit and His Word fills your cup more than anything in life. But sometimes we decide to trade that out and exchange it because we're codependent on other people.

We try to get other people to fill that, and that is a problem in community. We try to fill the hole that God's supposed to fill in our hearts, but we put someone else there and say, "Hey, fix me. Make me feel meaningful. Make me feel loved." We seek intimacy that's only something God can give.

I want to show you a chart on the screen of all the things the Holy Spirit is supposed to do in Scripture. He's supposed to give you new life. He dwells in you. He resides in you. Please take a picture of this. This is really important for you.

He gives you the strength and the power to overcome sin. It's through the blood of Christ that this is made possible, but then it's through the Spirit that He empowers you to do so.

He produces spiritual fruit, the fruit of the Spirit. To be in the likeness of God, to be like Him, we need the Holy Spirit to produce those things, because your works do not get those for you. That comes from abiding. That comes from trusting in the Holy Spirit. That's how you get those.

He guides you into truth. The Holy Spirit reveals to you things about your heart, because the heart is deceitful and wicked above all things. The Holy Spirit helps you understand that so that you can know the truth and walk in it.

He helps you pray. He intercedes on your behalf. He assures you of your adoption in Christ. You've been called and adopted by God. Hallelujah! He reminds you of that.

He equips you for ministry. He gives you spiritual gifts, the gifts you possess that you're supposed to use to

build up the body of Christ. That's something He gave you.

He unites believers. We're supposed to be united as one body, not divisive and not separated.

He guarantees our inheritance. He is the seal that guarantees your inheritance in heaven, looking to the future in salvation.

The best community you could ever have is with God and with people of faith. Amen.

I could stop there, but I'm not. I'm going to keep going.

Four Ways to Build Practical Community

Let's get super practical. I want to show you four ways that we can build practical community. I'm going to try to be encouraging to you, but I'm not going to avoid telling you the truth. This is going to be a little hard to hear, but we've just got to go with it.

In our pursuit of Jesus as Christians, we're running the race. We're trying to be holy because God has called us to be holy. We're obeying all of His commandments and living the life God has designed us to live.

It's important that we evaluate all of our friendships - all of them - including the ones with unbelievers and unrepentant Christians. Those can be a real struggle for you.

The first point, when it comes to your community, your old life, and those who are not encouraging you and pushing you forward in your faith, is: forget it. Forget them. We're trying to be holy and transformed. We're not trying to go backward.

I used to work in landscaping before I came to work at the church. Any blue-collar guys here? Where are we at? Thank y'all. Hey, represent the Carhartt. You earned it. Some people didn't. Some people didn't, and I know who you are, Abner.

I used to do landscaping, and the guys I worked with were nicotine addicts, alcoholics, trying to get laid all the time, speaking terribly about each other, and absolutely tearing each other down. The work culture was awful.

I came to a point where I was working in this because I needed the money, and I was waiting until I moved down to Houston to start my job here. I was sitting there thinking, "Okay, what am I supposed to do here?" Because clearly, if I'm trying to be friends with them, they're going to lead me into sin. They're going to lead me into evil and wickedness. But I can't just ignore this. There's got to be something I can do about it.

It was hard. It was really hard. I chose to minister to my coworkers and not make them my buddies.

It's often said that we have an inner circle of people in our lives. You can't let unbelievers be in that little circle. You cannot let unrepentant believers remain in that circle for a long time.

Why? You're the makeup, the average, of your five closest friends. That gets said a lot in psychology and in the church, but it's true. You are who you surround yourself with.

We as Christians have to be wary of our ties and relationships to the world because we're easily corrupted, easily tempted, and easily distracted from the faith. God's Word has a lot to say about people and how we should interact with the ways of the world.

Take out your phones. It's going to be a lot.

Proverbs 13:20:

> *Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise,*
>
> *but the companion of fools will suffer harm.*
>
> — Proverbs 13:20

Proverbs 22:24-25. I told you we're going fast.

> *Make no friendship with a man given to anger,*
>
> *nor go with a wrathful man,*
>
> *lest you learn his ways*
>
> *and entangle yourself in a snare.*
>
> — Proverbs 22:24-25

A snare is a trap, by the way.

Romans 16:17:

> *I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught;*
>
> *avoid them.*
>
> *Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals."*
>
> — 1 Corinthians 15:33

It's a great verse.

Second Corinthians 6:14-17:

> *Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers.*
>
> *For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness?*
>
> *Or what fellowship has light with darkness?*
>
> *What accord has Christ with Belial?*
>
> *Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?*
>
> *What agreement has the temple of God with idols?*

> *Therefore go out from their midst,*
>
> *and be separate from them, says the Lord,*
>
> *and touch no unclean thing;*
>
> *then I will welcome you.*
>
> — 2 Corinthians 6:14-17

Second Timothy 3:1-5. This is the last one, I promise. This is talking about the end times, which you and I live in right now.

> *For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents,*
>
> *ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control,*
>
> *brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit,*
>
> *lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,*
>
> *having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.*
>
> *Avoid such people.*
>
> — 2 Timothy 3:1-5

Last week, we talked about sharing the gospel. How do you share the gospel? You've got to be around unbelievers. I'm not trying to contradict that message. If anything, I'm trying to add to it, because the biggest difference between these Scriptures I just read to you and last week's sermon is this question: Do you hang out with the world, or do you minister to it?

Where do you hang out with people? Who are you hanging out with? Who are you allowing into that world of yours?

We're called to be in the world but not of the world, as 1 John puts it. James tells us not to love the things of the world or make friendship with the world, lest we become enemies of God.

Jesus spent a lot of time in His earthly ministry meeting with evildoers. He met with prostitutes, tax collectors, and wicked religious leaders. He met with outcasts, the poor, the beggar - you name it.

But here's the thing: Jesus didn't sin with them. He didn't hang out with them. Jesus hung out with His disciples. He still ministered to those who were not believers. He still served them, loved them, shared the gospel with them, and invited them into a relationship with Him. But He did not hang out with them like He did with the disciples.

Why? Those were His people, people of faith, trustworthiness, and loyalty, who knew God's Word and His commandments. He hung out with His own people, people of faith.

In the Old Testament, Israel was not allowed to mess around with other nations because every single time they did, what happened? They gave themselves over to idolatry, picking up the idols, sins, and practices of

the other nations. They were led astray from the Lord and into sin, and they faced severe consequences for being God's people and being corrupted by evil and sin.

They were still to love foreigners and serve them, but they were not buddies. They were not best friends. They were supposed to love them and serve them in a Christlike way, but those people were not in that circle. That's not what the Lord asks us to do.

This isn't just about unbelievers. I'm also talking about unrepentant Christians. This applies to people who say they're Christians. They wear the cross. They've got the tattoo. They've got the Bible verse. They've got a Bible on the dash of their truck, but it's not in their heart. They're not doing it, okay?

You have to be careful who you let into your circle.

There's a list on the screen. I took it from 2 Timothy. These are the things you need to watch out for in your circle: lovers of self, lovers of money, chasing the bag, proud and arrogant, always thinking about themselves and talking about themselves, unholy, with no self-control. They give themselves over to everything the world has to offer. They're lovers of pleasure, always seeking to feel good and not do good. They're not lovers of God. Who do they love? Themselves.

I can read that, and I can also think it's convicting. Some of us read that list and think, "That's me."

The difference, though, is that hopefully you're moving in the direction of God. You're running the race, as Hebrews 12 says, and throwing off the sin that so easily entangles you.

The difference is: Are you moving toward the Lord? Are you doing the things that move you forward? We will inevitably sin, but the difference is what direction you're going in.

If you think of life like a lazy river, the current naturally takes you in a certain direction. But the Christian is supposed to move forward and push against that. If you stop, you just drift. You're drifting back into the world, and we've got to be careful of that.

The second thing, if you're looking to build community with believers, which I hope you are, is that you've got to find it. You've got to look for it and seek it out.

It's very rare that community just gets DoorDashed to you, okay? It doesn't really work that way. In order to have intentional community as believers, you have to go out and find it. It is available to you.

If you're looking for groceries, where are you going to find them? H-E-B. Thank you.

If you're trying to buy a car, where are you going to look? Marketplace. There you go.

If you're trying to find a good football team, where are you going to look? Dallas. Go Cowboys! Come on, come on.

But here's the thing: If you're looking for Christian community, where are God's people? They're at the church. Go to church.

If you're looking for this need and saying, "Man, I need this," go where it is. If you need groceries because you're hungry, you go to the grocery store. If you need a car, you go to the car dealership. If you're sick and need medicine, you go to the doctor. If you need community, go to the church. That's where God's people are.

I know it's difficult. I know people are difficult. I'm not trying to overcomplicate this, but I think we can easily make community overcomplicated. You don't really need to reinvent the wheel. You just need to go where it is. It's that simple.

On Sundays, we have services at 8:00 and 10:45. We have life groups in between at 9:30. This church also offers grow groups. We offer midweek classes. There are things you can get involved with, like The Grove, to help you find your community.

It's available to you. You just need to seize it. You just need to take it up. You've just got to do it. God's people are in God's place. In the Old Testament, they would go to the temple. We go to the church.

You need to show up to young adult events. You need to get into a small group.

Acts 2:42-47 is a beautiful illustration of what community is and what believers do:

> *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

I love this passage. It's a beautiful picture of how simple community is supposed to be. You go where God's people are. You read God's Word. You pray together. You eat God's food.

I think one of your application points tonight needs to be that you get a couple of people, go to Whataburger, get a patty melt, and talk about the sermon. That's it. That's community. Just go eat together. Go read the Word together. Go get a honey butter chicken biscuit. They're so good, man.

Just go be with God's people, with God's Word, and eat food. Be together. Give things. Be generous to each other. God's people need to be together and serve each other.

We're not going to be consumers. We're going to be contributors. We give back. We help serve. We don't just sit rent-free in the church. We're active. We're involved. We're engaged. We're moving forward, and we're contributing.

It's also possible that while you're gathered with everyone, you can just exist in a space and coast without even being known.

Matt Chandler, who's a pastor up in Dallas, talks about Jason Bourne Christians. Have you seen Jason Bourne? Basically, he's on his own. He's trying to fight the fight on his own. He's trying to take out the bad guys, and he's trying to figure everything out by himself.

But the Christian life isn't supposed to be that way. You can be doing all the right things, but if you're doing them without God's people, you're doing them wrong. Jason Bourne Christians are not a thing.

David in the Bible, King David, had his mighty men. Jesus had His twelve disciples. Paul had his ministry buddies - Silas, Barnabas, Timothy, Titus, and all his buddies. All these great leaders of the faith had community. What makes us think we're above that?

The third application point is that you have to forge community.

Think of a forge or a welding group where they take great pieces and bring them together. Through fire, heat, and something uncomfortable that's ultimately good for you, the pieces are joined together. That's how community is built.

Jonathan Pokluda says that community isn't just found; it's forged. You can find community, but it's not going to become something for you unless you forge it together.

The gathering is where you are. Sunday mornings here, the gathering is where you are. Fellowship is what you do. Fellowship is what you share and do together.

Honestly, a small group is what you would consider a forge. You've got to be intimate. You've got to be real. You've got to be personal.

I'm going to read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 again:

> *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

They're working together. They're tight. They're together. They're forged together.

Friendships like that are what propel you in the Christian life. It's crucial that we as believers have these tight friendships - not being exclusive and not showing favoritism, but selectively choosing people in our lives to help us grow in godliness and accountability.

This is something I've done in my life. It's a method that John Elmore at Watermark Church in Dallas has done.

Basically, here's the thing. I'm going to make this really simple. You don't have to overcomplicate it. Grab three to six people you know are taking their faith seriously, who want that godly life, who are chasing the gospel and want to grow in godliness. They're mature. They're doing the things the Word says to do.

Grab three to six of those people and find a time during the week to meet. Mondays at 6:00 a.m. Okay, I just scared a couple of y'all by saying 6:00 a.m. But find the people, find the time, and then ask these questions:

How did you feed your soul? That's input. What did you do to feed yourself? Did you listen to podcasts? Did you read the Word? Did you listen to worship? What did you do to grow yourself in your faith?

How did you feed others? That's output. Where is your faith producing works?

How did you feed your flesh? That's confession. Share your sins together.

These are just great questions to start with, but this method has changed my life. I've been doing it for over five years now.

Proverbs 27:17 says:

> *Iron sharpens iron,*
>
> *and one man sharpens another.*
>
> — Proverbs 27:17

I'm going to read Hebrews 10:24-25 again:

> *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

We are supposed to encourage each other and sharpen each other. That's accountability.

We've got to tell the truth even if our friends don't want to hear it. We cannot be afraid of what they're going to say. We have to tell them the truth because, in the end, we want them to be godly. I want you to tell me the truth because I want to be godly.

You've got to find friends who are committed to that. You've got to be honest and tell the truth to each other.

You also need to confess sin. Proverbs 28:13:

> *Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper,*
>
> *but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.*
>
> — Proverbs 28:13

James 5:16:

> *Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.*
>
> *The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*
>
> — James 5:16

I heard this quote about a year ago. I love this quote: "You are only going to heal and grow as much as you are willing to confess."

You are only going to heal and grow as much as you are willing to confess.

That's not my quote. I wish it was. It's really good.

If we as believers want to progress, grow, and mature in our faith, that means we need to confess our sins. We need to clean out the gutter. We've got to show each other the dirty side - what's broken, what's not clean in us, and what we need to confess.

What are you hiding? You have to show that. We have to clean out the gutter.

You also need wisdom from other believers. Proverbs has 13 proverbs that talk about getting wisdom from other people. Thirteen. One is enough. Thirteen is a lot, okay? Pay attention to that. There are 13 proverbs about getting wisdom from other people, receiving it, and giving it to others.

Your community and your accountability partners will know your blind spots, the things you can't see. That's why some of y'all get into car crashes, because you don't check your blind spots. You need people in your life who can see what you're not seeing.

I used to tell my fraternity this. There were guys who would be in it and would be all about it, but then they would complain, "Hey, I'm not getting the community or the discipleship that I wanted." The tools were available to them, but they just weren't taking them up.

I gave them this illustration: You can go to a gym and just sit there and do nothing. Then you can complain, "Why am I not getting stronger? Why am I not looking better? Why am I not feeling fit?" It's because you're not working out.

You need to work out your salvation, as Paul tells us in Philippians 2. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. You have to put effort into your faith. It takes work. Sometimes it's a grind, and you just have to put the work into it.

First Timothy 4:12 says:

> *Let no one despise you for your youth,*
>
> *but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.*
>
> — 1 Timothy 4:12

If you're looking for people to be accountable with, that's an amazing standard right there: your speech, what

you do, your conduct, who you love, your faith, and your purity.

It's a great standard. We're not perfect, but remember, the goal is that we're running toward it.

Lastly, follow it.

We have the community. We've found it. We're forging it. But the biggest issue, where a lot of believers fall off, is that they don't stay committed to it. We can flake. We can fall off. We can say, "I'm going to be lazy about it," and become apathetic.

We've got to commit to a body of believers. For some of you, that means you need to stop church-hopping and get a church membership somewhere, okay? We have a church membership class at our church on Sunday. It's at 9:30. That may need to be an application for you.

One of the ways you can commit to your church is by serving. Go get into kids ministry, dude. They need help, okay? I was with the preschoolers on Sunday. They need help, all right? We need your help in kids ministry, man.

You've got to commit to a life group. You've got to be with people. That doesn't mean that's your forge, but that's where God's people are. It may not be a place for you to receive, but it needs to be a place for you to serve.

Grow groups have been incredible. I got to be in one of those this last year. I saw God change a lot of guys' lives because they just kept showing up. They just kept staying committed.

Community is difficult, and it's forged during hard times. We, as God's people, are supposed to stick together through it all.

Ephesians 5:21 says:

> *Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*
> — Ephesians 5:21

Submit to each other. Commit.

Are you a faithful friend? Are you trustworthy? Can people rely on and depend on you? We ask and expect that of other people, but we don't often ask that about ourselves. Am I the friend that I want other people to be to me?

Ephesians 4:15-16 says:

> *Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,*
>
> *from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped,*
>
> *when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*
> — Ephesians 4:15-16

Speak the truth to each other. We're all united under the head of Christ, all body parts connected to Him. We've been equipped to work properly so that the body may grow and build itself up in love.

The body does not grow with body parts separated from each other. Babies in a womb grow together. They're not separated. That's how the body of Christ needs to be.

Fight the Good Fight

Lastly, I want to encourage you to fight the good fight.

Our goal as believers is to fight the good fight of the faith, to remain faithful, to stay with the Lord, and to be told, "Well done, good and faithful servant." Don't you want to hear those words from the Lord at the end of your life?

In 2 Timothy 4:7, Paul says:

> *I have fought the good fight,*
>
> *I have finished the race,*
>
> *I have kept the faith.*
>
> — 2 Timothy 4:7

Man, I would love to be able to say that at the end of my life. If God was faithful to us, we have to be faithful, friends. We have to be faithful to Him.

I'm going to put all the application points up on the screen in a second.

Some of you need the gospel tonight. You've been trying to walk this walk on your own. You've been living this life apart from this great and beautiful community God has created - the church, the body, the gathering - and you're not even a part of it.

I would hate for you to miss out, because I can look back at my life and say, "Man, I missed out by not being in that earlier."

The invitation for you, as we seek as believers to listen to and follow the Lord, is that we would ask that of you as well. Would you join us? Believe in the Son of God, who came to die for your sins, so that if you believe in Him, you will be saved.

For the rest of us in the room, when the other applications come on the screen, what do you need to do in your community?

You may even be at step four, but it can go deeper. It can become more intentional. You can continue to pray for each other's needs. You can serve and give to each other. There's always more. You can always keep growing.

Forget and move forward from those who are hindering you. Still love them and share the gospel with them.

Find it. Be with God's people. You've got to be where they are.

Forge it. You've got to put the work into it. You've got to get the people together, and you've got to do the hard work. It's fire and forging.

Lastly, follow it. Stay committed and stay faithful to it.

Thanks again for listening to today's teaching from The Grove. Be sure to follow us on Instagram at thegrove_cf. If you're a young adult in Northwest Houston, we'd love to connect with you on Tuesday nights and Sunday mornings. We hope to see you soon.