

“Pursuing Each Other Relationally”

Selected Scriptures Better Together #2

Weekend of January 12-13, 2019

INTRODUCTION:

What does it truly mean to be part of a community? In reality, I am asking what does it mean to be a part of the church? The church, the eklesia, has been called out to live in community. One of the things that happens in a Community is accountability, and it is such a beating...I mean, a blessing. Yes - a blessing. It's a blessing. It's this thing in our lives that sometimes we don't feel like we need.

Years ago, I spoke at Yosemite Family Encampment in Yosemite National Park. It looked like this...I had the opportunity to speak at a camp, and this camp was in the mountains. I was driving on unfamiliar roads. All in my car were not adjusted to the Pacific time zone. It was night. It was dark. They were sleeping.

As I was driving down these unfamiliar roads, sometimes I would veer off on those obnoxious bumps on the side. They look like this...Everyone was sleeping. I was trying to keep them asleep, but it would make this loud noise and vibrate the whole car, and everybody would wake up and ask...“Are you okay?” I'm like, “Yes, I'm fine.” I wasn't intentionally drifting.

I didn't feel like I was in any real danger, so the bumps on the side of the road and the accountability they offered was just obnoxious. It was just annoying. The truth of it is we're all drifting. Even as you came in today, there are parts of your lives not drifting toward Christ. That's a really unsettling feeling, that we are naturally prone to wander, that we are constantly tempted to drift. **D.A. Carson says it this way...**

- **“People do not drift toward holiness. Apart from grace-driven effort, people do not gravitate toward godliness, prayer, obedience to Scripture, faith, and delight in the Lord. We drift toward compromise and call it tolerance; we drift toward disobedience and call it freedom; we drift toward superstition and call it faith; we cherish the indiscipline of lost self-control and call it relaxation; we slouch toward prayerlessness and delude ourselves into thinking we have escaped legalism; we slide toward godlessness and convince ourselves we have been liberated.”** We drift.

BIBLE STUDY

We see this in the Scriptures. It takes all of three chapters for this to happen. Adam and Eve drift from the commands of God. **The first question God asks man is, “Where are you?” As if to say, “What are you hiding?” As if to say, “How have you drifted so fast?”** But the first question man asks God shows up one chapter later, **Genesis 4:9**. He's talking to Cain about Abel, and man responds to God, **“Am I my brother's keeper?”** It's a rhetorical question that assumes the answer of “No” when in reality the answer is a resounding “Yes.”

- **In the relationship of accountability, we are indeed our brother's keeper.** We must help each other from drifting. Not only do we drift, as D.A. Carson said, we try to justify the drifting. It's the worst kind of drifting: one that assumes it's actually on the path. There is a temptation to be stupid. My friend, if she was here, would say, “You can't say that word,” and I always remind her, “Well, God did.”
- **In Proverbs 12:1 he says, “He who hates correction is stupid.”**

There are parts of our lives that are resistant to correction. There are parts of our lives that want to hold something private; not to bring it to the light; not to live out loud.

- **James 5:16, which says to “confess your sins to one another so that others can pray for you, so that you can experience healing. John 1:7-9 calls us to live in the light, to have this reality where we continue to bring out these parts of our lives that are not conformed to the image and character of God and his Son Jesus.**

We want to hide them.

Proverbs 28:13 says, “Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.” I want to prosper. I want to find mercy. I don't want to be stupid. I want to be healed. It starts with this idea of accountability. So, what are things we need to be held accountable to? One of them is confession in and of itself. We need help. We need others to call us to this idea.

- **“Hey, are you hiding something from me? Is there anything you don't want to bring forward?”** We may need help, just a call to confession.
- **“Hey, how often are you getting in God's Word? How often are you praying?”** What does your prayer life look like in this season? “Let me ask you another hard question.
- **How do you determine how much of God's resources you keep for yourself?** It seems that you're tempted to break 1 Timothy 6 and the other commands in the Scripture. How would you like me to hold you accountable in that area? Is there anything off limits?”

I've heard people say, **“I'd rather show up naked than talk about my finances.”** You may feel that way, but speaking of naked, for many the issue is **marriage intimacy.**

That may be something we need to hold each other accountable to. That may be an area where you're like, “Hey, that's off limits. You want me to talk to people about that?” If you're not experiencing God's best in that area of your life, then yes.

- **If you're single, maybe it's purity.** Maybe you need accountability around purity. “Are you living out 1 Corinthians 6, as God calls us to flee sexual immorality? Is that an area I can help you with?”
- **Maybe it's business.** “As you conduct your business, are you above reproach, as Colossians 3 would call you to? Do you use it as a platform to share the gospel, as Titus 2:10 commands us to?” How do I view my business? Is this an area where I need accountability?
- **Maybe it's evangelism.** Who in my life do I need to be sharing the gospel with? How often does God's Word actually expect me to share the gospel, and how do I live out this area of the Scriptures? Or maybe it's things we can't see, other forms of idolatry.
- **Maybe it's kids' sports or the way I parent** or some other area, an idol I cannot see, that I need someone to help me with.

If these are some of the things, we need to be held accountable to, what does this accountability relationship look like? It requires two people; two people concerned about each other, asking questions, one asking for help and one asking helpful questions; two people in relationship. We're talking about it here in the context of community, that we would offer this for one another.

The role of this first-person offering accountability is going to do three things.

- **The first one is ask hard questions.** You must be willing to ask hard questions. Whenever the questions are difficult, there's a temptation to kind of turn our head and shoot. Sometimes we bow up. Sometimes we come with extra energy that's unnecessary. Take a deep breath, slow down, and say, "Hey, I see an area of your life that I don't think you're experiencing God's best. This is a Scripture I think speaks into this, and I'd love to help you. I'm not saying I'm perfect, I'm not saying I have it all figured out, but I know you've asked me to keep you on the path of becoming like Christ."
- **The second thing you do is share Scriptures.** I don't want to know what you value that's not what God values. You may have some limit, like, "You can't spend this much on a car," that you've kind of carried with you that is extra-biblical. I don't want to hear what you think. I want to hear what God thinks. So, share from the Scriptures.
- **Lastly, what you need to do is keep in touch.** Continue to follow up. Not a "one and done" conversation, but wake up the next day and say, "Thank you so much for what you shared last night. Thank you so much. Here's a Scripture I read this morning that would encourage you. By the way, I want you to know that I'm praying for you, and I'm going to follow up tomorrow, and I'm going to follow up the next day, and I'm going to follow up next week, and I'm going to follow up until we meet again. I'm going to continue to let you know that I'm praying for you."

What about the person who's being held accountable? **You're going to want to do three things as well.**

- **Avoid getting defensive.** There's a temptation in us that doesn't like these questions, so when someone asks us, we well up with frustration and defensiveness. That should be an alarm to you that they're poking around an area of your life that may not be well. That temptation to get frustrated, to get defensive, should be an alarm to your head and to your heart that, "This is an area I really care about, and I don't want people meddling."
- **Avoid getting defensive.**
- **Share openly.** Share everything, especially the thing you don't want to share. I'm going to share so much they're going to have no questions left to ask. I want to share openly.
- **Avoid getting defensive.**
- **Share openly.**
- **Know the accountability that you need.** Here's what I mean by that. If you come to me and say, "Hey, I want you to hold me accountable to the way I spend money" or "to not look at pornography," or whatever that is, then I'm going to ask you, "What do you want me to do if you do? If you show up and say, 'Hey, I looked at pornography,' what do you want me to do in response to that? Do you want me to pray for you? Do you want me to remove your computer? What are you expecting from me?"
- **As you are the person being held accountable, outline your expectations. "Here's what I want this accountability to look like."** This is what an accountability relationship looks like. Slow down. This stuff takes time. It takes patience. You may say, "Give me a minute as I try to find this verse in the Bible. I think God's Word speaks into this. I may ask somebody for help

here.” Slow down. Listen. It may feel like someone is talking too much.

The reality of this concept has changed my life. It changed my marriage. It changed the way I parent. It changed the things that I would do recreationally. It changed my view of God and my relationship with him. It deepened my relationship with Christ, because people loved me enough to ask me hard questions when I really, really didn't want them to. It wasn't a beating; it was a blessing. It is a blessing.

When I was driving down that road, the camp was actually in the mountains, and as everyone had fallen asleep... Everyone eventually fell asleep. We were exhausted. I got going up the mountains on these hairpin turns. Heavy fog set in. I'm driving through a cloud. It's at night. There's zero visibility, and now I'm thousands and thousands and thousands of feet off the ground. I'm going and then turning and then going. I'm just 10 and 2, peering out the window. I can't see anything.

It was those same bumps that had annoyed me earlier that kept me from falling off the cliff to our deaths. It was those same bumps that were obnoxious earlier that now, in the moment, I was relying on for life so that I didn't drift off the path. **This, in essence, is accountability.** You need it. We're desperate for it. We need people to help us remain on the path as we become more and more like Christ.

James says it like this in James 5. **“My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.”** We are indeed our brother's keeper.

APPLICATION:

As we close, I want to give us 4 things we can do to pursue each other relationally so we can build healthy community, be accountable, and be all God has called us to be. **I'll make an acrostic out of the word LOVE. Here's the first one...**

- **Latest information.** The author of Hebrews instructs us in **Hebrews 3:13** to **“encourage one another daily, as long as it is called ‘Today,’ so that none of us will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”**

We must work hard at trying to connect with one another. This doesn't mean we have to add a bunch of meetings to our schedule. Oftentimes, the only thing we have to do is just a few extra phone calls a week, a couple of extra text messages a week. Healthy communities stay up to date on the latest information.

- **Latest information.**
- **Offense.** Paul in Galatians 6:10 encourages us to take initiative with doing good to others, especially those who are in the family of faith. Every single one of us must feel like it is our responsibility to take initiative in pursuing connecting with other people, in confession, in caring for one another. We all have to feel that and understand that burden and responsibility, that it is our job, individually, all of us, to take the initiative in connection, confession, and care.
- **Latest information.**
- **Offense.**

- **Vital relationships.** Paul also tells us in Romans 12 that we are to be devoted to one another in love and that we are to give one another preference. They are vital, which means we give them priority, we view them as God's provision for us, and we give them preference. If you don't think about those relationships as vital, that probably means you're not giving them priority in your life, which means you rarely say no to anything so that you can continue to develop your relationships and deepen your relationships.
- **Latest information.**
- **Offense.**
- **Vital relationships.**
- **Expect to work.** When Paul was writing his first letter to the Thessalonian church, he was commending them for the way they were loving one another, and in that letter, in chapter 4, he told them to excel still more in the way that they love one another. He told them not to rest, not to just be okay with where they're at, not to feel like they're at a spot in that relationship where they can just coast.

The world takes notice when we live like this. The world starts to take notice, because they've never really seen people love one another and give preference to one another like that. They start to take notice, and we have opportunities to talk about this amazing Jesus, who has died for us, and the love he has shown to us and the love we can now show to other people. The world takes notice of that, and our God is glorified, and his kingdom moves forward as we love one another. So, let's resolve to love each other.