



Life Together

Session 08

Overview

“If you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together.” We are not designed to travel the spiritual journey by ourselves. We need community to practice the Way.

And Jesus’ call to community goes far beyond church attendance to relationships of depth, vulnerability, and a commitment to transformation.

Practice reflection

Before we begin Session 08, break up into small groups and share your reflections on last session’s exercise of creating a Rule of Life.

- 01 **Share about your process of creating a Rule of Life. What worked for you?**
- 02 **What feelings came up for you as you worked through this exercise?**
- 03 **What do you anticipate will be the most life-giving and transformative practice you came up with?**

Teaching

Scripture

A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.” “Who are my mother and my brothers?” he asked. Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”

—Mark 3v32-35

Session summary

- Jesus’ invitation was to come and do life together.
- Through Jesus, we have been adopted into the family of God.
- Jesus’ desire is not just to form you into a person of love, but to form a community of love.
- You can’t follow Jesus alone; spiritual formation is a relational process.
- Four layers of community*:
 - Intimates: 1-5 people who deeply know and love us
 - Friends: 15 people with whom we do life
 - Village: 150 people, the maximum we can be in relationship with
 - Tribe: The larger group we identify with and belong to
- Spiritual friendships are marked by three core characteristics:
 - Depth
 - Vulnerability
 - Commitment to transformation
- Our final practice is to cultivate a community of spiritual friendship and begin meeting regularly.

* Robin Dunbar, “Coevolution of neocortical size, group size and language in humans,” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 16, no. 4 (1993).

Discussion questions

Pause the video and take some time to process together as a community.

Here are some questions for discussion:

- 01 Of the three relational characteristics named (depth, vulnerability, and a commitment to transformation), which is the hardest for you?

- 02 As you reflect on your life and relationships, who has been or could be a “soul friend” to you on this spiritual formation journey?

- 03 What has Jesus done in your life over the last eight weeks, during our time together?

- 04 What’s your next step in your spiritual journey, your “next right thing”?

After the video

Closing prayer

End your time together by praying this liturgy:

Lord Jesus,

There is no greater prayer than yours —
make us one as you are one,
in devotion, in living, in love.

Amen.

OPTIONAL

If you'd like to continue your conversation, here are some additional questions for reflection:

- 01 What comes up when you consider meeting in an intentional community?
- 02 What natural pathways exist in your life for this, whether within your church or other spaces?
- 03 As you examine your own desires, what do you envision for your time?
Engaging in a Practice? Reading a book? Taking a BibleProject class?
Meeting for a meal or prayer? Or something else?

Practice

Do life in community

Jesus' call to community isn't a theory or an idea, it's a practice — a relational way of doing life together.

Jesus would preach to crowds of thousands, but he spent most of his time with a small circle of disciples, in homes and around tables.

It's important to worship in church on Sunday and be part of a larger community, but it's just as important to know and name your "twelve" and your "three." To cultivate spiritual friendships that last for years.

So our final practice is to identify our intentional community and begin to meet with them regularly.

01 Identify a community to meet with regularly.

02 This community could be with just one or two others, or a dozen or even more.

03 We recommend you meet weekly, but it could be bi-weekly or monthly.

04 We also recommend you share a meal when you meet. The act of "breaking bread" is central to the Christian way. Something powerful happens when we eat together.

- But remember, there's no one "right" model for you to follow. You may choose a house church with 20 kids running around a backyard on a Sunday afternoon or a small triad for group spiritual direction early in the morning.
- We encourage you to follow the pathway of your church — whether in a small group, table community, or house church, or a women's or men's Bible study.
- You could follow this Course with any of the nine Practices available from Practicing the Way, share a weekly meal and pray for one another, or work through more free resources from BibleProject, like the following:
 - Reflections mini-cast with discussion questions: bibleproject.com/podcasts/reflections
 - Reading plans: bibleproject.com/reading-plans
 - Heavier classes: bibleproject.com/classroom

Resources to go deeper

If you're interested in learning more about doing life in community, here are some more resources to consider.

Recommended reading

- *When the Church was a Family* by Joseph Hellerman
- *The Connected Life* by Todd Hall
- *Made to Belong* by David Kim

Recommended listening

- The Community Practice teaching series from Bridgetown Church:
link.practictheway.org/course-s8

Additional Resources

- The Community Practice from Practicing the Way: practictheway.org/community (coming soon). If you'd like to learn more about the practice of community, you can run the Community Practice, a four-session experience designed to integrate the practice of community into your regular life.



Guest bio

Our guest this session was Reverend Dr. Charlie Dates, pastor of Salem Baptist Church of Chicago. He is a speaker, professor, and author. Check out his contribution in the book, *Say It!: Celebrating Expository Preaching in the African American Tradition*, or listen to him preach at saalemchicago.org.

PART 03

Continue the Journey