

STANDALONE: COMMUNITY GROUP SUNDAY

You might be asking yourself the question... why are they so obsessed with community groups.

Two reasons:

1. Community groups exemplify everything we represent here at New Life Republic.
 - a. Our **MISSION: BUILD COMMUNITY**
 - i. In our groups we activate our core values (SHOW ON COMING IN ON DIFFERENT LINES)
 1. **WELL – We commit as a church to go to people and not expect them to come to us.**
 2. **STORIES – We commit as a church to tell the stories of those whose lives have been transformed by the Gospel.**
 3. **FEET – We commit as a church to roll up our sleeves and serve each other.**
2. Maybe even more importantly: its very nature and structure displays how Biblical community was designed to operate.

We see examples of how the church operated in it's infancy stages in the Book of Acts.

- We see groups of believers meeting in homes, dining together, sharing resources, telling stories, and enjoying each other's company.

WHY YOU SHOULD BE IN A GROUP

The main question I want to answer tonight is not why we are obsessed with them.

- The main question I want to answer is why you should be.
- In that lays the core of what's very important to your journey with Jesus.

Here are three reasons why you should be obsessed with community groups:

1. IT PREVENTS SPIRITUAL ISOLATION

This is one of the biggest threats to our walks with Christ.

- If the enemy can implant the idea in our minds that we don't need others to have a healthy walk with Jesus he was won

We have a natural tendency as human beings to drift away from anything that is good for us.

- We drift away diets.
- We drift away from exercise.
- We drift away from healthy relationships.
- We drift away from responsibility.
- We drift away from God.

It's this picture that our life is a boat out in the middle of a fast-moving stream... cause life is never slow right?

- If we aren't paying attention, put the paddles in the boat and kick it... our boat will just go wherever it wants.
- Rarely does it go where you want it to go if you have a destination.
- Maybe you say... I want to make it to that campground over there by dark.
 - Well great, but it's probably not going to happen by just sitting in the current.
 - You have to put the paddle in the water and begin to make intentional decisions about moving the board in the direction you want it to go.

YOU HAVE TO BE INTENTIONAL

This is why if we want to maintain anything wholesome, holy, or good for you in your life... you need to be intentional.

- Not only do you have to be intentional, but you will likely be going against the current.
- You never just drift into a healthy marriage.
- You never just drift into a healthy lifestyle.
- You never just drift into a fantastic career.
- These things are items you have to be intentional about and work at them.

Likewise, because being in spiritual community is good for your soul, you will naturally find ways to drift from it.

- Because to be in spiritual community is hard work... it's paddling upstream
 - You gotta get your family rounded up and head to church.
 - Kids are screaming in the car
 - That same Bruno Mars song is playing for the 200th time today on the radio
 - You got a headache, and Walking Dead is coming on dang it.

You pay a little price for being in community on the front end, but when you are there... you are always glad you went.

- Without others...
- As our world becomes smaller, and our issues grow bigger.

Don't drift into spiritual isolation.

Hebrews 3:12-14 MSG

12-14 So watch your step, friends. Make sure there's no evil unbeliever lying around that will trip you up and throw you off course, diverting you from the living God. For as long as it's still God's Today, keep each other on your toes so sin doesn't slow down your reflexes. If we can only keep our grip on the sure thing we started out with, we're in this with Christ for the long haul.

- Well Josh, I'm not. I'm in church. Why do I need a group to escape spiritual isolation?
- That leads me to the 2nd reason why you should be obsessed with community groups

2. CIRCLES ARE BETTER THAN ROWS

Andy Stanley the pastor of North Point Community Church in Alpharetta Georgia has this saying that has gone world famous and it's this:

"Rows don't know, but circles do." – Andy Stanley

Rows don't see a drifting heart. You have to be face to face to see a drifting heart.

When you come to church and you sit in rows, you don't really get to know people.

- You do in a way, but 1 minute of greeting time doesn't really allow you to crack open someone's life ya know.
- This environment is conducive for teaching and corporate worship, but it's not conducive for staring each other in the face and getting to know real people that are just like you in a lot of ways.

EXAMPLE – BRING SOMEONE UP AND DISPLAY HOW SITTING NEXT TO EACH OTHER AND THEN TURNING AROUND AND FACING EACH OTHER IS MUCH DIFFERENT.

Community groups provide an environment where you actually get to know people on a real level.

Until you turn around and look someone in the eye it gets real.

- The eyes are windows to the soul... now I can see that you are struggling, now I can see that you are doing well.
- You need people in your life that know how to detect these things.

Now that you are in a place where it's safe to talk, it's time to get down to real work.

The 3rd reason you should be obsessed with groups is because:

3. IRON CANNOT SHARPEN IRON FROM A DISTANCE

Proverbs 27:17 MSG

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

Obviously you know that in order to sharpen metal you need to place to pieces of metal together and use one to sharpen the other.

- In order to get stronger, you must be around stronger.
 - This is how you grow.
 - For example:
 - You may be really bad at forgiveness, but somebody in your group is really good at it. **(ANIMATED VISUAL OF GRAPHS CHANGING)**
 - Not because they are better than you, but because they've been through something and learned from it.

- So hearing their story and how they handled their problem sharpens your iron and you get stronger because you are around stronger.
- Likewise, there may be times you are the stronger. **(ANIMATED VISUAL OF GRAPHS CHANGING)**
 - You may be really good at understanding the Bible, and others in your group may struggle.
 - No problem, you share some of your secret sauce on how you understand the Bible.
 - Boom!

Not only that guys, but the Bible is difficult and Christianity is hard.

- It was never expected or designed that you figure all of this out on your own.
- It was designed that we figure it out and go through it together.

CLOSING

We believe strongly at New Life Republic that community groups are essential to our mission and being believers of Jesus.

- I pray with all my heart that you become obsessed with the idea of being in a community group as an essential part of your walk with Jesus.
- This is not a new church fad... it's a structure that has existed for 2000 years.

We tried to make it as easy on you as possible to discover and join a group.

- If you are an socially quiet and you simply want to investigate and process these groups on your own time... we've given you ways with these handouts and our online site.
- If you need to engage someone socially to gain the trust needed to feel comfortable with being in a group? – Great... that's what the tables are for.

Please prayerfully consider joining a group today. **(SHOW VISUAL OF GROUPS)**