

DEEPER:
 A Return To The Deep
 November 14, 2010
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(Go over the 5 principles and their adjoining motions.)

A FULLY COMMITTED FOLLOWER OF CHRIST:

Deflects a cynical worldview with the Word of God

Extends authentic hospitality in response to a forgiven life.

Embraces transformation and moves beyond personal comfort

Pursues God's purposes in spite of fear

Excels in focus and discipline and does not personalize suffering

And our principle for today begins with the word REJECT.

How about a gesture for that one?

(Allow church to respond and then repeat the following with the gesture)

Rejects isolating behaviors by connecting with the authentic spiritual community

So today we are going to look at the last of our 6 principles.

The question for us today if you take a look at your sermon notes is:

How does a fully committed follower of Christ live, so as to become an effective witness to those at Stage Six?

And the principle is right there in the box on your sermon notes.

Read that with me please.

Rejects isolating behaviors by connecting with the authentic spiritual community

So what does this mean?

It means that:

A follower of Christ understands that sustained effectiveness for the Kingdom cannot be achieved in isolation but in community with other mission-minded individuals who are seeking truth. As a result, a follower pursues emotionally and spiritually healthy relationships that demonstrate transparency, honesty and accountability.

The church is essential to our spiritual well being.

In the New Testament you will see that there are no “Lone Ranger” Christians.

John Wesley (the founder of the Methodist faith) has said

“There is nothing more unchristian than a solitary Christian.”

We are **not** meant to go this journey alone.

In fact God not only expects us to come alongside of each other,

He commands us to be there for each other.

He has ordained that we play a vital part in each other’s faith.

God has a purpose for putting us together.

God desires to use his church to do some powerful things in our lives and in the lives of others.

Things that we can **not** accomplish in isolation.

So Let’s take a look at **Hebrews 10:24-25a** to see how the Bible instructs us on how to live out this principle of:

Rejecting isolating behaviors by connecting with the authentic spiritual community

Hebrews 10:24-25a says:

*“Let us think of ways to **motivate** one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not **neglect** our meeting together, as some people do, but let us **encourage** one another...”*

Three times this passage says LET US and then it tells us what we are supposed to do.

So the first LET US is:

1. *Motivate – to stimulate strongly, arouse, move to action.*

How many of you here have ever tried to exercise or diet or quit smoking on your own?

Or you have decide what your New Year’s Resolutions are going to be, but you didn’t share them with anyone else? You thought you would do (whatever your resolution was) and surprise everyone.

And how any of you gave up or when a trial or temptation came your way you just couldn’t keep on going?

I am going to bet almost all of us have.

It is hard to go something, especially something life changing, on our own.

And friends there is nothing more life changing than a relationship with your Lord and Savior.

So Hebrews tells us that we are to motivate each other – especially in two distinct areas.

The first is to love.

Now love, contrary to popular belief, is not an emotion but it is a choice to act regardless of our feelings.

And the second area is good works.

Those works or deeds done for the good of others – those works that will attract others to Christ.

The reason the Bible tells us to motivate each other in these 2 areas is because left on our own or in isolation these 2 things are hard to do. It is like those resolutions.

Think about it:

To love someone or to do good works for others when there may not be anything in it for you...

To do good works that may take time away from the fun things you want to go and do...

To love someone who the world has deemed unlovable and let others see you do it....

To go on loving others when life for you has become difficult...

To do good works for others when no one is helping you out....

What this passage is telling us however is that LOVE ACTS.

Love serves God and others.

Even when it is hard.

In the community of faith, we not only absorb Christ's love individually,

But through our changed lives, we also get to reflect his love corporately.

We ALL have a God-given responsibility to lovingly reach out and serve others so that needs don't go unmet and then lead others to erroneously conclude that God doesn't care about them.

We need to motivate each other so that we can continue to reach out in loving service.

Which is why the second LET US tells us

2. LET US NOT NEGLECT meeting together
Neglect - - *purposefully ignore, fail to care for.*

This means that you have **intentionally** made the decision to ignore something or someone.

It seems that neglecting to meet together is an age old problem since we see here in Hebrews that the people were trying to be a Christian on their own even back then.

And you know as well as I do that if you skip one Sunday it is easier to skip the next and the next and pretty soon you are intentionally neglecting other Christians.

Have you ever heard someone say to you – I don't need to go to church to worship God, I can do it out in nature just as easily.

This passage is not talking about whether or not you can worship God alone, which certainly you can and I hope do.

It is talking about surviving as a Christian without the help of other Christians.

When I was a kid growing up one of my dad's favorite shows and therefore one of my favorite shows was called "Wild Kingdom."

Ever see that?

It was a show that took you out into the wilds of the world where you could watch lions, and gazelles, and elephants and all kinds of animals in their natural habitats.

It would show you how they lived and ate and well everything.

Whenever they showed you how the animals would get their food, it would always show that the lone animal in a pack was the one that would be killed. You see that lone animal had lost the strength of the pack.

We do the same.

We need to meet together in order to have the strength of one another.

(This is the communion of the saints that the Apostles Creed speaks about)

The koinonia or fellowship of other Christians

After all the Bible tells us the Satan prowls around like a roaring lion looking for whom he can devour.

The Wild Kingdom beautifully illustrates this passage.

Satan is looking for that lone Christian so he can devour him/her.

The other benefit of not neglecting meeting together is tied into the third LET US.

3. LET US ENCOURAGE.

- build up, to give support, to inspire.

Plain and simple friends - Christians are responsible for each other. The Bible is filled with verses on how we should encourage each other. We should add to the wisdom, knowledge and understanding of each other by sharing our own wisdom, knowledge and understanding through discipleship opportunities.

We should strengthen and support each other when we are facing difficulties, trials and temptations.

We should inspire others with the example of our own convictions and devotion to the Lord.

We should pray together and share each other's burdens.

Your presence alone is a great encouragement to others, especially to your pastors.

Have you ever thought that by you not being here (even if it didn't affect your faith) might actually affect the faith of another Christian.

A word of encouragement offered at the right moment can be the difference between staying strong in the faith or collapsing along the way.

Friends the bottom line is this:

WE NEED EACH OTHER

I read in our sermon notes earlier and now I would like for all of us to read together: (please look at your notes right under the 6th principle)

A follower of Christ understands that sustained effectiveness for the Kingdom cannot be achieved in isolation but in community with other mission-minded individuals who are seeking truth. As a result, a follower pursues emotionally and spiritually healthy relationships that demonstrate transparency, honesty and accountability.

Proverbs 27:17 tells us that just

"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."

Proverbs, with all of its wise sayings, is telling us that:

We must make room or allow our fellow Christians the right to look into our lives even as we look into theirs **IN CHRISTIAN LOVE**.

That is why the Bible calls each of us to Teach, Encourage, Set an Example, Explain, not Neglect meeting together, Exhort, Urge and Motivate each other on toward love and good deeds.

We need to be intentional as we seek other Christians to speak into our lives and sharpen us for work in the kingdom to make sure their motives are pure and right and godly.

We must also be intentional as we seek to sharpen and motivate others that our intentions are pure and right and godly.

We need to be in relationship with God first and then with others. To be in relationship means we cannot neglect meeting together.

We need to be an encourager in order to influence and affect each other's lives for the good.

However, the Bible also teaches us that as we are doing these things to be **careful** in the words we use, the example we set, and what we are influencing others toward.

You see the mark of community - true biblical community - is not the absence of conflict and difficulties but the presence of a reconciling spirit. In our humanness we all do things to rub others the wrong way and to offend.

In our humanness there are times when we hurt each other and the tendency is to pull away and go it alone – isolation.

We must resist that tendency.

In Christ, we are a community of faith, a special place where we can minister or sharpen and be ministered or sharpened to.

We need each other.

When I lived in California – one of our favorite things to do was to go up and visit my Uncle Mark in San Francisco and go to see the Redwood Trees. They are amazing. They are the largest living things on earth and the tallest trees in the world. Some of them are 300 feet high and more than 2,500 years old. You would think that trees that large would have a tremendous root system, reaching down hundreds of feet into the earth. But that is not the case. Redwoods have a very shallow root system. The roots of these trees are, however, intertwined. They are tied in with each other; interlocked. So, when the storms come and the winds blow the redwoods still stand.

With an interlocking root system they support and sustain each other.
They need one another to survive. So do we!

God has given us His Church, which is the body of Christ on earth.
 When one is baptized into Christ, one is baptized into the body of Christ.
 Through Christ we are bound together in a community of faith.
 Belonging to Christ we belong to each other.
 Fellowship with Christ means fellowship with each other.
 Through Christ God has made us a family, an authentic spiritual community
 of faith.
 This is our God-given support system.

During the past 6 weeks we have dove in deeper and deeper into what a
FULLY COMMITTED FOLLOWER OF CHRIST looks like and how we
 should live out our life as such.
 So once more let's go over those principles and motions in order to sharpen
 one another.

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Extends authentic hospitality in response to a forgiven life.
Embraces transformation and moves beyond personal comfort
Pursues God's purposes in spite of fear
Excels in focus and discipline and does not personalize suffering
Rejecting isolating behaviors by connecting with the authentic
spiritual community

We are able to live out all of these principles because through it all
GOD REIGNS.

Pray with me please.