

Gathering Question: Discuss some of the reasons that you think God wanted the church to exist. Is it possible to be a Christian apart from the church? Give reasons for your answer. (Optional) On slips of paper write down something about yourself that no one else in your group knows. As the leader reads the slips of paper guess the identity of the person.

Introduction

We have all heard the story of Robinson Crusoe. It is the story of an obstinate Englishman who ignored his father’s wish that he become a member of the clergy, opting instead for a life at sea. No sooner had his career began than he suffered a shipwreck and was cast ashore alive but alone somewhere on an uninhabited island off the coast of America. With only the supplies he salvaged from his ship he managed to build a house, a boat, and something of a life for himself. Despite living in an idyllic setting Crusoe was never truly happy. The reason for his unhappiness was his solitude. It was not the climate, the food, or the setting that made him so desperately unhappy. Rather, it was the fact that he was alone. The island itself was not a horrible, desolate place, but it was horrible because of unbearable solitude.

The story speaks to a basic human need – community. Humans were created to be in community, both with each other and with God. In the beginning, before the Fall, humankind enjoyed perfect community with God and with each other. Just as community is a foundational part of God’s design for human beings, it is not surprise that it is also foundational to the church. The church is not a concession to failure; it is the culmination of God’s plan for his children. Church, when done the way God intended it, gives us a taste of the perfect community we will experience in heaven.

The New Testament is filled with teaching about the importance of community. This year we plan to study community by taking notice of two simple phrases that occur over and over in the New Testament – *one another* and *each other*. These phrases have to do with interpersonal relationships in the church and are vital to genuine community.

Read: I Corinthians 12:12-27

Questions for Discussion:

1. When Paul says in verse 13, “baptized into one body” what do you think he means? What does this have to do with community?
2. After having read this passage, what part of the body do you consider yourself to be and why? How is your part of the body important to the whole?
3. Read verses 22-25 again. What do you think Paul means by “weaker,” “less honorable,” “less respectable,” and “inferior?”
4. What is the “bottom line” of this passage for you? Which verse challenges you the most?