

The Cost of Non-Community

9.27.26

Colossians 3:12–15 — "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

Stats on loneliness:

- The increased risk of mortality due to loneliness is comparable to smoking 15 cigarettes a day (Surgeon General).
- Nearly half of churchgoing adults (48%) say their feelings of loneliness range from intense to unbearable (Barna).
- More than half of Christians (56%) say their spiritual life is entirely private (Barna).

Non-community comes at the expense of discipleship

Following Jesus always means alongside other followers.

It's too easy to romanticize certain aspects of the early church — to picture the guys who actually lived and walked with Him as though it was simpler or cleaner than it was. It wasn't:

- **Acts 5:1–6** — Ananias and Sapphira sold a piece of property and, with her knowledge, kept back part of the proceeds while claiming to give it all. Peter confronted him: "*Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?*" Ananias fell down dead. Great fear came on all who heard of it.
- **Acts 15** — Paul and Barnabas had a sharp enough disagreement that they split up and went separate ways.
- **Galatians 2** — Paul publicly confronted Peter for caving to social pressure.
- **1 Corinthians 6** — members were suing each other in court.
- **1 Corinthians 11** — drunkenness and class division at the Lord's Supper itself.
- They had to meet in secret and hide for fear of being imprisoned, stoned, or killed.

Henri Nouwen wrote that, "Friendship has always belonged to the core of my spiritual journey."

So, why is community so hard? Why is it hard to make and keep friends?

Every community consists of people...

- People can be tough to be around sometimes.
- People can be annoying.
- People can be judgmental.
- People can be weird.
- People can be mean and hurtful.
- People can have different beliefs, values, ideas, and opinions than you.

Community isn't just hard because people make it hard — the world is driving us toward isolation.

In 2025 and 2026, the number one use of generative AI was for therapy and companionship.

More than ever, we need to prioritize human connection. We need to prioritize reading the Bible, not just asking ChatGPT to tell us about God and how we should live.

Community and friendship will serve you in three ways:

1. A good friend will nourish your soul

Mother Teresa insisted that the deepest form of poverty is loneliness, and that the poverty of the developed world is a poverty of intimacy, love, and connection rather than of resources.

If she's right, then friendship and human connection is a form of wealth.

2. Community will expose your immaturity

The other way community will serve you in the process of your formation in Christ is that being part of a community of other people will bring friction to your life.

Consider some of the 12 Jesus first chose:

- Fishermen — Peter, with his temper.
- Simon the Zealot — “men of the dagger,” prone to violence.
- Matthew — a tax collector, seen as a betrayer to his fellow Jews.
- Judas — a shrewd and cunning businessman, looking out for himself.
- Thomas — seemingly more timid, introspective.
- James and John — immature, easily angered, insecure, momma's boys.

We need to consider the possibility that a person who brings some friction to your life might serve to reveal that something in you that needs to change.

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Here's what this sounds like: you need to bear with one another in love and forgive, because it's not going to be all fun and roses all the time. When somebody hurts you, when it gets hard to be in community, the solution is forgiveness and bearing with one another in love.

2 types of difficulty

- Marriage
 - There's the hard work of being intentional and responsible. It's hard because it requires time and effort. It requires taking the time to develop a vision for who we want to be and what type of marriage we want to have...
 - On the other hand, there's the difficulty of dealing with gets created in the absence of intentionality and responsibility.
 - So the path where we get to be passive and unintentional is initially easier. Less time, less effort, less planning. But this path gets harder over time because the absence of intentionality and responsibility in a relationship will typically lead to dysfunction and other problems.
 - The second path — where we develop a vision and put in the effort to work toward the actualization of that vision — is harder at first, but it gets easier over time because the hard work of being intentional and responsible has potential to improve the quality of our life and the quality of our relationships.
- Finances
- Friendship / Community
 - It's hard to put yourself in a position to where the people around you are exposing the areas in which you need to grow...
 - But it's much harder to go through life assuming that you don't have any areas in which you're still immature.

3. Community keeps you standing in the storm

Jesus warned that storms are coming (Matthew 7). Following Jesus doesn't mean life will be easy. It just means that when the storm comes, you have a foundation that won't get swept away with the wind and rain.

The redwoods

Most of their roots stay within the top three feet of soil. They don't grow down, they grow out. And they're meant to grow in groups, because their root system interlocks with other roots.

- So the reason a redwood doesn't immediately fall when a storm hits is because its roots are connected to all the other redwoods, and they hold each other up.

It's hard to make friends.

It's hard to keep friends.

It's hard to let people see you and know you.

It's hard to let people hold you accountable.

It's hard to be vulnerable.

But that's a cost I think we need to be willing to pay in exchange for one of the primary ways by which we grow and change, which is in community and friendship.

New addition to the Rule of Life!

So far:

- Daily Bread (Scripture)
- Weekly Rooting (Formation / Discipleship)
- Weekly Sabbath (Rest)
- Weekly Communing (Community)