

Family

Week 2 Group Guide | Message by Shawn Johnson

Start

To get things started, let's go around the circle and answer this question:

Are you an introvert or an extrovert? Talk about the challenges and advantages of both.

Share

Welcome to our series "Family."

Driving by almost any neighborhood, we see rows and rows of houses. A house is what we see from the outside, but it's what happens on the inside that makes it a home. Not every house is a home. The people who inhabit it define a home. It is about the family life inside that makes it feel like home.

God's church is not a building; it is the people of God that make up the church. A membership class will not make someone a member. A member is someone who has a relationship with Jesus Christ and is fully engaged in the life God has called them to alongside other believers. It is a family to be a part of, not something we sign up for. Just like any family, we enjoy each other's friendship, encourage one another, argue at times, sit at the table, and apologize and find ways to help serve our brothers and sisters in Christ.

At Red Rocks Church we believe in the family of God. All of us have a place at the table thanks to what Jesus Christ has done for us. We don't build the church; God builds the church and calls us to play a part using our God-given abilities, resources and time to run the one and only race that matters. We get to do Kingdom work and invite others to join the family that they have always been longing for.

This week, we are going to look deeper into what it truly means to have *community*. For some of us, we honestly do not understand the concept of a stranger, because everyone we meet is instantly our friend! For others, we avoid looking at people in the grocery line, or will dodge that potential run-in with an acquaintance at the coffee shop. This is because the thought of having to carry on an impromptu conversation makes us want to crawl into a hole. Regardless of our predisposition, God has called us to live in intentional community with other believers. It is in community where we can share our lives, where we can share our stories.

Author Eugene Peterson says:

We live in narrative, we live in story. Existence has a story shape to it. We have a beginning and an end, we have a plot and we have characters.

Let's read Acts 2:41-47

The first church was just created, God was moving, and people could feel it. Instead of reveling in the greatness of those moments, the people in Acts decided to go one step further. They immediately huddled up into groups in each other's houses, and had meals together. They started sharing their lives with one another. Isn't it comforting to know that as we gather together right now, this model has been happening for thousands and thousands of years? Community has been close to Jesus' heart from the very beginning.

What are some of the difficulties of being in community? Why do you think God still calls us to do so, despite these?

Does God's desire for us to be in community with other believers impact you personally? How so?

Grow

As Shawn mentioned, following God was never intended to be carried out in solitude. Jesus demonstrated a perfect relationship with the Lord, and even He chose to have community. If there was one person who could make it through life without others, it would have been Jesus. Yet He knew the all the richness that community has to offer.

Let's read Ecclesiastes 4: 9-10.

There are two beautiful parts to these verses. With community, you not only have someone there for you when you are struggling who can "pick you up," you also have the opportunity to be the person who is "picking up" your fellow friend. It is a beautiful dance to rely on your community, and to be the one who is relied on. As believers, we get to be vulnerable with those we trust, and also be the person or part of the group of people who surround a friend in need. We get to support them through difficult seasons of life, as well as celebrating with them in the joyous moments in life.

Here is Matthew Henry's commentary on these verses:

Hence Solomon infers the mischief of solitude: Woe to him that is alone. He lies exposed to many temptations which good company and friendship would prevent and help him to guard against; he wants that advantage which a man has by the countenance of his friend, as iron has of being sharpened by iron. A monastic life then was surely never intended for a state of perfection, nor should those be reckoned the greatest lovers of God who cannot find in their hearts to love any one else. He proves it by diverse instances of the benefit of friendship and good conversation.

Read Proverbs 12:26 and Proverbs 13:20

What, if any, struggles do you have with being open and honest with those in your community? What does getting beyond that look like for you?

Are there areas of your life that you are reluctant for others to know about you? Are they barriers for you in being part of this community?

Move

Whether you have just joined your life group, you have been in a life group for years, or took Shawn's advice and created a temporary group, you have completed the first step that Peter was talking about; you are in a group! It is easy to take our community for granted, but the reality is that in Red Rocks Church alone, there are vast amounts of people who do not have a group to join. We must sincerely invest in the lives of those in our group, as well as allow ourselves to be invested in. We must open our hearts to the Lord's leading for and in our life groups, and steward the blessing of community well.

Shawn encouraged each of us to write down names of people in our lives to whom we need to take the next step toward deeper community with. Jesus modeled this with His inner circle of three men, inside the larger group of His 12 disciples. For some, we have felt the deep pain of betrayal by those we chose to let in. It is important to partner with the Lord and trust Him with your relationships. Remember, God never wastes our pain or our time, and we must continue to let Him work through every area of our lives.

Let's end by reading James 5:16

How can we tangibly start to go deeper with those in our community? How do we make this sustainable in those relationships?

Shawn mentioned some examples of what it looks like to go deeper with a few. What does this tangibly look like for you? What is your desire for those relationships?

Pray

As a group, spend some time praying for each other, especially for the struggles that people might be facing today. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

To Go

Psalm 27:17

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.