



COMMUNITY IS A NEED:

Why do I need other Christ-followers?

Facilitator's Guide

COMMUNITY

🎯 OVERVIEW:

Jesus described his followers as sheep with a shepherd. Charles Spurgeon expanded on this idea: "Some Christians try to go to heaven alone, in solitude. But believers are not compared to bears or lions or other animals that wander alone. Those who belong to Christ are sheep in this respect, that they love to get together. Sheep go in flocks, and so do God's people."¹ Are you part of a flock? Do you sense that a flock and a shepherd are necessary for survival? A lone sheep in the wild is extremely vulnerable. A follower of Christ without community is in a similar position. This lesson focuses on the importance of community for every believer.

? OPENING QUESTIONS:

- When was the loneliest you ever felt? What made you feel that way? What were you missing most?
- Think of a time you felt like a part of a group, surrounded by friends or family. What made this special?

💬 WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY ABOUT IT:

"Spiritual maturity is giving up the illusion that I can ever be alone."² Many of us have the illusion that we can walk our faith journey solo. We think we can do it all on our own. Especially in the United States, it's easy to pick up on this idea that we're supposed to have it all together with no help from anyone. But that's not how the world works. We need community. We need people to love and support and help us. And we should do the same thing for other people. John Donne, a famous poet, wrote, "No man is an island."³ The Bible shows us this truth over and over, and no one exemplifies it better than Jesus.

Jesus is God. So, if anyone could live life without any help, it would be him, right? Not exactly. Before he assumed humanity, even before he created the earth, the Son lived in eternal community with the Father and the Spirit. That's why we call God "the Trinity." So, if anyone knew the importance of community, it was Jesus. He understood the value of surrounding himself with others and pouring into their lives, too. Near the beginning of his public ministry, one of the first things Jesus did was to ask 12 men to join up with him, to travel with him, to follow him. These 12 men were his disciples. They were his students, followers, and friends. And if Jesus needed intentional community, so do we. Read the following passage about the time Jesus spent praying in the garden of Gethsemane, just before he was arrested and crucified. He didn't go it alone. His disciples followed him to watch and pray (although they messed that up). During the hardest moments when Jesus was sweating blood, he stationed his friends around him.

Read: Matthew 26:36-46





Discuss:

- Why did Jesus want his disciples close by at this difficult time, watching and praying?
- How do you think Jesus felt when he found his friends sleeping, not once, not twice, but three times?
- Could you be as direct as Jesus was about asking friends to be with you when you really need it?
- Can you think of a time when you've been there for someone else who needed it? Is there a time you should have helped someone out, but didn't?



A SECOND LOOK:

Francis Schaeffer was a fairly normal kid. He was a little on the small side. His parents worked normal jobs. He wasn't a great student, and by the end of high school, he worked on a fish wagon part time. Sounds pretty average, right? But fast forward to what he'd accomplished by the end of his life: He worked with famous politicians, had the attention of the president, wrote books, made films, and received honorary doctorates. So, what got him from "Point A" to "Point B"? How did an unremarkable guy become so influential? In a lot of ways, it came down to his choice to open himself up to community. Here's how it started: Schaeffer's oldest daughter brought some friends home from college. Schaeffer and his wife, Edith, were kind hosts and helped these students think through some deep questions, so more people started showing up to participate in this community that grew in the Schaeffer's home. They called it "L'Abri" (French for "the Shelter"). After a time, L'Abri became famous as a community where people who wanted answers to hard questions could come and engage in deep thinking, discover truth, and find acceptance and help. Famous thinkers would travel high up into the Swiss Alps just to visit Schaeffer. His deep commitment to a community of Christ-followers led him forward into a life of amazing impact.

Like Jesus, Schaeffer valued and pursued community, even before a hugely successful public ministry. The world can be a rough place, and we need the support and the challenge of other followers of Christ to make it. In *The Cost of Discipleship*, Bonhoeffer writes, "In the world the Christians are a colony of the true home."⁴ Christian community provides a tiny glimpse of Heaven. We need the sharpening, support, and hope that come from friends who love Jesus.

Discuss:

- How did Francis Schaeffer benefit from the community he built? How did he pour into the community?
- Do you think he could have had the same success without the help of other people? Why or why not?
- Do you have a solid community in your life?
- What things do you think are necessary to make up a solid, healthy community?



✓ **LIVE IT OUT: Bonding Time**

Community is more than just hanging out with people. Take a few minutes to brainstorm with your group and write down all the characteristics you can think of that make a solid community, the kind that pushes you to follow Christ. Take a look at these verses for some direction: Psalm 1:1, 26:4–5; Proverbs 12:26, 13:20, 22:24–25, 27:17; Ecclesiastes 4:9–12; Romans 12:10; 1 Corinthians 15:33.

LEADER'S NOTE: Helping students define a godly and edifying community is important. Community is more than just hanging out—it's intentional, it has a purpose, and it helps us pursue Christ. This is a great chance to get your students' perspective on this, as well. Use their answers as a working definition for the community you're building within the group. Consider writing down their answers on a large paper or white board and keeping it in the room in which you regularly meet.

Do you watch many sports movies? Have you ever noticed the classic theme of a team of misfits that can't come together to pull off the big win until they've had some fun, off-the-field bonding? That bonding time helps them open up to each other, trust each other, and work together to make great things happen. What are some things your group could do to build community outside of Youth Group and form those bonds? Together with your small group, brainstorm a list of things you could do together to form that inspirational-sports-movie bond. Share your ideas with the whole group and then schedule a time to actually do them this week. Put it in your phones or write it in your planner. Then do it!

LEADER'S NOTE: This second point is a great chance for students to own the next "event" and take their relationships to a deeper level. Help students not just share ideas, but come up with a plan and dates for this event before they leave. Let them take leadership and ownership of it.

Discuss:

- Think about your list of characteristics of biblical community. Are you missing out on any of them? How can you start integrating those into a community you're already a part of?
- Now think about your list of "extracurricular" hangout activities. Do you think it'll be easier or harder to do these things regularly than the things on your first list? Why?
- Why do you think solid community has to be more than just hanging out? Why do you think hanging out is still important to building friendships?



APPLY IT:

Write down one way you can personally grow or initiate godly community in your life this week.

Be specific:

What are you going to do?

When are you going to do it?

Is there someone who can keep you accountable?

LEADER'S NOTE: Whenever students make applications, challenge them to be specific. It's one thing to say, "I'm going to trust God more." The truth is, our students won't really know if they did this, or if they grew in trust over the week. It's another thing to say, "Every morning this week before I eat breakfast, I'm going to tell God that today is his and that I trust him, and I'm going to ask him to give me the strength to replace worries with trust." Challenge your students to answer the questions under the "Be Specific" section. You can even have them pair up, share their applications, and ask for accountability from their partner.



THINK ABOUT IT:

"Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another," (Prov. 27:17).

"Fellowship is a place of grace, where mistakes aren't rubbed in but rubbed out. Fellowship happens when mercy wins over justice." – Rick Warren ⁵

***Any reference within this piece to Internet addresses of websites not under the administration of LeaderTreks is not to be taken as an endorsement of these websites by LeaderTreks; neither does LeaderTreks vouch for their content.

¹ Charles H. Spurgeon, "A Call to the Lord's Own Flock (Sermon No. 1807)," *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Vol. 30, (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1884), 518.

² Tad Dunne, quoted in Brennan Manning, *The Relentless Tenderness of Jesus*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 14.

³ John Donne, "Meditation 17: Now, This Bell Tolling Softly for Another, Says to Me: Thou Must Die," in *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions: And, Death's Duel*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 103.

⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, (New York: Macmillan, 1959), 243.

⁵ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), Kindle edition.