



BETTER TOGETHER: I Need Togetherness

Pastor Derek Sanford

June 6, 2021

ENCOURAGEMENT:

As we cautiously walk out of the loneliness and isolation of the pandemic, we might feel as if we are entering a darkened movie theater. We can't see what's directly in front of us, and we fear dropping our popcorn or sodas on to the lap of some unsuspecting theater patron who came in when the lights were on! We don't like being vulnerable and yet, we are called to be just that [2 Corinthians 6:12-13]. Describe a time when you let yourself be vulnerable with others. What were the results of your decision? How did you feel afterwards?

Scripture:

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. Acts 2:46-47

- 1- What does "together" mean for you? (think- family, friends, coworkers, church)
- 2- Do you find the best expression of "together" to be the local church? Why or why not?
- 3- What are some of the ways that the Church is called to behave together? [Leader- consider asking members to read some of the "[one another](#)" passages from the New Testament]
- 4- Where do you see yourself and Grace church doing these well? Where do you see a need for growth for you? For the church?

Prayer: Pray for one another. Pray for Grace church. Pray for our hearts toward one another and for our gathering to be marked by the togetherness we see in Scripture. Invite the Holy Spirit to convict, to awaken, to transform!

Next Step: Since Church is not limited to the bricks and mortar by which the building is composed and teachings are not limited to the pastors giving a sermon on Sunday, how can you bring the Good News of Jesus to others who might be dealing with loneliness or isolation? Be bold and remember that the same Holy Spirit that resurrected Jesus resides in you!



BETTER TOGETHER: I Need Transcendence

Pastor Derek Sanford

June 13, 2021

Life Group Discussion

Encouragement:

Ask the group about times of meaningful worship they have experienced. Ask them about times it has seemed hard to worship. What are the differences in the two times?

Prayer: Mix it up today! Use [Psalm 95](#) as a guide for group prayer time to prepare your hearts for discussion. (Suggestion- Have someone read a verse and pause to allow others to pray out loud.)

Scripture:

Read [Exodus 19: 9, 16](#)

1. What did God ask Moses to have the people do prior to Him coming to them? How can we prepare ourselves for worship? What should our attitude be during worship? How can we focus on God and not necessarily on what others are doing around us?
2. What does it mean to you to “bring your best”? How can we do this when we come before God in worship?

Read [Matthew 15: 8-9](#) and [1 Corinthians 13: 1](#)

3. Have you ever felt like your worship was empty? What do you think it means to set your heart right for worship?

Next Steps: How did our prayer time prepare us for the group discussion? What is one thing you can do to be better prepared for group time? For Sunday worship?



BETTER TOGETHER: I Need COURAGE

Pastor Derek Sanford

June 20th, 2021

Life Group Discussion

Encouragement:

Share some stories of encouragement! Have you ever changed direction, found courage, or been helped in any other way by the encouragement of others?

Scripture:

[Hebrews 10:19-25](#)

1. Verse 19 says “we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus.” Would you say that “confidence” is a word that you would use to describe your prayer life? Why/Why not?
2. Based on these verses, what are the reasons for our confidence before God?
3. Vs 24-25 - Do you find stirring others to love and good works to be hard or easy? Why or Why not? What are the barriers to being this kind of encourager? What are the barriers to receiving encouragement?
4. Knowing that “encouragement” means “to give courage”, what are practical ways you can you “give courage”?

Prayer:

In what situation or with what person do you need courage? Consider breaking into to pairs and spend time praying for and encouraging each other.

Next Steps:

Review the main points from Pastor Derek’s message:

Why we need the Courage of Others –

1. Some DECISIONS are too important to MAKE ALONE
2. Some TRIALS are too hard to BEAR ALONE
3. Some TEMPTATIONS are too strong to RESIST ALONE.

When it comes to decisions, trials, and temptations, would you say you generally face these things alone or involve others? What tends to keep you back from involving others? What changes do you need to make? How can you take a step this week to receive the courage of others?



BETTER TOGETHER: I Need a Stranger

Pastor Derek Sanford

June 27, 2021

Life Group Discussion

Encouragement:

Share a story of the first time you met one of your closest friends or significant others. What made you decide to go from being strangers to becoming friends?

Scripture: [Ephesians 2:11-14](#)

We were all once “strangers” to God, but through Jesus, we have been adopted into God’s family – a family that is united by Jesus’ blood and our common goal of getting as many people as possible to experience that mercy. Since Jesus sought us who “were far off” and have now “been brought near,” we should do the same for others.

- When and why do you neglect those who are “far off”?
- Who might God have placed in your life in order to bring near to him?

Circumcision was the distinguishing feature of God’s followers under the old covenant (before Jesus).

- Based on other scriptures that you know, what does Jesus say are some of the distinguishing features of his followers? (Hint- think on the “one another” verses in the New Testament)
- How do those tie in to loving and welcoming strangers into your life and church?
- If Jesus has broken down the “dividing wall of hostility,” then why are there still divisions and hostility in the church?
- How about in your own life?
- What are the serious and the silly reasons we don’t welcome strangers at church?

Prayer:

Ask God to help you overcome the serious and silly reasons that keep you from welcoming strangers, and then pray in advance for the strangers you will meet this week.

Next Steps:

Take Pastor Derek’s challenge, and identify the “stranger” from church who you will invite into your life.!