

40 Days of Community

Part 1

Why We Need Each Other

“Since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others.” Rom. 12:5b (NLT)

1. I NEED OTHERS TO _____ WITH ME.

“Just as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him...” Col. 2:6-7 (ESV)

“It is not good for man to be alone.” Gen. 2:18 (NLT)

“Let us not give up the habit of meeting together... Instead, let us encourage one another.” Heb. 10:25a (TEV)

- **Community is God’s answer to:** _____

“When you gather, each one of you be prepared with something useful for all: Sing a hymn, teach a lesson, tell a story, lead a prayer, provide an insight... Take your turn, with no one person taking over. That way... you all learn from each other.”
1 Cor. 14:26, 30-31(Mes)

“As each part does its work, it helps the other parts grow, so Christ’s whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.” Eph. 4:16 (NLT)

“Open your homes to each other without complaining.” 1 Peter 4:9 (TEV)

2. I NEED OTHERS TO _____ WITH ME.

“God made us to do good works, which He planned in advance for us to live our lives doing.” Eph. 2:10 (NCV)

“Two people are better than one, because they get more done by working together.”
Eccl. 4:9 (NCV)

- **Community is God’s answer to:** _____

“Every time we get the chance, let us work for the benefit of all, starting with the people closest to us in the community of faith.” Gal. 6:10 (Mes)

3. I NEED OTHERS TO _____ FOR ME.

“Look out for one another's interests, not just for your own.” Phil. 2:4 (TEV)

“Keep being concerned about each other as the Lord's followers should.” Heb. 13:1 (CEV)

*“A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.”
Eccl. 4:12 (NLT)*

- **Community is God's answer to:** _____

*“If one person falls, another can reach out and help. But people who are alone when they fall are in real trouble.”
Eccl. 4:10 (NLT)*

4. I NEED OTHERS TO _____ WITH ME.

“You should be like one big family, full of sympathy toward each other...” 1 Peter 3:8a (LB)

“If one member suffers, all suffer together.” 1 Cor. 12:26 (ESV)

- **Community is God's answer to:** _____

“Be happy with those who are happy, weep with those who weep.” Rom. 12:15 (TEV)

“Encourage each other and strengthen one another.” 1 Th. 5:11 (GW)

5. I NEED OTHERS TO _____ WITH ME.

*“Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”
John 13:35 (NLT)*

“The Holy Spirit doesn't want you to be afraid of people, but to be wise and strong, and to love them and enjoy being with them.” 2 Tim. 1:7 (LB)

- **God's answer to fear is** _____.

*“...You are working together and struggling side by side to get others to believe the Good News.”
Phil. 1:27b (CEV)*

40 Days of Community Part 1

Why We Need Each Other

Transcript of Message by Rick Warren
October 2-3, 2004

Well good morning everybody. Wow, you look great today. If you'll take out your outlines, today, we're beginning a revolution. And I don't say that lightly. It is going to be a revolution that will start here and will spread literally all across America and then hopefully around the world.

And we're going to start with a message today that really is pretty radical. It's pretty countercultural. It's the exact opposite of what you've been taught your entire life. But God says, "If you will do what I tell you to do, you will never again have to deal with loneliness. You'll be able to overcome fatigue, fear, failure, and frustration. Your life will be so much easier if you'll just do it the way I planned for you to do it." The anecdote to all of those things is the concept of community.

Now we Americans, man we love our independence. Our nation was founded on the Declaration of Independence. And so we really love it. You know, "I got to be me." "I did it my way." "I don't need anybody to tell me what it's all about."

And we think and we have been taught that happiness is the result of independence, and that if I'm financially independent, if I'm relationally independent, if I am independent in every way, then I will be the happiest. And yet, we have never had more unhappy people, and suicide rate continues to go up. Why? Because that's not the answer. The truth is, happiness does not come from being independent, isolated, living your life with all the barriers up and all the masks and keeping people at an arm's distance. That's not the way to be happy. Happiness comes from interdependence, from interdependence, from community.

Notice what the Bible says there on Romans chapter 12. Let's read it aloud together, "*Since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other and each of us needs all the others.*" Turn to the person next to you and say, "You need me." Go ahead. "You need me." All right. Now also, I want you to say, "I need you." Go ahead. "I need you." We just had over a hundred marriage proposals just then. I'll be doing a two for one special on weddings after the service.

We do need each other. We just don't realize how much we need each other because we are taught independence. Now during '40 Days of Purpose' that we did two years ago, the big idea was that God put you on this planet for five reasons and we talked about those five purposes that God put you on earth to fulfill. That's the big idea.

Let me give you a bigger idea. You cannot fulfill any of those five purposes on your own. You can't do it by yourself. It's impossible. God wired you and wired all of us in such a way that we can only fulfill his purposes for our lives in community, in his family, in relationship to each other. We need each other. That's the big idea we're going to look at for the next 40 days.

We're going to look at relationships. We're going to look at why do relationships go bad? And how do you turn a bad relationship into a good one? And what does it mean to really love and be loved? And what does it mean to really have intimacy with somebody? To have soul-to-soul fellowship and what is the purpose of God's church in all of this?

Now, today I'm going to give you a little introduction. And we're going to look at why we need each other. The five reasons why you need a church family, and more than that, five reasons why you need to be in a small group with a few other friends who you get to know on a deeper level than just casual acquaintance.

And the Bible gives us five reasons:

Number one, **I need others to WALK with me.** I need others to walk with me. In other words, I need people to help me grow spiritually. The Bible says in Colossians 2:6 and 2:7, "*Just as you receive Christ Jesus the Lord,*" read it with me, "*So walk in him.*"

Now the Bible often calls your spiritual life, your walk. It calls it "the Christian walk" or "the spiritual walk." Why? Because life is not just a sit-down thing, it's a journey. You're always growing. You're always moving, and your life is a journey. There is a destination to get to. And the Bible says that as you walk through life, God wants you to do certain things.

Now all through scripture, it tells us, particularly through the New Testament, we're to walk in the light, we're to walk in love, we're to walk in obedience, we're to walk in the Holy Spirit, we're to walk as Jesus walked, we're to walk in wisdom. Many, many ways the Bible tells us how to live this kind of life. But one of the important things is this: God never intended for you to walk through life alone. Never. God never intended for you to walk through life alone. Now let me make it really clear, this has nothing to do with whether you're single or married. .

Now some of you say, "Well what's wrong with walking alone? I like to walk alone. I prefer to walk alone. I get my own way when I walk alone." Well, that's part of the problem... is you're not learning cooperation. You're not learning relationships. You're not learning love. God says, "I want you to walk through life with other people close in relationship with you," and he says it for three reasons. You might just write this in the margin.

Number one: **It's safer.** It's safer when you walk with others through life. There's safety in numbers. It's a whole lot less risky. Have you ever had to walk through a dark alley at night by yourself in an inner-city area or some other place, maybe even in the country? It can be quite frightening to you. It's safer when you walk with others.

Second, **it's supportive.** It keeps you from giving up. When other people are walking with you, they keep you going. Have you ever done a marathon where you're going through this marathon and as you're going through it, all of a sudden you get a ache in your side and you got this pain and you want to give up? It usually happens to me about mile 20. Isn't that true? About mile 20? About 20 steps for me? And you want to give up but if other people are walking or running with you, then you keep on going. There's an old Zambian proverb, 'When you run alone, you run fast. But when you run together, you run far.' The life that you live is not a 50-yard dash, it is a marathon and you want to run far.

Have you ever seen geese flying in V-formation? The reason they do that is that they can fly farther in that formation because it creates an updraft and they don't get as tired when they fly together. And when we fly, when we walk, when we run through life together, we're a whole lot less tired. It's safer. It's supportive.

And number three, **it's smarter.** You'll learn a whole lot more when you go through life with other people close to you. I'm not just talking about casual friends. I'm talking about people who are in true fellowship with you. The Bible says in Proverbs 26, "*Only fools trust what they think alone is right.*" In other words if I'm the only one who thinks it, guess what? I'm wrong.

The Bible says in the multitude of counselors, there is safety. And so it's smart and it's supportive and it's safe.

Now look at this next verse, Genesis 2:18, read it with me, "*It is not good for man to be alone.*" That's the first thing God said after he created Adam. Everything was perfect, but he said, "It is not good for man to be alone." God hates loneliness. God hates loneliness. You can bank on that for the rest of your life.

And so, he created two groups. He gave you a physical family and a spiritual family. The physical family that you grew up in, and the spiritual family that you live your life in, because your physical family doesn't last. They die off, and they move away and things like that. So you need a spiritual family, and that is the church. And actually, your spiritual family is going to last a whole lot longer than your physical one because it's going to go on for ever and ever and eternity. And God's safety net is his family. Notice Hebrews 10 says this, "*Let us not give up the habit,*" that means you do it all the time, "*The habit of meeting together, instead let us encourage one another.*" I need people to encourage me in my daily walk. And he says, "How do you do that?" He says, "By meeting together."

Now that verse there, he's not talking about what we're doing right now. He's talking about community. Folks, this is not community. This is a crowd. And so, you don't have community in coming here to worship. Community is what happens when you're with three other people or four or five or six or maybe eight, maybe at the most ten or so. You get more than ten people in a group, somebody usually stops talking, and so you stop relating. You see, you could be in a crowd, you could come to church every week for years and still be lonely because you never know anybody.

Recently, I was in Manhattan And I walked out by myself, I was in a crowd of , , maybe 100,000 people. It was very crowded, but I felt pretty lonely. you can be lonely in a crowd.

Now would you write this down: **Community is God's answer to LONELINESS.** Community is God's answer to loneliness. We need a few people in our lives that we know really well, and they know us really well. And we all need a place, we need a group, where we can practice relationships and really learn to love. So let the revolution begin.

[music break]

Now that's what we're going to talk about for the next 40 days: What the world needs now is love and we don't often even know what love is all about. We don't know really how to relate to each other. We don't know how to build great, healthy, strong, lasting relationships.

Now notice what the Bible says in First Corinthians 14, there on your outline, it's talking about when you get together and it says this: *"When you gather, each one of you be prepared with something useful for all, sing a hymn, teach a lesson, tell a story, lead a prayer, provide an insight. Take your turn with no one person taking over. That way... you all learn from each other."*

Now here's a question, does that sound like something we do hear on Sunday morning? No. No, we don't do this. I don't say, "Anybody got a poem?" "What happened at work this week?" "Can I pray for you?" We don't because this is too big. This is not a community. This is a crowd. What I just read, there's only one place that can happen: In a small group. Temple courts for worship, house to house for fellowship, and you need both to be a balanced believer. You need both to be healthy spiritually. He says it can only happen in a small group.

Now what is the goal here? When you walk through life, you need a small group of believers walking through life with you. And that's the goal, Ephesians 4, the next verse, *"As each part does its work,"* that's all of us in the body of Christ, *"It helps the other parts grow. So Christ's whole body,"* that's the church, *"is healthy and growing and,"* read it with me, *"full of love."* That's what God wants. He wants us all to grow, and he wants us all to be full of love.

And how do we do it? We get in the situation where everybody can help each other on a personal basis. Now that's what '40 Days of Community' is all about and during '40 Days of Community,' I want everybody to get in a small group. I'm talking about 100% of our church.

Now I'm not asking you to do this the rest of your life. I'm asking you to just do it for 40 days. That's six times. Just get in a group and go six times. Why? Well, you're going to get several benefits.

First, you are going to learn. Each week you will watch a 20-25 minute lesson that I prepared especially for this series on community. And, you will have a chance each week to discuss what I will be teaching.

The second thing that happens is that everybody in a group, is going to get this new book, called "Better Together, What On Earth Are We Here For?" And it is 40 daily readings on how to get better relationships, how to build better relationships. Now, you can't buy this book in any bookstore. The only way you can get it is by being in a small group. You're not going to get it any other way because learning about community is worthless unless you're in a community. You've got to experience it. And so, you'll be reading through this every day.

You will also get one of these small key chains. And each week you will get a little plastic card to put on the key chain. On each of the cards is a memory verse that will reinforce what you are learning that week about community.

Like I said earlier, we want every one of you in a group during the next 40 days. We have many people in our church have stepped forward and volunteered to host a group. I want to ask all of you who have volunteered to host a group to stand right now. Go ahead, stand up right where you are. THANKS for your willingness to serve.

Now these people want you in their home. So if you're not in a group yet, Tom's going to come in a minute and tell you how you can get in a group. But let me just tell you something. these hosts will grow the most. The host will grow the most. Why? Because God's economy is that when we give out, he gives more to us. And those who bless others are actually more blessed themselves. The fact is you could be a host, everybody here. All you need to do is sign up and we will get in touch with you.

The Bible says this in First Peter 4:9, "*Open your homes to each other,*" read it with me, "*without complaining.*" Yeah, okay, complaining. Question: What's your complaint? What excuse have you been using for not opening up your home? "Well, it's too dirty." Well, I'll come help you clean it. Just invite me over. I'll help you clean it. You say, "Well, it's not big enough." Well, is it big enough to hold three people, maybe four? That's all you need for a group. Just get some friends... get some people who owe you money. Invite them over. Use that leverage. You say, "Well I don't know if I want to do it... I don't like my neighbors." Well, don't invite them. I'm not telling you you have to invite people you don't like. No, no, find people you like. People you work with, you

go to school with, people who are friends, relatives or neighbors or something like that. Some of you say, “Well Rick, nobody would want to come.” Are you kidding? Oh really? Do you realize that in every human being’s heart there is a longing for belonging? Inside, everybody wants relationships. Nobody wants to be lonely. That’s why solitary confinement is the worst form of punishment. We were made to belong.

We’ve provided some invitation cards that you can use to invite people to join you in this study. I want you to give this to somebody this week, and take them to a group with you.

Pastor Tom:

[REPLACE THIS WITH EXPLANATION OF HOW TO SIGN UP FOR A GROUP AT YOUR CHURCH.]

Pastor Rick:

All right, that’s the first reason why we need each other because I need people to walk through life with me.

Number two, I need people, I need others to not just walk with me but to **WORK with me**... to work with me. Do you know that the Bible says God put you on earth to do some certain things? And you need other people to help you do those certain things? The Bible says in Ephesians 2:10, “*God made us to do good works, which he planned in advance for us to live our lives doing.*”

Before you were even born, God decided what talents you were going to get, what natural abilities, what gifts, what background. He decided what country you would be born in. He decided all of these things because he has a certain thing that he wants you to do with your life, “your good works.” And that is called your ministry. Anytime you use the talents God has given you to help other people, that’s called ministry or service. It’s helping other people. But God doesn’t want you to do it by yourself or you’ll get worn out, he says you need other people to work with you.

And remember, I’ve told you this many times that life on earth is practice for heaven, for eternity. And in heaven, you’re going to do four things, and one of them is serve God. When you’re in heaven, one of the things you’re going to do is serve God. What do you want to do here? God says, “I want you to practice serving while you’re on earth.” When you get to heaven and you didn’t practice, well what kind of job are you going to get there?

Now see in heaven, nobody’s ever going to get tired doing their work because we will all share it together. And everybody just has a little part, you don’t have a whole lot. You’ve just got a little part to do in heaven and so, you’re never going to get tired.

Now on earth, you’re tired all the time. Maybe its because You’re not in community. You don’t have other people helping you.

Now God tells us why we need others to work with us. Look at the next verse, Ecclesiastes 4 says, “*Two people are better than one because they get more done by working together.*” You know that’s true. You always get more done by working with other people.

You know, I recently did a tour on the East Coast. And I spoke in 11 cities in 12 days. It was amazing. Now, I would’ve been a basket case if I had tried to do that all by myself. But I took Tom and I took Forrest and I took David and those three guys all were a part of the team. And every time the plane hit the ground, we each knew our assignments. Nobody’s good at everything. We need each other. And the key is you need people in your life who are strong at things you’re weak at.

And so, we did this together as a team. When I got home, I wasn’t tired, I got up the next morning at 6 a.m. and went right back to work. Why? Because we had a team. I wasn’t carrying the load myself. You know, it was amazing, while we were at Westpoint, they showed us a system where they feed 4,000 people in 15 minutes and they do it three times a day. Imagine feeding 4,000 people in 15 minutes. I said, “How in the world did they do that?” They give everybody a roll with butter. Everybody has a role to play. Everybody has a position, and they do it all together.

You’ve heard me say before, “Snowflakes are frail but if enough of them stick together, they can stop traffic.”

Now I can’t do a whole lot on my own, and you can’t make a very big impact on the world on your own either. But you know, you get enough snowflakes together, they can do something. And in this church, we’ve got 82,000 snowflakes. That’ll stop something. Better yet, it’ll start something.

And God says, “I want to use you.” You see, there’s this myth, the Mother Theresa myth, of the lone person going out there to save the world on their own. That’s not what Mother Theresa did. Mother Theresa had an army behind her of other sisters. In fact, this past week in Washington D.C., Kay met Mother Theresa’s successor and had a meeting with her. She had an army of other people helping in the streets of Calcutta. You see, together each of us... together, can make a difference if we each just do a little part. It’s not a big thing. It’s just a little thing.

The reason why you’re so exhausted is you don’t have anybody helping you. Would you write this down on your outline: **Community is God’s answer to FATIGUE.** Community is God’s answer to fatigue. Have you ever seen on TV or maybe you saw the movie *Witness* where the Amish build a barn together in one day? The whole community turns out. Everybody does a little bit and the thing’s done like that.

During ‘40 Days of Community,’ we’re going to take on a big project as a church: To feed every homeless person in Orange County, that’s 35,000 homeless. Every day feed them three meals a day for 40 days. Now that is an overwhelmingly huge project, but not

really. If everybody in our church got in a group and every group gave about two hours to this project, it'd be over in a week. It'd be done in a snap. It just isn't that hard.

Galatians 6:10 says this, *“Every time we get the chance, let us work for the benefit of all, starting with the people closest to us in the community of faith,”* that's the church. You see, God uses ordinary people

All right. I need people to walk with me and I need people to work with me. The third thing is: In life, **I need others to WATCH OUT for me.** I need people who will defend me, who will protect me, who will stand up for me when I need somebody to stand up for me, who will help me stay on track, who will warn me. I need people to watch out for me.

Philippians 2:4 says this, *“Look out for one another's interests, not just for your own.”* Now that's a countercultural statement because in America, everybody says, “It's all about me. It's all about my needs, my interests, my hurts, and the rest of you, forget you because really it's all about me.” And yet the Bible says, “Look out for one another's interests.”

Have you ever seen any of these ‘Neighborhood Watch’ signs in some areas? That's a sign of community. It says we watch out for people here. We take care of each other. If you went on vacation this summer and you were gone for a week or a couple of weeks, you probably told your neighbor, “I'm going to be gone for a while. Would you look out for my stuff?” Because we all want our stuff looked out for. So we ask our neighbor, “Would you mind just keeping an eye open and watch out for my stuff?”

Well, let me ask you, do you have anybody looking out for your soul? Because your soul is more important than your stuff. Is there anybody who is helping you out in your spiritual journey? Who's watching out for you? To make sure that you're still growing? To make sure that you're not getting discouraged and depressed and feel like giving up?

You see, the fact is we all have blind spots. There are things in our lives that we can't see, that only other people can see. You know, I grew this this summer [points to goatee] and then Kay goes, “If you're going to have this beard, honey, you've got to get rid of the flat hair.” So she gave me this new spiky thing. There's only one problem with it: I can't see the back of my head, and it stands up back there. And so, I'm not making this up, both last night and this morning, as I'm walking out the door to go to church, she says, “Stop!” I thought, “What did I do wrong?” And she has to ‘squirt, squirt.’ [mimics Kay fixing the back of his hair] You know? Because I can't see it. I mean if you have a taillight that goes out, you're never going to know it. Somebody's got to tell you, “You've got a taillight out.” Hopefully, somebody tells you when you're unzipped. Please if I'm ever unzipped, will you tell me? Don't let me go the whole sermon, okay? Just stand and go, “Rick, zip up!” Okay? If you've got lettuce in your teeth or taco, friends don't let friends have taco in their teeth.

So we need people who watch out for us, who love us, who go, “Hey you know, you’ve got a little booger right here. Get rid of that thing.” That’s why we need each other. Get it? Good.

I need others to watch out for me. The Bible says this in Hebrews 13, “*Keep being concerned about each other as the Lord’s followers should.*” Christians ought to take care of Christians. People in the church ought to take care of other people in the church. It says, “Keep being concerned about each other.” Circle the word, ‘Keep.’ That means be vigilant. You don’t just do it once. You just keep on doing it. You know in a war, everybody has to serve sentry duty at some point, where everybody else is asleep but then you stay awake to watch out.

Recently, I read the 9/11 reports. It’s pretty fascinating reading, and I was reading the first preface there, listen to this section and tell me if it doesn’t apply to your spiritual battle with Satan every day because you have an enemy too. Listen to this, “We learned about an enemy who is sophisticated, patient, disciplined and lethal,” well that applies to the devil to, “The enemy rallies broad support by political grievances but its hostility towards us and towards our values is limitless. Its purpose is to rid the world of religious pluralism. It makes no distinction between military and civilian targets; collateral damage is not in its lexicon.” Satan doesn’t care who he hurts if he hurts you, hurts your friends, hurts your children, hurts your parents.

You see, Satan’s real deal is he wants to hurt God. But he can’t hurt God. God can’t be hurt. So what does he do? He hurts God’s children. If you couldn’t hurt me, what would you do? You’d go after my wife or my kids. And so, Satan can’t hurt God, so what does he do? He tries to hurt God’s children.

They say, “We did not understand how grave this threat really was,” and most Christians don’t either. “Now we didn’t adjust our policies and our plans and our practices to deter or defeat it,” and most Christians don’t either. “The test before us is to sustain the unity of purpose.” Man, I couldn’t have written this stuff any better. “The test before us is to sustain the unity of purpose, and meet the challenges now confronting us. We need to design a balanced strategy for the long haul to attack terrorists while at the same time, protecting ourselves against future attacks.” Now did you get that? They say not only do we need to protect ourselves from a future attack; we have got to go after them.

And when it comes to spiritual battle when you’re fighting the devil, it’s not just protecting yourself, but it’s also go after him. Now, most of the time, we’re defeated because the devil, he doesn’t wear a red suit with a tail and pitchfork and come up and say, “Boo!” How does the devil work in your life? Habits, you can’t break. Hurts, you can’t forgive and let go of. Hang-ups you can’t change. Problems, circumstances, relationships that mess up your life; it’s all indirect, and he’s always trying to mess you up that way.

And most of the time, we're defeated. Why? Because we try to fight it on our own, by ourselves. And you're never going to beat the devil on your own. Never. You need other people in your life who are watching out for you. The Bible says this in Ecclesiastes 4, "*A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back to back and conquer, and three are even better for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.*" That's why you need a small group.

You know last year, about a year ago at this time, I walked across a maximum security prison yard about the length of two football fields with a couple thousand convicted criminals. And I did it without any guards, prison guards, without any weapon, without any body armor, and I walked across the yard unafraid. You say, "Boy, you're brave." No, I just had 30 Christian inmates hanging around me, and these guys were monsters. They had arms the size of my thighs with tattoos that say, 'Mom' and 'Jesus.' And there were guys in front of me, and there were guys on either side of me, to my right and left. And guys behind me who were walking me to the place I was going to speak. And if anybody was going to get at me, they were going to have to go through those guys first.

Question: Who's watching your back right now, spiritually? Who's watching your back? Is there anybody in your life who is so close that they are helping you and making sure you don't fall into the typical traps that mess us up? Anybody like that? If you don't have that person, I pity you because you've got a big bull's eye on your back for the devil.

Here's another question: Who's back are you watching out for? You can't expect anybody to watch out for you if you're not watching out for anybody else? You care enough about anybody else, you'll say, "You know what? I'm going to be with you through thick and thin."

Years ago when I was much thinner, I was a lifeguard. I really was for three years, and everybody knows that you never swim in the ocean by yourself. Never. You take a buddy with you because you never know if you're going to hit a riptide. You don't go through life by yourself.

Even the pros need someone watching their back. And you do too. Would you write this down: **Community is God's answer to DEFEAT**. Community is God's answer to defeat

:

I need people to walk with me through life and I need others to work with me and I need others to watch out for me. Number four, **I need others to WAIT AND WEEP with me**, to wait and weep with me. What am I talking about here? I need people who are going to be there in the inevitable crises of life. When I'm waiting for the bad news or when I'm weeping, when I got the bad news, I need people in my life.

Now as your pastor, I feel this one really deeply because I see it every day in our church. There are many situations in life that nobody should ever have to go through alone. Nobody should ever have to sit alone in a hospital, waiting during a life or death surgery.

No woman should have to wait alone while she's waiting back for a lab test from a problem pregnancy. No one should ever have to wait for the news from the battlefield alone. No one should ever have to sit in the home, waiting for the coroner to identify the body of a loved one who just had a heart attack in your home. They shouldn't have to wait alone. No one should ever have to stand at an open grave alone. No man or woman should ever have to spend the first night alone when his wife dies or her husband dies. And no man or woman should have to spend the night alone when the wife walks out, or the husband has walked out. I could go on and on and on.

We were not meant to face the crises of life alone. Now the fact is some of these things are going to happen in your life. They are going to happen, some of them will in that we're all going to lose loved ones. And only a fool would go through life unprepared for what they know is inevitably going to happen. You need the support network in your life now because you don't know when the crisis is going to come, when the earthquake's going to happen... you need that support group, those three or four... you don't need a lot, you don't need a hundred but you do need five or six people in your life who are going to be there when you need them. And the time to prepare is now.

Now God says that the safety net he planned for your life is a group of believers who are committed to you. The Bible says this in First Peter, "*You should be like one big happy family, full of sympathy toward each other.*" Now when you get in the hospital, you don't want the whole church to visit you. In fact, that would not be a good idea. But it would be nice to have five or six people visit you, and to say, "We're praying for you. We're going to be here."

I'll never forget a man who came to Saddleback for about seven years and he used to sit up in the bleachers. And he only came and he left; came and he left; never got involved in anything; never joined a small group; never met anybody else. I'm the only person in the church he knew. And he came for about seven years and one day, he had a heart attack and they put him in the hospital. While he was there, he got an infection and he was in for two weeks. And I was out traveling on the road speaking, and I didn't even know he was in the hospital. And nobody visited him. And when I got back, he came to church and he said, "I'm leaving the church." And I said, "Why?" He said, "Because nobody visited me in the hospital," and I said, "I'm sorry," and he left. And I thought, "It's your fault." You don't have anybody to blame but yourself. He didn't ever visit anybody in the hospital. He didn't ever care about anybody else. He never even took the time to get to know anybody in his own spiritual family that he's going to spend an eternity with. And when the crisis came, there was nobody there for him.

I've told you many, many times, I could not make it without my own small group, the eight people in my group. This last year alone we've been through practically every kind of personal and family crisis you could imagine and were there to wait for each other, and to weep with each other.

Here's God's plan, First Corinthians 12, "*If one member suffers, all suffer together.*" You know, I just read recently about a guy who died at home in bed and nobody

discovered him for two years. I thought, “How tragic that he had no relationships in life who missed him.” That the guy died... imagine the despair, nobody should ever have to die alone.

Would you write this down: **Community is God’s answer to DESPAIR**. Community is God’s answer to despair. The Bible says, “*Be happy with those who are happy and weep with those who weep.*” You party when people have a celebration and you weep when they have a tough time.

By the way, people often don’t know what to do with tears in a small group. And they’ll be sitting in a small group and then somebody starts crying for one reason or another. Let me give you a little tip: Tears are always the tip that it’s time to stop and pray. When tears come, it means it’s time to stop and pray for that person. “Let’s just stop right now and pray for Mary. She just got bad news from her sister. Let’s pray for her right now,” and you stop and you pray. “Let’s just stop and pray for Bob right now. He just got laid off from a company he’s given 22 years of his life to and they gave him one week’s notice.” That’s a shock. “Let’s just stop and pray for Tom right now...” Tears are time to pray.

You don’t have to fix people’s problems. When they’re going through a crisis, they don’t want advice anyway. They just want somebody to be there. You just sit there and be quiet with them. You don’t have to say anything profound, usually we get in trouble when we start talking. Just be there with them. They don’t need a lot of advice. Just be there with them.

The Bible says in First Thessalonians 5, “*Encourage each other and strengthen one another.*”

There’s one other reason why you need other people in your life and it is: **I need others to WITNESS with me**. What does that mean? Well, God has a plan for your life and he has a purpose and he has a mission. And you have a life message that God wants you to say to the world and your life message, if you don’t share it, it won’t get shared.

Now that’s kind of scary sometimes, sharing your life message with the world. That’s why you need other people in your life. I need people to help me fulfill the mission that God put me on earth to fulfill. Now there’s great power in a group witness. When people come in here and they look around and they go, “Whoa, look at all these people! Something must be going on here.”

But how do we witness? What’s the best way to witness to people who don’t know the love of Jesus Christ yet? Well I’m going to tell you and it’ll surprise you. It’s by loving other believers. That’s what Jesus said. Look at the Bible. Jesus said in John 13, “*Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.*” Notice he said, “Your love,” not for me, not for God, he said, “Your love for one another,” for other people in the family of God, is the proof that you’re in the family of God. If you don’t love other believers, you have every reason to doubt ‘Am I in the family?’ Because he

said, that's the proof. One of the ways you know that you've stepped across a line and you're in God's family is do you love the other people in it? He says, "That's how you know."

You see, the thing that proves to the world that we're Christ's followers is not our buildings, not our music, not our sermons, it's our love for each other. And during the next 40 days, we're going to start a revolution of love right here that is going to reach out to the community around us. Second Timothy 1:7 says this, "*The Holy Spirit doesn't want you to be afraid of people, but to be wise and strong and to love them and enjoy being with them.*" That is like 'Invite them into your house!'

Now, you've heard me say this many times, I've asked you, "Is anybody going to be in heaven because of you?" I've asked that many times.

Would you write this down: **God's answer to fear is COMMUNITY**. God's answer to fear is community. The Bible says, "*You're working together and struggling side by side to get others to believe the good news,*" that verse has the two goals of '40 Days of Community' in it. "Working together side by side," we want to deepen the community in our church, "to get others to believe the good news," to reach out to the community around our church.

We all need each other. We all need each other. We need other believers to walk with us, to work with us, to watch out for us. We need other believers to wait for us and wait with us and weep with us, and we need them to witness with us.

I want you to say this with me: I really really really need a group. That is your declaration of interdependence. It wasn't that hard, was it?

Inside your program, there's a little green card. Would you pull this out? And this card is different that most of them because I don't want you to turn it in. I want you to put it where you'll see it every day for the next 40 days: on a mirror, in your car, on your desk, paste it to your computer, refrigerator, somewhere. And it says this, 'My commitment: I will participate in a '40 Days of Community' home group' or you can start one. 'I will read a chapter a day from 'Better Together.' I will do my best to hear all seven of Rick's messages and I will try to memorize a Bible verse each week.' You can sign your name there. And I want you to clear your calendar as much as possible for the next 40 days. If you do, I guarantee you. You're going to look back on the next 40 days and say, "That was the turning point in my life." If you'll do this, I guarantee you, you'll look back and say, "That was the turning point in my life."

Now this church is all about community. And I have been praying for you, and we are going to make history. And I'm praying for you in 100% participation. I don't want you sitting on the sideline. God didn't bring you to this area, to this church, at this time to watch it happen. He brought you here to be a part of what's going to happen. He brought you to this church for this purpose. Let's bow our heads.

Father, it's time for the church to be the church. It's time for the revolution of love and fellowship and community. Please begin in our hearts today. With all my heart, Lord, I believe that our church will start fulfilling God's purposes in community and that in that, we'll see a new reformation in the church and a new spiritual awakening in our nation and boy, do we need it.

Now you pray. Dear God, forgive me for the times I've felt I didn't need other people in my life. I want to be a part of what you're doing on earth through your family, the church. I want to experience real community. I'm tired of superficial relationships. I want to learn to love and be loved in a deeper way. I open up my life to you, Jesus Christ. I want to be a part of your family. Thank you for bringing me here, for this place to belong and grow in fellowship. And serve and share and worship. I don't want to be a passive follower anymore. I want to get in on what you're going to do. So today, I commit to getting in a small group so I can learn about real community. Please bless our church as we do 40 days together. In your name, I pray. Amen.

Let the revolution of love begin.