

Week Nineteen: “Cultivating Community”

Day One: “Cultivating Community: Honesty”

Read: Ephesians 4:22-29 (*Freedom in Christ Bible*, p. 1359)

Read: *Purpose-Driven Life*, pp. 145 to top of 148

Reflect: Who is someone in your life who loves you enough to tell you the truth? Has the correct handling of conflict resulted in growing closer to each other?

Dig: See Ephesians 4:25. Based on how this verse ends, who is the ‘neighbor’ referred to in this verse?

When it comes to dealing with a conflict with your neighbor, do you avoid it or walk through it to achieve resolution?

Verse 25 begins with “Therefore.” Based on the preceding verses why should we not shirk from conflict? Why should we instead speak truthfully?

What insight does verse 29 reveal regarding the manner in which we should speak?

Apply: If there is someone you need to confront, prayerfully surrender to the Holy Spirit’s leading as to how and when to put off falsehood and to speak truthfully.

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Day Two: “Cultivating Community: Humility”

Read: Romans 12:10, 16; Philippians 2:3-11 (*Freedom in Christ Bible*, pp. 1295, 1366)

Read: *Purpose-Driven Life*, p. 148 (section on humility)

Reflect: The *Purpose-Driven Life* says that pride builds walls between people while humility builds bridges. Ask God to reveal pockets of pride within you that may be building barriers between you and others. (Think you have no pride? Perhaps—but be careful. See Psalm 36:2, p. 615)

Dig: Read Romans 12:10, 16 and Philippians 2:3-4. In these four short verses how many commands regarding pride/humility do you find?

What does it mean to ‘honor one another above yourself’ and to ‘consider others better than yourself’? On whom is the focus?

How did Jesus exemplify this? (Philippians 2:5-8)

Apply: Think through the various activities you’ll engage in today or tomorrow. How can you put these verses into practice and ‘honor others above yourself’?—be specific. Read the paragraph under “Pride vs. Humility” on p. 1517 of the *Freedom in Christ Bible* and then pray the prayer written below that paragraph.

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Day Three: “Cultivating Community: Courtesy & Confidentiality”

Read: Romans 15:5-7 (*Freedom in Christ Bible*, p. 1298)

Read: *Purpose-Driven Life*, pp. 149-150

Reflect: Do you have any ‘EGR’ (extra grace required) people in your life? Are you courteous in how you interact with them? If you are in a small group, is it a safe place where such people are embraced and their life stories are held in confidence?

Dig: Note the context of Romans 15:5-7—even extending back to chapter 14.

In light of the context why would Paul pray for *endurance* and *encouragement*?

What would you say is the theme of verses 5-7?

How would you rank the level of unity among believers at Madison Square Church?
Among your care group?

Do you need endurance and encouragement as you love the ‘EGR’ people in your life?

What is the source of such endurance and encouragement? (verse 5)

Apply: From 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17; 3:5 (NIV) “May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your heart and strengthen you in every good deed and word.”
“May the Lord direct your heart into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance.”
Spend some time in stillness to hear and receive God’s encouragement and endurance.

Week Nineteen: “Cultivating Community”
Day Four: “Cultivating Community: Frequency”

Read: Hebrews 10:25; 1 John 3:16-18 (*Freedom in Christ Bible*, pp. 1431, 1468) (Note the GWT translation of verse 16 in the box on p. 151 of *Purpose Driven Life*)

Read: *Purpose-Driven Life*, pp. 150-151

Reflect: The *Purpose-Driven Life* says that genuine fellowship means giving up our self-centeredness and independence in order to become *interdependent*. What grade would you give your fellowship and interdependence within Madison Square Church?

Dig: Note the context of Hebrews 10:25 by reading verses 19-25.
What parallels do you see between this passage and 1 John 3:16-18?

What reason does Hebrews 10:25 give for admonishing us not to give up meeting together?

Is this happening within Madison Square Church? Within your care group?

Apply: Let’s review: Grade your care group or your fellowship at Madison Square Church in each of the following areas:

_____	authenticity	_____	sympathy
_____	mutuality	_____	mercy
_____	honesty	_____	humility
_____	courtesy	_____	confidentiality
_____	frequency		

What steps can you take today in each of those areas to ‘raise your grade’ and to work toward genuine, Acts 2 fellowship?

Week Nineteen: **“Cultivating Community”**
Day Five: **Lectio Divina**

Using the **“Lectio Divina”** method of Bible study (see page 3 of this booklet), **meditate on this scripture:**

“We understand what love is when we realize that Christ gave his life for us. That means we must give our lives for other believers.” 1 John 3:16 (GWT)

Lectio divina (a Latin expression which means Sacred reading) is done in three stages:

- reading: you read the passage slowly and reverentially, allowing the words to sink into your consciousness; after you have memorized the text, write down one word which strikes you and draws your attention and note why you chose that word.
- meditation: you allow the passage to stir up memories within you, so that you recognize in it your own experience or that of people who have touched your life; write down memories of events or conversations or other scripture passages.
- prayer: you allow the meditation to lead you to prayer – thanksgiving, humility and petition. Write out a prayer based on the passage.