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DISCUSSION

DAY 1

WE BELONG IN COMMUNITY

Naomi and Ruth (*Ruth 1-2*)



We all need to belong with others and feel loved. But for Christians, belonging goes much further.

God created us to belong in community with other believers. He created Eve to be a companion for Adam. He brought the nation of Israel out of Egypt as a community. God's own Son, Jesus, called His disciples to follow Him in community. As a community, these disciples started the early Church, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Christian communities can be large, such as a thriving church, or small, like two believers praying together.

1 John 1:7 reads, "Suppose we walk in the light, just as He [God] is in the light. Then we share life with one another. And the blood of Jesus, His Son, makes us pure from all sin."



God created us to belong in community, to worship, pray, study

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER

DAY 1

WE BELONG IN COMMUNITY

Naomi and Ruth (*Ruth 1-2*)

1. God intends us to be in community, and it is vital that we come together in fellowship, prayer, and study of the Word.
2. Jesus is at the center of Christian community, large or small.
3. God created us to belong in community, and share fellowship with others.

DAY 2

WE GROW IN COMMUNITY

The Vine and the Branches (*John 15:1-17*)

1. Our spiritual growth depends on remaining in community, where we study God's Word, pray together, and fellowship together.
2. It is in community where we stay connected to God.
3. It is only through God's love and power given to us through the Holy Spirit that we can love others as Jesus loves us.

DAY 3

WE LOVE IN COMMUNITY

Jesus Washes Disciples' Feet (*John 13:1-17; 34-35*)

1. Jesus calls Christians to carry out His mission through the power of the Holy Spirit, and through the love we experience being in community with Jesus.
2. It is only through Jesus' love for us and the Holy Spirit in our lives that we can love other people.

REFLECTION

QUESTIONS CONTINUED

5. Why did Jesus wash the disciples' feet?

(There was no servant in the room where Jesus and the disciples were eating. It is likely none of the disciples wanted to lower himself and wash the others' dirty feet. Jesus wanted to teach His disciples how to humble themselves, and love one another.)

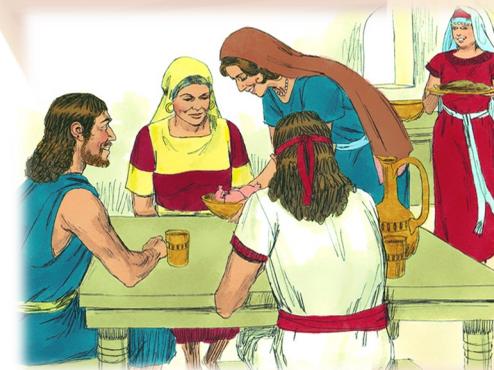
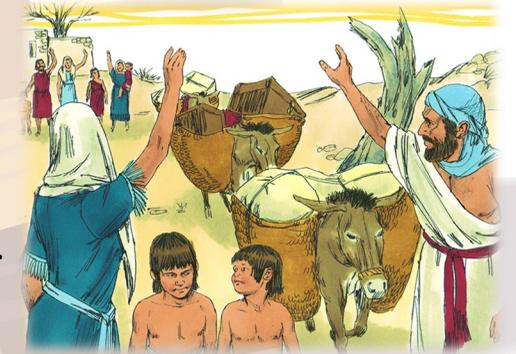
6. What command did we hear from Jesus two lessons in a row, and why is it important?

"I give you a new command. Love one another. You must love one another, just as I have loved you. If you love one another, everyone will know you are my disciples." John 13:34-35, NIRV.
Our love for others will draw people to Jesus, and we bear fruit!

God's Word, fellowship and serve together.

An example of what it means to belong in community is found in the **Book of Ruth, chapters 1-2.**

There was not enough food in the land of Judah. Naomi, her husband and their two sons left Bethlehem and traveled to the country of Moab. While in Moab, Naomi's husband died.



Her sons married women from Moab named Orpah and Ruth, and they lived in Moab for about ten years. Then her two sons died. Naomi was left without her husband and two sons.

Naomi heard the Lord was again providing food for the people of Judah. So, Naomi and her two daughters-in-law prepared to go back to Naomi's home in Bethlehem.

Naomi said to Orpah and Ruth. "Both of you go back. Each of you go to your own mother's home. You were kind to your husbands, who have died and me. May the Lord



be kind to you and help each of you find another husband.”



Then Naomi kissed them goodbye. They broke down and wept loudly. They said to her, “We’ll go back to your people with you.”

But Naomi said, “Go home, my daughters. Why would you want to come with me? The Lord’s power has turned against me!” Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye. But Ruth held on to her.

“Look,” said Naomi. “Your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her.” **But Ruth replied, “Where you go, I’ll go. Where you stay, I’ll stay. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God. Where you die, I’ll die.”**



Naomi realized that Ruth had made up her mind to go with her. So, she stopped trying to make her go back.

They arrived in Bethlehem, just when people were beginning to harvest the barley. Ruth said to Naomi, “Let me go out to the fields and pick up the grain that has been left by the harvesters.”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. **What is Jesus’ mission?**

(Find anyone who is lost and save them.)

2. **What mission did Jesus pass on to His disciples, and us?**

(Jesus commanded His disciples, and us, to go make disciples of all nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.)

3. **Why did the disciples need their feet washed? Who usually washed guests’ feet?**

(Back then everyone walked on dirt roads, some with sandals and others with no sandals at all. It was the lowest servant in the household who washed the feet of guests.)

4. **How can we lower ourselves to serve others in love?**

(We can do the chores no one else wants to do.)

Today, people will be drawn to Jesus by our love. This is how we bear fruit! We show love to others when we pray with a house-mate who is hurting, help our staff with chores, or say a kind word to a co-worker. When we do these things and more, we are showing God's love and welcoming others into our Christian community. **Who can you share God's love with today?**

**DAILY BIBLE
VERSE**

**"If you love one another, everyone will know you are my disciples."
*John 13:35 (NIRV)***

**THOUGHTS OF
THE DAY**

- 1. Jesus calls Christians to carry out His mission through the power of the Holy Spirit, and through the love we experience being in community with Jesus.**
- 2. It is only through Jesus' love for us and the Holy Spirit in our lives that we can love other people.**

**Day 3 Reflection Questions can be done with families,
caregivers, and direct support staff**

As it turned out, she worked in a field that belonged to Boaz who was a relative from Naomi's husband's family.

Talk about commitment! Ruth left her country, and family to go back to Bethlehem with Naomi. Because of Ruth, Naomi didn't have to face her sorrow alone. Ruth and Naomi belonged in community with each other and with Naomi's God.

Boaz saw Ruth and spoke to the man in charge of his workers. He asked, "Who does that young woman belong to?" The man replied, "She's from Moab. She came back with Naomi. She asked if she could pick up the grain left behind by the workers.



Boaz said to Ruth, "Dear woman, don't pick up grain in any other field. Stay here and work in my fields. Pick up the grain that is left. When you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the jars the men have filled."

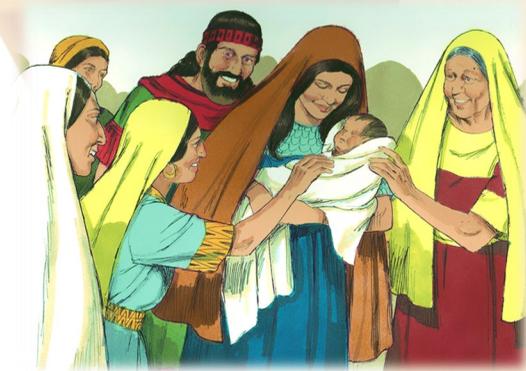
When Ruth heard this, she bowed down and asked him, **"Why are you being so kind to me? I'm from another country."**

Boaz replied, "I have heard what you have done for your mother-in-law since your husband died. **May the Lord bless you.**

Ruth picked up grain in the field until evening. She carried it home and Naomi saw how much she had gathered. Naomi asked her, “Where did you pick up grain today? Where did you work?”



Ruth told her about Boaz. Naomi said. “That man is a close relative of ours. **May the Lord bless him!**”



It was later that Ruth married Boaz. God blessed them with a son named Obed. Obed became the grandfather of King David, and from King David’s family line **Jesus would be born!**

God opened Ruth’s heart to remain committed to Naomi. Ruth left her family and customs behind and chose to belong to Naomi’s community and the one true God. **God worked through Ruth, and she became part of the direct family line leading to Jesus Christ.**

Think about a Christian community you belong to, whether it be your Friendship group, your church, or another small group. **Who can you invite to belong in your community today?**

important for the disciples to understand. **It’s an important message for us, too.** As Christians we should never think we are better than others. Rather, we need to invite others into community and share God’s love with them. This is how we can show our love for others.



Jesus told His disciples many other things after washing their feet. In **John 13:34-35** Jesus told His disciples, ***“I give you a new command. Love one another. You must love one another, just as I have loved you. If you love one another, everyone will know you are my disciples.”***

This is the second time this week we heard this same command to love one another. It must be an important lesson for us! It is only through Jesus’ love for us and the Holy Spirit in our lives that we can love other people.

Throughout the Gospels we see all kinds of people being drawn to Jesus: broken people, sinful people, and people who were outcasts. All of them were loved by Jesus.



Jesus answered Peter, “Unless I wash you, you can’t share life with me.”

“Lord,” Simon Peter replied, “not just my feet! Wash my hands and my head too!”

Jesus answered, “People who have had a bath need to wash only their feet. The rest of their body is clean. And you are clean. But not all of you are.” Jesus said this because He knew who was going to hand Him over to His enemies.

When Jesus finished washing their feet, He put on His clothes. Then He returned to His place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” He asked them.



“You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord.’ You are right. That is what I am. **I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet. So, you also should wash one another’s feet.**

I have given you an example. You should do as I have done for you. What I’m about to tell you is true. A slave is not more important than his master. And a messenger is not more important than the one who sends him. Now you know these things. So, you will be blessed if you do them.”

Jesus’ message to love and serve others in community was

DAILY BIBLE

“Two people are better than one. They can help each other in everything they do. Suppose either of them falls down. Then the one can help the other one up. But suppose a person falls down and doesn’t have anyone to help them up. Then feel sorry for that person!”

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 (NIRV)

THOUGHTS OF THE DAY

1. God intends us to be in community, and it is vital that we come together in fellowship, prayer, and study of the Word.
2. Jesus is at the center of all Christian community, large or small.
3. God created us to belong in community, and to share that fellowship with others.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the memory verse say about the importance of community?
2. What are some of the struggles that happened to Naomi?
3. What did Ruth give up so she could stay with Naomi and return to Bethlehem?
4. Did Naomi ask Ruth to stay with her? What did Naomi tell Ruth to do?
5. How did God use the community between Naomi and Ruth for His purpose? How can God use you in community?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How did you become part of a Christian community, and who can you invite into Christian community today?
2. Do you have the boldness to share with others what Christ means to you? If not, pray for boldness to share the love of Christ with others.

large bowl. **Then He began to wash His disciples' feet.** He dried them with the towel wrapped around Him.

He came to Simon Peter. "Lord," Peter said to Him, "are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus replied, "You don't realize now what I am doing. But later you will understand."

"No," said Peter. "You will never wash my feet."

Back then everyone traveled on dirt roads wearing sandals, and some didn't even have sandals. This made people's feet filthy. The lowest servant in the household would wash guest's feet.



There was no servant in the room where Jesus and His disciples were eating, and it's likely none of the disciples wanted to lower themselves to wash the others' dirty feet.

Jesus was their teacher, and He wanted to teach His disciples how to humble themselves and love one another. **So, Jesus took on the role of the lowest servant by washing their feet.** This is why Peter was horrified Jesus was going to wash his feet.

community. They did this by showing everyone the same love Jesus showed them. This is how the early Church began.



During His earthly ministry, Jesus showed many times how much He loved the disciples. The greatest way Jesus showed His love for the disciples (and for us!) was by

dying a painful death on a cross.

Right before He was to be arrested, Jesus showed His love in a teaching moment. He wanted them to understand they needed to love others as He loved them. This story is found in

John 13:1-17.

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for Him to leave this world. They were having their evening meal. The devil had already tempted Judas Iscariot to betray Jesus. He knew that the Father had put everything under His power.

So, He got up from the meal and took off His outer clothes. He wrapped a towel around His waist. He poured water into a



DAY 2

WE GROW IN COMMUNITY

The Vine and the Branches (*John 15:1-17*)

Have you ever seen a garden with fresh tomatoes, or a tree filled with apples? It's amazing to think how tomato plants and fruit trees start from a seed that was planted in the ground. With water, good soil, and lots of sunshine, those tiny seeds grew into the delicious foods that we enjoy.



What would happen to the branch of an apple tree if the branch was cut off the larger trunk of the tree? Would the branch produce any apples? Would tomatoes grow on a branch that was cut away from the tomato plant?

As Christians it's important that we also grow, not just physically but in our faith. **Our spiritual food and water come from our connection with Jesus Christ, and each other.**



Our spiritual growth depends on remaining in community, where we study God's Word together, pray together, hold each other accountable, serve others, and fellowship together. **It is in community where we stay connected to God.**

Jesus talked to His disciples about the importance of staying connected to Him and to each other in **John chapter 15:1-17**. It was right before Jesus was going to be arrested and crucified. Jesus told His disciples,



“I am the true vine. My Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch joined to me that does not bear fruit. He trims every branch that does bear fruit.

You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain joined to me, just as I also remain joined to you. No branch can bear fruit by itself. It must remain joined to the vine. In the same way, you can't bear fruit unless you remain joined to me.

“I am the vine. You are the branches. If you remain joined to me, and I to you, you will bear a lot of fruit. You can't do anything without me.

DAY 3

WE LOVE IN COMMUNITY

Jesus Washes Disciples' Feet (John 13:1-17; 34-35)

This week we have talked about belonging and growing in community. Most of all, we need to be loving in community.

Jesus' mission is to find anyone who is lost and save them. He passed His mission on to His disciples before He ascended into heaven. They were to go and make disciples of all nations, and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (**Matthew 28:19**).

This mission is also meant for us. **Jesus calls Christians to carry out His mission through the power of the Holy Spirit, and through the love we experience being in community with Jesus.**

Jesus spent three years forming community with His disciples. After He had gone into heaven the Holy Spirit came and gave the disciples the boldness to bring more believers into that



DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS CONTINUED

3. Why is it important to be in community with other believers?
4. What was Jesus' command for us in this passage from John 15?
5. Where do we get the ability to love others in the same way Jesus loves us?

REFLECTION
QUESTIONS

1. What are ways you can remain connected to Jesus?
2. How can you bear fruit for God in your everyday life?

There will be no discussion group on Day 3. The Day 3 Reflection Questions can be found in the next section. You can take the booklet home today.



If you don't remain joined to me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and dries up. If you remain joined to me and my words remain in you, ask for anything you wish.

When you bear a lot of fruit, it brings glory to my Father. It shows that you are my disciples.

"Just as the Father has loved me, I have loved you. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love. In the same way, I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that you will have the same joy that I have. I also want your joy to be complete.



"Here is my command. Love one another, just as I have loved you. No one has greater love than the one who gives their life for their friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I have told you everything I learned from my Father. You did not choose me. I chose you. **Here is my command. Love one another."**

In **1 Corinthians chapter 12**, the image of a Body is used to describe the Church with Jesus Christ as the head. As parts of



Christ's Body, God gives each of us different spiritual gifts. By ourselves we can do nothing. A hand by itself can't do anything. But a hand that is connected to an arm, that is

connected to a shoulder, and is connected to a head, can do many things.

When we are connected in community as parts of the Body of Christ, God can do wonderful things through us! **It is through our relationships with each other and with Jesus Christ as our head that we grow in faith and produce fruit for God.**

Jesus' command is that we love each other in the same way Jesus loves us. Jesus' love for us and our love for each other is what keeps us connected with Jesus, as well as growing and living fruitful lives.

In **1 John 4:19**, it says, *"We love because He [God] first loved us."* Just like a tomato plant or a fruit tree needs to stay connected to the larger trunk to grow, together we remain connected to Jesus to spiritually grow in our faith. **It is only through God's love and power given to us through His Holy Spirit that we can love others as Jesus loves us.**

DAILY BIBLE VERSE

I am the vine. You are the branches. If you remain joined to me, and I to you, you will bear a lot of fruit. You can't do anything without me." *John 15:5 (NIRV)*

THOUGHTS OF THE DAY

- 1. Our spiritual growth depends on remaining in community, where we study God's Word, pray together, and fellowship together.**
- 2. It is in community where we stay connected to God.**
- 3. It is only through God's love and power given to us through the Holy Spirit that we can love others as Jesus loves us.**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. What happens to the branch of a fruit tree that is cut away from the larger trunk? Why?**
- 2. Why is it important that Christians continue to grow spiritually? What does it mean for a Christian to bear fruit?**