

One

"Community on Mission"

May 4-5

Introduction

Aloha! I'm Mark, and I'm thrilled to welcome you to our service this week as we bring our *One* series to its conclusion. These past weeks, we've delved deep into the beauty and significance of community, exploring what it means to abide as one.

Recall that from the very start of this year, we've been meditating on the significance of abiding, drawing inspiration from our theme verse, John 15:5, where Jesus declares,

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you abide in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing."

It's a profound reminder that our greatest strength and productivity come from remaining connected to Jesus.

As disciples of Jesus, our aim is to live lives overflowing with fruitfulness — to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit and to bear fruit for the Kingdom. To do this, we must recognize the vital importance of staying intertwined with Jesus at all times. Our growth and our very ability to act in alignment with His will hinges upon this intimate connection. How do we abide with Jesus?

In our previous series, we examined the transformative power of abiding with Jesus through His Word. We studied the profound impact stories have to form us into the people we are. All of us have been formed by the stories we believe to be true, Biblical or otherwise. Well, just as stories mold and shape us, so too do our relationships. Proverbs 12:26 wisely reminds us to choose our companions with care, for they hold sway over the trajectory of our lives.

From the outset, we've understood that community isn't just a nice-to-have; it's God's divine design — His "Plan A" for our lives. Just as His Word draws us closer to Him, so does the fellowship of believers. In community we find ourselves abiding with Jesus and growing more like Him with each passing day.

In recent weeks, we've been inspired by the testimonies of those in small groups, recognizing them as more than just a fellowship of friends. They're our "Mat Friends," those who usher us to Jesus when we feel unable to reach Him on our own. They're our "Boat Buddies," journeying alongside us as we sit at the feet of our Master, becoming more like Him each day.

But now, as we draw this series to a close, we're left pondering: What next? How do we take the lessons learned in community and translate them into action? What happens when Jesus calls us out of the boat and into the fray? The answer lies in our next step: embracing small groups as our...*Battle Buddies*? No, we already used "Buddies". My Son Judah said, "What about Battle Besties!" "Transformation Team"? "Kingdom Crew"?

Whatever you call them, when it comes to fulfilling the Great Commission, we cannot—must not—go it alone. We need each other, shoulder to shoulder, standing as "Battle Besties," ready to fight for the Kingdom's cause. So, today, let's lean into the power of community, recognizing that together, with our Kingdom Crew, we are stronger, bolder, and "mo bettah toggedah" in fulfilling God's call on our lives.

Two-by-Two

“Calling the Twelve to Him, He began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits” (Mark 6:7).

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of Him to every town and place where He was about to go,” (Luke 10:1).

Our “Mat Friends” usher us to Jesus for times of healing and recovery. Our “Boat Buddies” support us as we sit with the Master and become like Him. But there comes a point in every disciple’s life where we are sent to bring God’s love and transformation to the world around us. As we see from these passages, God’s ‘Plan A’ is that we go together. Jesus didn’t send them out alone. But why pair them up? Jesus could have reached twice as many locations if He sent them individually! Jesus could have sent them out alone, but He knew scripture better than anyone. He would’ve read Ecclesiastes 4 which says,

⁹ *“Two are better than one,
because they have a good return for their labor:*

¹⁰ *If either of them falls down,
one can help the other up.*

*But pity anyone who falls
and has no one to help them up.*

¹¹ *Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.
But how can one keep warm alone?*

¹² *Though one may be overpowered,
two can defend themselves.*

A cord of three strands is not quickly broken,” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

Two are better than one! We>i. Because they have a good return for their labor. Anyone who has ever been in a small group knows it is not without labor! Relationships take work, community takes work — the most precious things in life are the ones we have to work and fight hardest for. But scripture tells us that the best investment you will ever make will not be a financial one, but rather the investment and work put into others. And the work we do together will produce a bountiful harvest. Being vulnerable with those in your small group takes work, holding one another accountable takes work, loving one another despite your strange quirks and idiosyncrasies takes work. But the Bible says you will get a good return — you will reap dividends when you labor together and don’t go it alone.

Next Thursday we celebrate the finale of another amazing Youth season (You’re all invited). Ask any of the parents or leaders involved. It took a lot of work! But I am convinced we have the best youth team on the planet and the return we saw for our labor was extraordinary! You’ve heard many of the testimonies that came from that time. So do not grow weary of laboring together for the Kingdom.

Another reason Jesus sent them two by two is so that they could help one another. If one fell the other could help them up.

It’s one thing to have acquaintances in your life, “Followers”, and Facebook friends, but in the moments when you fall, when you’re stuck, when you feel you can’t get any lower, how many people can you really turn to? Looking around, I am so grateful for those I do life with that have been there for me when I fall.

Reminds me of a young boy named Andrew who competed in the 220-yard dash in the Special Olympics. As soon as the race began he quickly took the lead and was soon 50 yards ahead of everyone else. But as he approached the final turn he looked back and saw that his best friend had fallen and hurt himself on the track. Andrew stopped and looked at the finish line. Then he looked back at his friend. People were cheering him on, "Run Andrew Run!" But he didn't. He went back and got his friend, and hand in hand they crossed the finish line together in dead last. But as they did, people cheered because there are some things more important than finishing first.

African Proverb:

If you want to travel fast, travel alone.

If you want to travel far, go together.

People form relationships for all sorts of different reasons. Some strive for success, others for status, but the Bible says, as believers, we should strive first to be there for one another in love and we will certainly go far.

12 Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves.

True community will fight to protect and defend you. These words were written during a time when battles were fought in hand-to-hand combat. Soldiers would go into battle with a partner, someone they could trust implicitly. Together they would stand back to back and defend each other from enemies at all sides. A true small group will never stab you in the back but they will also guard your back from others. I'm certainly grateful for my "Mat Friends" and my "Boat Buddies" but you know who else my small group has been for me? My "Fire Friends". These are the people in our life who, when the music starts playing and society tells us to bow to the idols and the pressures of this world we look to our left and right and find those who stand with us and are even willing to go into the fire with us before bowing down. Do you have "Fire Friends"? Do you have those 300 soldiers you're locking shields with?

The Big Picture

As we close this series, I want to reveal my hand, if you will, and show you where this is all going. I need to warn you, this is going to sound like a big hairy audacious dream. But it isn't my dream, it's His. If you hear this and think, "That's crazy", you'd be in good company. I imagine that's how Jesus' disciples felt as well.

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age," (Matt. 28:18-20).

The Church is called to make disciples of all nations. Let's say we took this literally. Our Church is in America, our state is Hawaii, and our region is Central Oahu. Central Oahu is made up of several communities — namely Mililani, Wahiawa, and Haleiwa. Jesus said to start in Jerusalem. His smallest metric was a city. If we break down one of those communities we find businesses, schools, government, neighborhoods, etc. If we break each of those down we find people. What kind of person disciples their home, their school, their business, their office? I believe it boils down to three essential components — A Biblical worldview, like-minded community, and a life ordered around God's abiding Presence. Picture this like a three-legged stool. If you remove any of the legs the stool collapses and we, in essence, collapse into a life of fruitlessness. Just as Jesus sent His disciples two-by-two, we cannot hope to transform our world alone. We need to do it from a place of meaningful community. That said, our small groups must operate with a missional perspective.

“Wow”, you might be thinking, “Is that really what Jesus is calling us to? Sounds a little radical, a bit extreme don’t you think?”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The year was 1935. In the shadow of Hitler's oppressive regime, Germany trembled under the weight of tyranny. Adolf Hitler, wielding fear and manipulation, was building a formidable army primed for cruelty and death. But amidst this darkness, a different kind of resistance was quietly brewing.

Enter Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a young pastor with a revolutionary vision. While Hitler focused on domination and fear, Bonhoeffer quietly cultivated a counterforce. In the secluded haven of Finkenwalde, he established an underground seminary, a sanctuary for Christian leaders. Here, away from the clamor of Hitler's regime, Bonhoeffer's approach was radical yet simple: prayer, confession, Bible study, fellowship, and humble service.

His aim wasn't just education; it was transformation. Bonhoeffer dreamed of a community where Jesus reigned supreme, not Hitler. He envisioned disciples molded not by fear, but by faithfulness, willing to bear any cost for their convictions.

In his biography, Charles Marsh recalls how one of Bonhoeffer’s friends, Wilhelm Niesel, thought life at Finkenwalde was too extreme. He grew suspicious of “so much spiritualism” and decided to pay his friend a visit.

In the early morning hours, Bonhoeffer took Niesel on a rowing expedition across the Oder river to an elevated clearing. There, overlooking the fields where Hitler was training his troops, Bonhoeffer let his friend behold the intensity and devotion of the Third Reich army. He explained how Hitler “was making disciples for a kingdom of hardness and cruelty.” Then he said something his friend would never forget:

“What we're doing at the seminary has to be stronger than what Hitler's doing in forming his army. We have to raise up a generation of Christians whose formation is stronger than that of the Third Reich. This (Finkenwalde) has to be more powerful than that.”

In his book, *The Screwtape Letters*, author, C.S. Lewis depicts a seasoned demon named Screwtape penning a series of letters to his nephew, a demon-in-training named Wormwood. In one of the letters, Uncle Screwtape pens these chilling words of advice on how to draw a Christian away from God, “Talk to him about moderation in all things. If you can once get him to the point of thinking that religion is all very well up to a point, you can feel quite happy about his soul. A moderated religion is as good for us as no religion at all, and more amusing.”

Conclusion

For too long, I believe the Church has settled for a moderated religion. Meanwhile, our enemy has been raising up disciples for His kingdom of darkness. He is discipling the next generation in the schools, he is discipling them on social media, and in the entertainment industry. Statistics show we are losing future generations to the enemy at alarming rates. So what we are doing here has to be stronger than what the Devil is doing out there. We have to raise up a generation of Christians whose formation is stronger than that of darkness. This has to be more powerful than that.

Discussion Group Questions:

1. In your own words, why do you think Jesus sent the disciples out in pairs? What does this tell you about the significance of community?

2. Based on Matthew 28:18-20, what do you think it means for followers of Jesus to “Make disciples of all nations”? How about Jesus’ words to His disciples in Acts 1:8,

⁸ *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth,” (Acts 1:8).*

3. What spheres of influence has Jesus entrusted to you? (Family, work, school, etc.) How might your small group help you to make disciples in these areas?

4. When it comes to a Missional world-view, Missional Community, and a Missional lifestyle, which do you feel you need to grow most in? What are some of the biggest challenges you face in making disciples of Jesus?