

Spiritual Rhythms

MEET

“Behold, how good and pleasant it is for [Christians] to dwell together in unity”—this is the Scripture’s praise of life together under the Word... For Jesus Christ alone is our unity. ‘He is our peace.’ Through him alone do we have access to one another, joy in one another, and fellowship with one another.”
—Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Gathering with other Christians for worship, study, fellowship, and prayer is one of the most joyous and beneficial of all God’s gifts. Whether you join your spouse in morning prayer, a couple of friends over coffee, a journey group in someone’s home, or a community group at the church building, the rhythm of meeting with others can be a catalyst for your spiritual formation.

One benefit of meeting together is that we often learn more when we have conversations about what we’re reading and experiencing. This rhythm of meeting gives us the opportunity to talk about what God is teaching us, but that’s not the only benefit. When we meet together regularly with other Christians, we are also encouraged in our faith, we are challenged by our sin, we are comforted in our troubles, and we meet each other’s needs. Christian community blesses us (and we bless others) when we do life together.

SCRIPTURE BASIS

Read and reflect on John 17:13–26.

- Note all the places in this passage where Jesus mentions unity and oneness.
- Jesus prayed “for all those who would believe in [him] through [the apostles’] message so that all of them would be one.” How should our experience of life together be impacted by this call to unity? How might it change our expectation of others and/or our goals in relationships?
- How is this unity related to the relationship God the Father has with Jesus the Son?
- In addition to unity, Jesus also prays that his followers would experience joy (verse 13), sanctification (verse 19), glory (verse 22), and love (verse 26). Which of these have you experienced in the context of relationships? Which would you like to experience more of this year? How can you encourage others in this?

Read and reflect on Acts 4:32–35.

- This passage starts with a reference to the believers being “one in heart and mind.” How did their unity express itself through daily life?
- What strikes you as countercultural from this passage? What surprises you?
- How is the description of community life in this passage similar to or different from what you currently experience in community with your family, neighbors, or Community Group? (see also Acts 2:42–47) How might we shift our expectations of community “life together” to look more like the biblical examples?

¹ Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, (New York: HarperOne, 1954), page 39

RESPONSE

Talk about the difference between “unity” and “sameness.” What are some challenges to doing “life together” with people who are different from you? Consider personality, politics, race, et cetera.

CHRISTIAN TRADITION

Dietrich Bonhoeffer² (1906–1945) knew firsthand the value of doing life together with a community of friends. Before he went to prison for opposing Hitler’s regime, he was assigned the care and leadership of a clandestine seminary, a group of twenty-five vicars who lived and studied together in Germany. That experience is described in *Life Together*, a well-loved book since its first publication in 1939. In the book he notes, “how inexhaustible are the riches that open up for those who by God’s will are privileged to live in the daily fellowship of life with other Christians.”³ This type of community is not simply a weekly gathering to look at a biblical text. Rather, the goal of doing life together includes fellowship over meals, spiritual conversations, encouragement through prayer, and more. Find other Christians to “meet” with—not just a study group but instead, the community with whom you “do life together.”

PRACTICE

Choose one or more exercises to try this week, with a few friends or in your Community Group.

- Meet with one or two friends and discuss the suggested scripture texts together. Ask if they’d like to make meeting a weekly commitment.
- Schedule a weekly walk or phone call with a spiritual mentor.
- Join a Community Group and discuss ways to “do life together” rather than just meeting to discuss the scripture. How can you connect with other believers for encouragement and friendship outside of your weekly meeting time?
- Reach out to some online or out-of-town friends who would be interested in connecting over Zoom or Facebook over the next few weeks. Send them the link to our “Spiritual Rhythms” resources and discuss them together virtually.

PRAYER FOCUS

Use these prayer prompts to deepen your practice of community life:

- **CCC:** Father God, thank you for giving us your church as a family of support and encouragement. Help us to reach out to those who may not be well connected to other Christians. Give us release from our spirit of independence and help us realize the value and importance of inter-dependence with other Christians. Help us to find ways to “do life together” outside of regularly scheduled worship or groups.
- **Omaha:** Almighty God, thank you for the neighbors you’ve placed right outside our front doors. Help us to be aware of needs around us and ready to meet those needs. Remind us not to close ourselves off too quickly with garage doors and privacy fences. Rather, help us to walk and pray in awareness of the people who need to know you and your son, Jesus.

² christianitytoday.com/history/people/martyrs/dietrich-bonhoeffer.html

³ Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, (New York: HarperOne, 1954), page 20

- **C&MA**⁴: Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on us today! Give us the empowerment we need to fully represent you to the people around us. We know that only in your fullness can we be fully present in relationship to others. We depend on your Spirit as our guide for each day, our comfort for each trial, and our strength for every kingdom purpose to which you call us. Amen.

RESOURCES

Books and websites that support this week's practice:

- Andy Stanley, "Starting Well," app.rightnowmedia.org/en/content/details/238730⁵
- "In Community, For Community", app.rightnowmedia.org/en/content/details/138230⁵
- Tim Mackie, "The Committed Community," (sermon), youtube.com/watch?v=hmatYbpvk80
- Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon. *The Art of Neighboring: Building Genuine Relationships Right Outside Your Door*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012).
- Irwyn L. Ince Jr, *The Beautiful Community: Unity, Diversity, and the Church at its Best*. (Downers Grove: IVP, 2020)
- Bob Goff, *Everybody, Always: Becoming Love in a World Full of Setbacks and Difficult People*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2018)
- Shauna Niequist, *Bread and Wine: A Love Letter to Life around the Table with Recipes*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017)
- Brian Mavis and Rick Rusaw, *The Neighboring Church: Getting Better at What Jesus Says Matters Most* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2016).
- Marva J. Dawn, *Truly the Community: Romans 12 and How to Be the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992).
- Joseph R. Myers, *Organic Community: Creating a Place Where People Naturally Connect* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007).
- Deuteronomy 6:1–9; 1 Samuel 20; Acts 2:42–47, 17:16–17; 1 Corinthians 11:17–33; Hebrews 10:19–25

NEXT STEPS

If you are not yet connected to a group, consider finding one!

- Search for groups with specific criteria at cccomaha.info.
- Contact the Adult Ministries team to find your best next step by visiting cccomaha.org/connect.

⁴ Sign up for a forty-day prayer devotional from the Christian and Missionary Alliance at cmalliance.org/40days.

⁵ You'll need to set up a Right Now Media account to view these. For free access through Christ Community Church, text CCCOmaha to 49775.