

PLEASE COME TO THE 11am SERVICE

INTRODUCE

Well, good morning church! If I haven't met you yet, my name is Chris Martin, and I'm the Lead Pastor here. If you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to 1 Peter chapter 2.

How's everyone doing with this Disciplines series?

- Anyone still reading and memorizing the Scriptures?
- Anyone Sabbathing? Pleasure stacking today?
- ACTS prayer?
- What about fasting? Anyone get hangry this week?

I'm hearing lots of good things, and believe it or not, there are only two weeks left. Today, and then we'll wrap it all up next week.

INTRODUCTION: CROSS FIT

But today, let's start with a question: who's heard of CrossFit? Actually, maybe the question should be, who hasn't heard of CrossFit...right?

There are only two thoughts about CrossFit.

- *It's awesome...*
- *best thing I've ever done in my life...*
- *everyone should CrossFit!*

Or...it's a cult. Right?

Now, I know a number of you here are CrossFitters. You know how I know?

First, you look like you could kill me in two moves. Alright?

- Any of you seen Doug Androsky?
- Lethal.
- Just lethal.
- Ok?

But you know how else I know you CrossFit? Because you let me know!

You don't lead with,

- *"Hey, I'm Ted and I work for Lockheed."*

No, you're like,

- *"Hey I'm Ted, and I work out at Decima, or Ken Caryl, or Kada."*
- It's the first thing out of your mouth!

And I'm not bad-mouthing CrossFit today, ok?

- Frankly, cause I'm scared of y'all...
- but really, I think CrossFit has tapped into something
- that is innate in every human being:

we are relational creatures, created to be in community.

And CrossFit has tapped into this.

They've got their own language. Right?

- *"You wanna come to the box with me?"*
- *"What's a box?"*
- *"It's the CrossFit gym."*
- *"Why don't you call it a gym?"*
- *"Cause it's a box!"*
- *"Please don't hurt me!"*

But you need to know what a WOD and a FRAN and a MURPH are.

Alright, I used to work out with a crew and we did a MURPH. Here's what a MURPH is:

- run one mile.
- Then do 100 pull-ups,
- 200 push-ups,
- 300 bodyweight squats,
- and then just run one more mile.
- Yo, that's crazy!

But CrossFitters are just bosting about that kind of stuff all the time:

"I bled out of my eyelids today...it was awesome!"

And people are like, *"sign me up!"*

But there's just a commitment to building up the community. Ok?

- If you hit a personal record,
- everyone celebrates and cheers you on.
- And when you fail
- they are quick to pick you up
- and encourage you
- and lift you up.

And I looked on one CrossFit website, and they've got so much going on it was mind-blowing!

- Workouts at 5am,
- two at 6am,
- 8am,
- 8:30,

- 9:30,
- 12...
- and then 4pm,
- 5:30,
- and 6:30.
- And they're all booked!

Yo, I'm just trying to get you to come to service once a week!

So, why this phenomenon?

Well, I think they've tapped into the desperate need of humans to belong.

COMMUNITY

So, our fifth discipline in this series we're going to look at is community. Community.

- And I want to make the case that community is, in fact,
- a spiritual discipline that needs to be practiced
- in order for us to grow into mature disciples.

And the New Testament gives us a built-in community...called the church.

- So, I'm not just talking any community,
- like you can get at the CrossFit Box...
- but I'm talking church community.

And I'm arguing that church community is a discipline, ok?

- It is a discipline.
- It takes work.
- It takes practice.
- And frankly...it's hard.

And there are MANY who say that CHURCH is NOT necessary.

- You've heard people say,
 - *"I'm spiritual, just not religious."*
- Or even the Christian version is,
 - *"Well, I love Jesus, just not the church."*

TRANSITION

So, let me give us a few reasons why people aren't practicing the discipline of church community.

POINT 1: IT'S EASIER THAN EVER NOT TO

First, **SLIDE IT'S EASIER THAN EVER NOT TO**. Right?

It's easier than ever not to be a part of a church. And you may be like,

- *"Shhhh...Chris, don't tell them this!"*
- But listen, we all know it. Right?
- It's easier than ever not to be a part of a local church
- because you can get your digital discipleship on.

BLANK SLIDE

Download a podcast from whoever your favorite preacher is.

- You want Andy Stanley?
- You want Matt Chandler?
- You want Tim Keller?
- They're all on demand...for free.
- You want in-depth bible studies?
- Download those videos and consume.

And here's the truth...

- those guys are better than me.
- They're better communicators.
- They're better preachers.
- They're the 1%!
- So, you can stream those sermons,
- and get your Hillsong on,
- or your Shane and Shane on.

And thanks to COVID, you can literally stream any church in the entire world you want!

It's easier than ever NOT to be a part of a local church.

Who needs church? I've got YouTube!

POINT 2: IT'S MESSY

Second reason people don't practice church community:

SLIDE IT'S MESSY.

- Let me tell you...it's messy.
- This place, Fathom...it's messy.

And so, sometimes we think,

- *"Well, I'll just go to a different church..."*
- But I'll tell you, that one's messy too.
- You just haven't seen the inside yet!

Church community is messy.

- It's messy because you're messy.
- It's messy because I'm messy.
- It's messy because we don't always make the right decisions.
- It's messy because we sin.
- It's messy because we all need grace.
- It's messy being a part of a church.

POINT 3: IT'S COSTLY

Third reason: **SLIDE IT'S COSTLY.**

- Community is costly.
- Church is costly.
- I have to build it into my rhythms.
- I have to get the kids up and dressed and out the door...
 - on a Sunday morning for church
 - or Wednesday night for Discipleship Group.
- I've gotta share some vulnerable parts of me.
- It's costly...
- and I'm just not sure I am willing to pay that price.

BLANK SLIDE

TRANSITION

Now, let's dig into our text today, and I think we'll be able to address each of those three reasons why people aren't practicing the discipline of church community. So, Look with me at 1 Peter 2:9-10

1 PETER 2:9–10

[9] But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. [10] Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

BELONG VS. CONSUME

Now, the first objection to church community was, it's easier than ever not to belong to a church community.

So, I've heard it...very likely you've heard it...but I often hear people say things like, *"You don't have to go to church to be a Christian."*

And listen to me...

- if you define church as a product,
- or an event,
- or a sermon and some songs,
- or a building...
- then that statement is completely true!

You don't have to go to an event or consume a product to be a Christian.

- Going to church makes you as much of a Christian,
- as sticking your head in the oven makes you a turkey.
- That's just not how it works.

But, what did our text just say the church was?

- First of all, that “you” in verse 9, is plural.
- Ok? It’s not “you” as in the individual...
- but “you all” as is “y’all”!

Y’all are a race....a nation...a people!

- You can’t be a race by yourself.
- You can’t be a nation by yourself.
- You can’t be a people by yourself.
- You need church community.

The church isn’t a place or a product...it’s a people.

So, if you see church as something to CONSUME...
no, you don’t have to GO to church to be a Christian...

- but I just don’t see biblically how you can see Christianity as
 - SOMETHING TO CONSUME...

So, my first point of what church COMMUNITY is:

- Biblically... **SLIDE IT’S SOMEWHERE TO BELONG.**

But that’s not how many American Christians function.

You see, this discipline isn’t in any of my books on spiritual disciplines, because, until recently, I think it was assumed! It was assumed that you belonged to a church community.

And it seems to me that many Evangelicals consume everywhere but belong nowhere.

- I think one of the things that has really stunted our faith
- is that many don’t belong to a church community.

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We like the preaching here, or we like the music there. And that's how we pick it.

- And I think you've got a mass of believers
- who aren't meaningfully plugged in anywhere.

So, the things required for spiritual growth are not present in their lives...

- no one can speak into them,
- there's no authority that they'll submit to,
- no one can rebuke them
- because they won't let themselves be known.
- They simply log-in, listen to a sermon, and log-out.
 - Or, honestly, they don't even log-in.

And this is not how the church is designed to be. It's not how she was designed to work.

- And then we're just kind of dumbfounded
- when we're not growing.
- And so usually we say something really dumb like,
 - *"Oh, I'm just not being fed there anymore,*
 - *so, we're going to move on to the next place."*

But church is not a product to consume. It's a people to belong to.

- And until you belong to a church,
- until then, it's just really goofy.
- You end up being people
- who listen to sermons for decades
- but not growing at all.

That's not how it was designed to be.

COMMITMENT VS. MATURITY

Next objection: it's messy!

Yeah, it's messy. Back to 1 Peter. Did you see what kind of people we were before God called us into community?

- You were called out of darkness.
- Once you were not a people.
- Once you had not received mercy.

Do you remember what you were like before Christ saved you and started his good work in you? YOU WERE A MESS!

And listen, sometimes even now that he HAS started working in you, you're still a mess!

JESUS' DISCIPLES

It's fascinating, in Matthew 9, we find Jesus calling his first disciples, and in verse 9 he makes an interesting choice for who he wanted to be a part of his community.

SLIDE MATTHEW 9:9-13

[9] As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him.

[10] And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. [11] And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" [12] But when

he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. [13] Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

BLANK SLIDE

So, this is an interesting turn of events...because in Jesus' community of disciples, there are not only good Jewish boys like Peter and Andrew and James and John.

But now, there are tax collecting traitors like Matthew, and even broader: sinners!

There are people in Jesus' community from across the spectrum of maturity. Right?

- This is not a club for the spiritually elite!
- Jesus seems, at first, to be more interested in one's commitment level rather than one's maturity level.

And that's my second point about community:

SLIDE IT STARTS WITH COMMITMENT AND MOVES TOWARD MATURITY

- This is why we can very genuinely say:
- church community is messy!

CHURCH IS MESSY

You listen to me: Jesus' heart is for the broken, the messy, the sinner. The minimum bar to be enfolded into the community of Christ is simply to open yourself up to him! It starts with commitment.

- It is all he needs.
- Actually, it's the only thing he'll work with.
- You don't need to clean yourself up to come to Jesus.
- Your very mess is what qualifies you to come.

It's not the healthy who need a physician.

DANGEROUS

And then finally, to the objection that church community is costly. Yeah, it is. Church community is costly...but my third point today: If belonging is costly...then **SLIDE NOT BELONGING IS DANGEROUS!**

You gotta understand that we do have a real spiritual enemy who wants to take us out. The Bible says that the enemy prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.

ILLUSTRATION: ANIMAL PLANET

Now, listen...which one does a prowling lion always go after? Come on now! You've seen the Animal Planet...

- You see a lion prowling around in the grass,
- and then the next scene is a herd of antelope,
- but then they zoom in on that one, gimpy, three-legged,
- tripod antelope hanging on the outside of the herd...
- Or that little baby barely walking...
- What do you know is happening next?
 - "Kids, change the channel..."
 - "this is not going to end well."

This is not a Disney movie...ok?

- In the Disney movies the parents die and the kids live...
- but that's just something different.
- Eileen is about to get taken out!
 - (some of you will get that joke later)

So, that lion, is looking for the easy target. The young and the weak.

- Do you know why God created animals with the herd instinct?
- **Because it's the herd that protects the weak...**

BLANK SLIDE

APPLICATION

So, watch out church. Because the enemy prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.

Let me tell you who he devours.

- He devours that disconnected person.
- He devours that person who comes to church,
- but nobody knows,
- because you're not connected in any meaningful way.

You see, what the church ought to be about,

- is that when we have a newer Christian or wounded person,
- we take them
- and we put them in the middle of the herd.
 - *"Get in here!*
 - *It's safer in here.*
 - *The enemy...that lion...can't get to you in here."*

This is what Peter said in verse 9: You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may, what's the word? PROCLAIM.

- We don't just belong to community for us!
- We belong to church community to
- PROCLAIM the excellencies of him who called us!

There're two types of people who need to get connected to church community.

Some of you are newer in your faith or, frankly, you're wounded,

- and you're gonna have a tendency to isolate,
- and hang out on the outskirts...
- but I'm telling you, the moment you do that,
- you're an easy target for the enemy.
- You need to get into church community.
- Get in the center of the herd.

Now, there's another group of you, and you aren't currently wounded, but you're doing ok...and your stronger...and you're maturing.

- Well, you need to be in church community, too,
- because it's not about you!
- We need the strong to surround and protect the weak.

And truthfully, as you are in community, you will cycle from weak to strong.

Sometimes you'll be the protector, other times you'll be the protected.

We PROCLAIM to each other the excellencies of Jesus!

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Alright, let's end with the practical! How do we practice this discipline of community?

Well, this one has gotten immensely harder this year with COVID. I mean, if anything, those excuses are now more justified than ever.

- It's WAY easier for me NOT to belong.
- It's WAY messier than ever.
- And it's WAY more costly.
 - You telling me I've gotta wear a mask?
 - Forget about it!

So, let me give you two challenges, ok? And for some of you, you might only be able to practice one of the two...but that's cool.

HAVE A MEAL

Number one: **SLIDE HAVE A MEAL** with someone from your church community. Last week I told you NOT to eat...this week I'm telling you TO EAT!

Have a meal with someone from your church community.

- Now, if you are still staying at home...
 - for whatever reason...
- This is still my challenge to you:
- have a meal with someone from church.

Listen, I know you're playing it safe...but I'm just telling you, it is not good to be alone. You need your church community.

- So, just have one person or couple over,
- and keep your distance,
- and wear your mask if you want.
- But you need to see someone
- and share a meal with them.

And here's the topic of conversation: what's God been up to in your life as of late? There you go.

I've done this with some of you, and I think it's worth the minimal risk. You need to get with some people and have a meal.

COME BACK

Number two:

- if you're still staying home from church,
- but if you're honest...
 - you're really just taking advantage of the live-stream,
 - and treating church more as a product,
 - than a people...

I want to encourage you to **SLIDE COME BACK**.

- Register for service
- and come back.
- I know it's costly.

But as your pastor, I'm really nervous of the emotional and spiritual effects of not being in church community for this long of time.

- I know there's more risk by coming!
- But like we just said, there are risks in NOT coming!

- And we're following the protocols,
- and we're socially distanced,
- and we're cleaning,
- and we're wearing masks.
- Come back.

BLANK SLIDE

ILLUSTRATION: 2-YEARS-AGO

Now, I'll close with this. I remember the night, nearly 2-years-ago, when the elders confronted me on plagiarizing portions of my sermons.

- I had gotten so obsessed with growing the size of this church...
- That I had let my own disciplines slip to almost nothing...
- I had burnt out...

And after that elder's meeting I called Maryse, as I always do, on my way home, and I can vividly remember how much I didn't want to tell her what had happened.

And after I confessed,

- I told her that I really didn't want to tell her any of it.
- And when she asked me why I didn't want to tell her,
- I said, *"I am just so ashamed of myself.*
 - *For getting here.*
 - *For doing this.*
 - *I should know better.*
 - *I'm just so ashamed."*

And later that week I confessed to my Discipleship Group...and then the next night to the church as a whole. And that began the process of recovery and healing for me.

But Maryse said something that first night I'll never forget. She said: *"Chris, you never have to be ashamed to tell me anything."*

ENDING

Fathom, **Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.**

- The grace I experienced from her that night...
- the grace that I experienced from so many of you,
 - my church community...
- the immeasurable grace I've found at the feet of Jesus Christ.

It's like I was that gimpy antelope, and you pulled me into the herd. And I'm the pastor here! This church community is for me, too!

- So, whatever your mess...
- you bring it.
- You confess it.
- You lay it down.
- You drag it into the light.
- Is it sin?
- Is it pain?
- Is it fear?
- Is it shame?

I'm gonna tell you what my wife told me: you never have to be ashamed to tell us anything.

Christ does not cringe at reaching out and touching dirty sinners and numbed sufferers.

- You will find grace.
- You will find mercy.
- You will find transformation.
- You will find Jesus.

This is church community. Let's train in this together!

Pray with me. **LYRICS SLIDE W/PADS**

RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – fathomchurch.org/give
- PRAYER - fathomchurch.org/prayer
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

RESOURCES USED:

- Chandler, Matt. *A People for His Own Possession*.
- Comer, John Mark. *Jesus' Call To Community*.
- Ortlund, Dane. *Gentle and Lowly*.
- Practicing the Way. <https://practicingtheway.org>
- Vanderstelt, Jeff. *Saturate*.