



Family: Thrives in Community—Devotional Thoughts for the Week of January 17, 2021

Our devotional author this week is Joan Lonsway. Joan has attended BCC for 28 years and is a leader in Bible Study Fellowship. A little-known fact about Joan is that, while she was in high

school, she was a member of the Citizens for Decent Literature. As a faithful member, she took an oath not to read Mad Magazine.

DAY 1: Community

According to Webster, a community is a group of people with a common characteristic or interest living together within a larger society. Other words that describe community life are dependent, connected, related, to name a few.

As a child, I attended Catholic schools and our teachers, the nuns, lived in a convent. They lived together, ate together, worshipped together, and socialized together. This was my first impression of living in a community. It did not appeal to me. At this stage of my life, however, and having matured somewhat spiritually, it makes more sense. Psalm 133:1 tells us, “How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity.”



When you live together in a community, you get to know each other better. We can do this on a small scale at church when we attend the same meetings, serve together, or socialize together. God does not intend for us to live in solitude. Picture a lone man high on a mountain. He has studied the bible for years and memorized hundreds of verses. This man spends hours exalting God. But, because of his solitude, who can hear him? Community life gives you the opportunity to learn from others and to go out and share what you have learned. And that is what the First Century Christians did. Do you spend time with fellow believers to learn and to teach? You might want to check out one of our book clubs.

Day 2: Community is Encouraging

I found this definition of the spiritual gift of encouragement: “the special ability God gives to inspire others to reach their full potential by challenging, comforting and guiding them in such a way that they are motivated to grow.”

Acts 2:47 says: “And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” This tells me that new Christians were constantly entering into an unknown community with mostly strangers. What would it take for you to feel comfortable in this situation? Perhaps an encouraging word or someone to guide you. Maybe, someone to teach you? How about, all of the above?

These new Christians found themselves sharing everything they own. Kind words and encouragement would be needed to let them know that everyone would be sharing everything. No one would be without. I am certain they would be given chores. It takes special people to guide, encourage, and direct someone learning new skills. The apostles encouraged them in spiritual matters which led them to pray and daily visit the temple.

As I sit here writing, a friend sent me an encouraging text, wishing me peace, love, and happiness. In what way do you encourage others? Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:11 wrote: “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”



Day 3: Community is Fun

Ecclesiastes 8:15 says: “So I recommend having fun, because there is nothing better for people in this world than to eat, drink, and enjoy life. That way they will experience some happiness along with all the hard work God gives them under the sun.”



As a child I had lots of fun with my brothers and sisters. After homework was done, we played board games or cards. In the summer it was Badminton, Strike on the Bounce, or Hide and Seek. I wonder what kind of games First Century Christians played? They probably liked to arm wrestle or play marbles using rocks. Someone might have been challenged to a singing contest.

In reality, having fun was most likely enjoying each other's company, working together or raising their voices in unison to praise God. Sharing a good meal is always fun, too. I had so much fun with my family Christmas Day, that I found myself thanking God all through the week. And, I believe, the more you thank God, the more joy you will be given. What would you do for fun if you were a First Century Christian?

Day 4: Community Attracts the Holy Spirit

Matthew 18:20 says: "For where two or more come together in my name, there am I with them." First Century Christians did everything together. They pooled their money and material goods. They grew their food, prepared it, and ate together. This made it easier to come together and pray and listen to the teachings of the apostles.

My personal experience with the Holy Spirit came shortly after my immersion as an adult. I was attending Home Group and our leader, Rick Stacy, was discussing brokenness. He asked if anyone had been broken. At that moment my insides felt like there was a great wind swirling around and I cried profusely. I didn't know what was happening but, I could tell by the looks on the others' faces, that it was profound. One of the members thanked me the next day for being able to be a witness to this manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Imagine if I hadn't gone to Home Group that night. What a loss for me and for them. God wants us in community so He can demonstrate His power and His love.

How can we spend more time together so we can learn about letting Christ live through us together?

Day 5: Community Outreach

In an article by Marty Goehring, PhD, the author talks about a devastating plague in A.D. 251 that swept through the Roman Empire, wreaking incredible misery and destruction. Known as the Plague of Cyprian, named for the bishop that chronicled the events, it killed 5,000 people per day during its zenith. Though many fled, in fear of their lives, the Christian response was to stay behind to minister to the sick and dying and to bury the dead. It didn't matter to them whether those they helped were Christians or nonbelievers. Communities were transformed by Christians reaching out to others...and so was the entire Roman Empire.

Still today, as then, communities are being transformed by Christians across the world who are willing to reach out to others in the midst of their own life struggles.

Beavercreek Christian Church is involved in ministering to the local area in many ways including:

- a. Promise House which provides crisis care for vulnerable women and children in the Miami Valley area.
- b. International Ministry
- c. NeighborLink Miami Valley assisting neighbors in need, especially widows and single mothers.

Where is God calling you to minister, and in what way? Nothing is too small that God will not use it.



1 Peter 4:10 says: "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.