

Community & Solitude

Start Here - 5 minutes

Last week we explored the importance of being a part of a loving and healthy community. This week we want to look at what could be a surprising but integral companion to community—solitude.

Midtown's mission is to help people **Follow Jesus and Live with Purpose in Community**. For us, following Jesus means modeling our life after his so we can become like him. If you read through the gospels you see that Jesus had a rhythm of being in solitude *and* being in community.

Mark 5:15&16

Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

If you ever fly with young children, the flight attendant will say to you, "Should the cabin lose pressure, oxygen masks will drop from the overhead area. Please place the mask over your own mouth and nose before assisting others." The first time I heard that I thought it sounded extremely selfish. But of course, when you really think through this idea you realize how important it is. If you don't put on your mask you run the risk of becoming unconscious. Not only would you not be able to help someone else but now someone else would need to help you.

Love is rarely passive. It typically requires energy from us. Jesus was the epitome of love in flesh. When Jesus withdrew to lonely places, it was a way for him to put his oxygen mask on, a way for him to be in tune with God and to be reenergized so *that he was able* to enter back into community to love others.

Many times, community is the place where healing happens. Throughout this journey of life we will all need a shoulder to cry on, someone to sit with us, to listen to us, to help us up and remind us there is still good in the world and that we can keep going. This doesn't mean that you have to be healthy to be part of community. But it does mean that we need to invest time in both our internal world (our emotions) and our external world (relationships/community). If we never put on our own oxygen masks and address with God the pain, brokenness, and sin that lies beneath the surface of our lives, we will likely end up hurting our relationships and eroding the communities we are part of.

This is why intentional solitude is so important to community.

Questions - 30 minutes

Have somebody read Luke 22:39-46

1. What did Jesus do with his overwhelming emotions of sorrow and dread? What kind of example does that set for us as followers of Jesus?
2. What was the result of Jesus “getting in touch with his feelings” and then giving his emotions over to the Father in prayer?
3. What are some of the reasons that we, like Jesus’ apprentices in the story, have a hard time meeting God in our emotions, specifically our negative emotions?

What does solitude with God look like for you?

Do you feel like you have a good balance of times of solitude and times of community?

Do you feel like you are drawn to one or the other?

Do you think there is a difference between solitude and isolation? Explain.

How can you create an intention balance between community and solitude in your life?

Close in Prayer - 10 minutes

Take some time to share what is going on in everyone’s life and how the group can encourage and support one another. Have someone close in prayer.