



## Week 7 | Building Community Exercises

*“Let him who until now has had the privilege of living a common Christian life with other Christians praise God’s grace from the bottom of his heart. Let him thank God on his knees and declare: It is grace, nothing but grace, that we are allowed to live in community with Christian brethren.” - Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

Joining in ministry with each other first means joining ourselves together through prayer and thankfulness. Take a few moments to thank God for the partners He has given you in ministry. Think through your community--those with whom you serve, celebrate, and share sorrows. As specific friends come to mind, thank God for His work in and through them and ask Him to guide you in prayer for them. Below is a suggested prayer of thanksgiving for other believers:

*Heavenly Father, I cannot imagine how storms can be navigated, burdens borne, and hardships handled without the company of a few good friends. I praise you today for the gift of friendship—for the joy, encouragement, and refreshment you give me through my friends.*

*When I walk through difficult and draining seasons, I’m inclined to think, “No one can possibly understand what I’m going through. Nobody can relate to my feelings and confusion. Everyone would handle this mess much better than I am.”*

*Those are the times when it’s easy to withdraw into isolation, fall into the pit of condemnation, and reach for some ill-chosen medication. That’s when the gift of long-standing, all-weather, burden-bearing friends becomes especially precious.*

*Father, I praise you for the gift of hearing my friends say these two words: “Me too.” I praise you for friends who know how to “refresh the hearts of the saints”—including this saint. I praise you for friends who remind me of the truth and power of the gospel, of the love of Jesus, and of the bigger story you are always writing.*

*I praise you for friends who share their lives and not just their gospel. I praise you for friends who offer tears and not just their answers. I praise you for friends who give life-giving wisdom and not just mess-fixing formulas.*

*Father, my all-weather friends turn my heart heavenward. They simply remind me that the foundation and fountain of all good friendship is found in the gospel. It’s overwhelming, settling, and centering to hear Jesus say to us, “I no longer call you servants... I call you friends” (John 15:15). Indeed, Jesus is the friend that sticks closer than a brother (Prov. 18:24).*

*What wondrous love is this, indeed? “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (John 15:13). Hallelujah, what a salvation! Hallelujah, what a Savior! Amen, I pray, in Jesus’ most glorious and gracious name.\**

\* Adapted from Scotty Smith - “A Prayer About Thankfulness for Long Standing Friends”

## **Exercise 2 - Ministering to One Another**

*“Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.” - 1 Corinthians 10:17*

As followers of Christ, we are one body. God wants us to desire to connect with each other in authentic relationships that cultivate, celebrate, and make evident Christ’s love for all the world. What does a community centered around Christ look like? Scripture gives us several examples and instructions on how to live as one body.

### **Love one another**

*“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love another.” - John 13:34-35*

### **Encourage one another**

*“Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up...” - 1 Thessalonians 5:11*



**Be kind to one another / Forgive one another**

*“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” - Ephesians 4:32*

**Care for one another**

*“But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.” - 1 Corinthians 12:24–25*

Sit quietly and prayerfully become aware of God’s presence. Ask God to show you someone in your community that He wants you to invest in. Spend a moment in prayer for this person. Ask God to show you one of the ‘one another’ examples from scripture above to live out for that person this week. Ask Him to give you the desire, time, and energy to follow through. Thank God for this person and for their presence in your life. Close your prayer by thanking God for the gift of community in your life.

**What was this practice like for you?**

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**Exercise 3 - Ministering with One Another**

As we minister to other believers, we also have the opportunity to minister with them--as we fellowship in the Gospel, we work to advance the Gospel. This means we must discuss with each other different opportunities God has given us to serve currently, as well as vision that He has given us for the future. We must be prepared to ask others to do ministry with us instead of trying to go at it alone.

Have a pen and paper handy and begin with a brief prayer asking the Spirit for wisdom and faith. Ask the Spirit to bring to mind all the opportunities you currently have to minister--within our church, in our city, and around the world. Also ask Him to bring to mind Gospel dreams you



have--opportunities you'd like to have to minister in the future. Jot these opportunities and dreams down.

Next, think of where you see needs in these areas. Prayerfully consider: **Where could someone else's gifts be used here? Is this ministry hindered because the whole body of Christ is not being mobilized? Where has the Spirit gifted others to join in this ministry?** Write down your thoughts.

Finally, take action. Talk to someone else about where you believe you could partner together for the Gospel. You might ask them to pray for a coworker of yours who is not a believer; you may talk with them about a vision God has given you for future ministry; you might point out how their unique gifts would serve a particular ministry team. Ask the Spirit for guidance as you go throughout this process.

