

WE (1): THE OTHERS

XP3

BOTTOM LINE: FOLLOWING CHRIST WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE DONE ALONE—WE NEED COMMUNITY.

INTRODUCTION

In following Christ, there is one truth that most of us forget—we were never meant to do this alone. We need other people. We get that when we feel lonely, don't we? But the reality is that there are times when the last thing we want is someone around—whether it's our own grumpiness or because we just don't want to be hurt again. But God made us in such a way that people fill a very specific need in our lives. And while God does supply all our needs, He created us to need other people too.



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PASSION.

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STATEMENT OF FAITH

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ABOUT GOD

God is the one and only true God, yet He exists in three persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. God is the Creator, so everything belongs to Him and is under His control. God is holy, so He is righteous, majestic and loving. God is all knowing and purposeful, so He's at work to bring about His will. No person, thing or idea compares to God.

ABOUT THE SCRIPTURES

God reveals Himself to us through the Bible, and it is 100% accurate, reliable and authoritative.

ABOUT PEOPLE

People are made in God's image and for His pleasure. But everybody falls short of God's intention, or ideal, for people. In other words, everyone has sinned. As a result, we are all separated from Him, even though He wants an intimate relationship with each of us.

ABOUT SALVATION

That's why Jesus, God's Son, came and lived on this earth, died and rose again. God offers His free gift of salvation to all who believe in Jesus and accept Him as Savior, the only way to be forgiven and reconciled to God. Anyone who accepts this gift is adopted as a son or daughter into God's family and will live with Him forever in heaven.

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WE (1): CREATING THE ENVIRONMENT

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We believe that the set, stage, music and everything in your room communicates a message—without you saying a word. That's why we put together a list of production ideas to help you set the stage for the session and the series. From the music you play when students come into the room to the worship set your band plays, we want to make sure that your room conveys "WE" in a multi-sensory way. There is a downloadable checklist available in your series downloads that will give you all the elements for this session (and the entire series).

BACKGROUND PLAYLIST FOR THE WE SERIES

- "To Remember" by Josh Kelley (from *To Remember-Single*)
- "Viva la Vida" by Coldplay (from *Viva la Vida*)
- "Tonight" by Jonas Brothers (from *A Little Bit Longer*)
- "Breakout" by Miley Cyrus (from *Breakout*)
- "Say" by John Mayer (from *Continuum: Special Edition*)
- "Put Your Records On" by Corinne Bailey Rae (from *Corinne Bailey Rae*)
- "We Shine" by Fee (from *We Shine*)
- "You're All I Have" by Snow Patrol (from *Eyes Open*)
- "Something's Missing" by John Mayer (from *Heavier Things*)
- "Real" by Goo Goo Dolls (from *Real-Single*)
- "The Puppy Song" by Harry Nilsson (from *Harry Nilsson: Greatest Hits*)

WORSHIP PLAYLIST FOR WE SESSION 1

- "Love Song" by Anberlin (from *Blueprints for the Black Market*)
- "Everything About You" by Sanctus Real (from *Fight the Tide*)
- "Made To Worship" by Chris Tomlin (from *See the Morning*)
- "Hosanna" by Starfield (from *I Will Go*)

THE SET

For the WE series, we have a few different ideas for your set. You can choose to do one of them or incorporate all three.

- Go to your local home improvement store and purchase giant pieces of foam board or cardboard. Trace and cut out silhouettes of people and stand them on stage. (This mimics the series art.)
- Print out pictures of all your students either individually or in groups. If you choose to take individual pictures, make sure that you are able to get a picture of every student. You could take these pictures the week before the series starts, or simply pull pictures from past events or trips. Then purchase some MDF board (or other big pieces of material) from your local home improvement store and paste the pictures to the board(s). Place the board(s) on stage as the backdrop or import the pictures into a slide show that plays on your screen as students arrive and leave.
- Move your set to the middle of the room. Your band and communicator will speak from the center of the circle. Arrange the chairs around the stage so that the people are in a circle.

SERIES ART

Art for PowerPoint backgrounds and for series promotional ads is available as a free download with every series. Visit the XP3 site, log on to your account and download the images to use in your presentation, newsletters and web site.

VIDEO

Both a video bumper and a session video are available for the WE series as video downloads from the reThink store. You can purchase the videos by logging into your XP3 account and clicking on the "XP3 videos" link. The bumper video was created to be used as an intro for all three sessions of the WE series. The session video was created to be shown during the third session.

WE (1): MIDDLE SCHOOL ADAPTATION

XP3-

The following activities and illustrations will help middle school students connect with the subject matter in ways that engage them physically, mentally, socially and sometimes emotionally. You can also adapt *We* series for middle school students by using the teaching outline found in this document to edit the teaching script to a 20 minute presentation, and also by using the separate middle school small group dialog questions (found in the series downloads) that are geared specifically for 6th-8th graders.

GAME: TWO VS. ONE (Play this game as an icebreaker to Session 1.)

For this game, you'll need a few easy children's puzzles, some Legos® and a few balloons. Every youth group has that one student who likes to volunteer for the game every week. They're convinced that no matter what, they can beat anybody, anytime. Select that student to play today's game. Then select another student to compete against him or her. Tell them there are three stages to this challenge and the first person to finish all three stages will be the winner. Here are the stages:

Stage One: Put together an easy children's puzzle.

Stage Two: Build a Lego® tower over 12 inches high.

Stage Three: Blow up three balloons and then pop them by sitting on them.

It should be pretty easy to do, but in order to show that we work better as teams, let the second student you chose to play choose another person to be on his or her team. Now it is Two vs. One. Everyone will enjoy it, even the kid who swears he'll still win by himself. The team of two should easily win and it will help illustrate that God makes us better with the help of others.

ILLUSTRATION: I AM LEGEND (Use this illustration during teaching point "D" in the INTRODUCTION section of the teaching script.)

During the introduction to the lesson, play a clip from the movie *I Am Legend*. In the movie, the main character Robert Neville, played by Will Smith, finds himself to be the last remaining survivor in New York City. As the movie begins, you can quickly see that the loneliness is getting to him. His only companion is his dog, with whom he shares meals and conversations. There is a great scene starting at 19:05 when he is driving to the video store. In the scene, he goes in to "rent" a video and has a series of conversations with mannequins he has obviously set up. Play the clip to 21:17 after the line, "I'm gonna say hello tomorrow."

We might think time to ourselves is nice, but even something good can get old if time alone is all we have.

TEACHING SCRIPT

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The teaching script is divided into five sections.

INTRODUCTION

This introduction is intended to connect you, the communicator, to the audience usually through a personal story or observation. We've included our stories, but you may want to substitute your own story in this section.

TENSION

The tension moves the message from the "me" mentality of the introduction to a "we" mentality. For example, a transition statement might be, "At some point in our lives, we have all been jealous of someone over something."

TRUTH

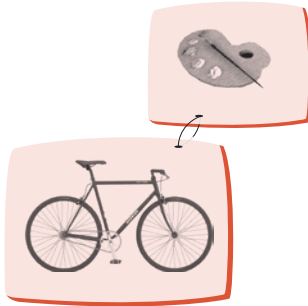
Once the tension builds, the next logical step is to uncover the truth of what the Bible says about the topic.

APPLICATION

At this point, the message moves to a "you" mentality in order to teach the application. The "you" is the student. Take God's truth and unpack how it relates to each student so that he or she can apply it to everyday life.

LANDING

Here it is important to land the message on what each student needs to know and do with what they've heard. Just as the message began with a personal story or observation, the message also ends with a "me" mentality. For example, one possible landing statement might be, "I have a greater sense of purpose knowing that God created me in His image." Leave the students with a clear sense of what all of you should do with what you've heard. Unless otherwise noted, the landing will always set up the small group dialog and give students an opportunity to process and internalize what they've heard.



WE (1): THE OTHERS

TEACHING
OUTLINE

PG. 1

XP3-

BOTTOM LINE: FOLLOWING CHRIST WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE DONE ALONE—WE NEED COMMUNITY.

INTRODUCTION

Life seems a lot easier without people.

TENSION

Living without relationships never feels right for long.

We all long to belong.

TRUTH

When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens—and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to work the ground, but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground—the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being (Genesis 2:4-7 NIV).

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man" (Genesis 2:18-23 NIV).

"It is not good."

APPLICATION

"An unshared happiness is not happiness . . . happiness is only real when shared."

Following Jesus Christ was never meant to be a completely personal, private relationship.

We were created with a need for other people.

LANDING

If you are lacking community, it isn't good.

God made us to need other people.

WE (I): THE OTHERS

TEACHING
SCRIPT

PG. 1

XP3-

BOTTOM LINE: FOLLOWING CHRIST WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE DONE ALONE—WE NEED COMMUNITY.

INTRODUCTION

- A. I love the beach. Love it. There is something about the hot sun and the blue water that just mesmerizes me. There is nothing like the feeling when my feet first touch the sand, and all of the sudden I feel like I can relax. I feel like I am a million miles away from stress and worries. Sometimes I get there and breathe in the ocean air and think, I could live here forever.
- B. It feels like that would be true. But it's not. I know it's not. Because for the past few years I have had to live at the beach for a full two months while being a part of different camps there, and you know what? By week three, the novelty has worn off. I am annoyed by how hot the sun is, how plain the ocean looks, and how sand seems to be EVERYWHERE—my shower, my bed, my car. By that point, I can't get away fast enough. The beach is a good thing, but too much of a good thing is just plain too much. Period.
- C. Some of you know what I am talking about. You have family, friends, teammates or coworkers that you spent every waking moment with this summer. You lived with them, you went to school together, you played sports together, or you were with each other every weekend all weekend. You are attached at the hip. But lately, things are different. There seems to be some tension. And some of those people who you really like are starting to annoy you . . . a lot. Now, you want your space, a lot of space. You think something is wrong with other people, but they aren't the problem. You just started to realize what I realized with the beach. Too much of anything gets old.
- D. And sometimes you feel this way, and it isn't because of one person, it seems like everybody is getting on your nerves. It feels like there couldn't be enough distance between you and the rest of humanity. So you disengage. You hole yourself up in your room, and you stay away. Life seems a lot easier when you eliminate people altogether. But it doesn't take long before that also gets old. You love your space, you love your privacy, but you can't live that way forever. None of us can. A part of us still craves the tension that comes with learning to live in relationships with people despite how difficult and trying people can be.

TENSION

- A. To some degree, we have all experienced life without people, whether we choose it to be that way, or loneliness chooses us. But living without relationships never feels right for long. With all of the ways that exist to communicate with people, it is obvious the need thrives in every one of us to make a meaningful connection. Text, e-mail, phone calls, FaceBook, MySpace, instant messaging all of these are attempts to relate on a deeper level. Still, there are more times than we would like to admit when we feel like no one understands. We may have hundreds of friends on FaceBook or MySpace, but when it comes down to it, we really need a living, breathing person around. We want someone to celebrate the good times with us, and we want someone to walk through the hard times with us too.
- B. We know that at the core of our souls, we all long to connect. We all long to belong. Something inside of each one of us is desperate for contact with other people. We desire to be in relationship with others. God created us to connect with others. God calls us to be and live in relationship with others. You feel it

WE (1): THE OTHERS

TEACHING
SCRIPT

XP3-

PG. 2

when you walk in the cafeteria and search out the people you want to sit with, you feel it when load the bus and look for the one person who has saved a seat for you, you feel it when you compulsively check your voice-mail, your e-mail, your FaceBook to see who is reaching out to connect with you. We want a connection. The need to have other people in our lives who know us, and really get us, is deep within us—even if we don't want to admit it to others. We not only need to be in relationship with God, but we also need to be in relationship with other people.

TRUTH

- A. Feeling this way, acknowledging that need for other people—for connecting with people in a deeper way—is normal. It is even healthy. God Himself made us that way intentionally.
- B. When I say the words, “In the beginning,” many of you know exactly what book of the Bible I am referring to—Genesis. And many of you here could tell me everything that God created, and how long it took Him to do it, and how He said everything was “good” at the end of each day spent creating. And a lot of you could tell me that the next to the last thing the book of Genesis tells us God made was man, and that God named him Adam. Does any of this sound familiar?
- C. Right there in the second chapter of Genesis we read: *When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens—and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to work the ground, but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground—the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being (Genesis 2:4-7 NIV).*
- D. For the next eleven verses Adam is alone. In those verses we read about the garden that Adam is placed in. We read about this incredibly sweet deal he has—he can eat anything he wants, except from one tree, and he knows what is expected of him—to work and care for this paradise. Now think about this. At this point, there was the garden, there were the animals, there was Adam and there was God. In theory, it sounds like Adam has no reason to complain about anything. What else could he possibly want? If Adam had said he was lonely, God had every right to respond by saying, “Lonely? You’re lonely? What about Me? I’m here, you can hang out with Me. Don’t you know that all of Me is more than enough for all of you? You have no reason to be lonely, get over it.”

We don't know if Adam complained about anything to God. Adam may not have even known what loneliness was, or realized that what he was missing was other people. If existing as the only human was all he knew, he may not have known his experience was incomplete. But God knew. God knew that this picture of humanity was not done with just the one human. God knew that like every other creature in the garden that had a suitable partner, Adam was in need of something more. Adam needed community with another person.

- E. Listen to this: *The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the*

WE (1): THE OTHERS

TEACHING
SCRIPT

PG. 3

XP3

beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man" (Genesis 2:18-23 NIV).

- F. No other creature could give Adam what he needed. After God had made each thing in the garden he repeated over and over, it is good, it is good, it is good. But when he saw Adam's loneliness, when he saw the emptiness next to the man, God said, "It is not good." This picture goes way beyond the purpose of marriage, although that certainly has something to do with it. God says Adam needs a helper. Adam needs a friend, a partner, a somebody to relate to, communicate with, who "gets" him. According to Genesis 2, Adam needed something more.

APPLICATION

- A. I think if we're honest, there are times when we believe if we could just get away from everyone and everything, our lives would miraculously become better and easier. Think about it—no parents, no drama and no chores. We could just escape it all. But does it ever stay that way for long? For those few hours, those few days, maybe even those few weeks where it seems like there is less responsibility, less pressure and baggage to deal with in relationships, is that really what we want? Is that really what will make us happy and satisfied? Or did God get it right when he saw Adam alone declaring, "It is not good"?
- B. In 1990, Christopher McCandless was just a recent graduate from Emory University. After leaving Atlanta following his college commencement, Chris set out on a quest for independence. He changed his name, cut off contact with his family, donated all his savings to charity and abandoned his car. Inspired by writers like Jack London and Henry David Thoreau, Chris thought that if he set out to live in the wilderness of Alaska alone, he would experience freedom, achieve the ultimate, complete independence from people and a pure union with nature. After hitchhiking and journeying south, west and north, he ended up at the culmination of his dream—in the wilds of Alaska, on the Stampede Trail. He brought ten pounds of rice, a .22 caliber rifle, a camera, several boxes of rifle rounds, some camping gear and a journal. He didn't take a map or a compass. In his mind, this was as authentic a trip as he could make to experience the ideals of the wilderness. And he thought the truest expression of this would be to do it alone.
- C. Chris lasted 112 days in the Alaska wilderness. He was dead for two and a half weeks before his body was found in early September by a group of moose hunters, and even then the cause of death was uncertain. Apparently Chris either died of starvation or from eating a poisoned seed plant. His story is the literal picture of our inability to do life alone. In the bestselling book *Into the Wild* (1996) by Jon Krakauer, where Chris's story is told, the reader gets the impression that towards the end of his life, even Chris started to realize the need for people. Just days before dying, after having finished the reading and rereading of some of his favorite books, Chris writes, "An unshared happiness is not happiness . . . happiness is only real when shared" Just days earlier, Chris had made his first attempt to leave his campsite only to find himself trapped by a raging river moving too fast and being too cold to swim. He confessed in his journal to being scared . . . afraid . . . and lonely.

WE (I): THE OTHERS

TEACHING
SCRIPT

PG. 4

XP3-

- D. At one point, Christopher felt as though being alone was the best way to live. He felt that being in the wild completely alone was true freedom. He was convinced that by escaping the real world, government, society and people, he would be able to find answers and a better, easier life. But his journal, his books, his notes seem to suggest he didn't die thinking this way. They seem to hint at the fact that shortly after it was too late, he understood the need for people, the comfort of community. Christopher McCandless is remembered as a failed attempt to make it alone.
- E. We need other people. Admitting that, and accepting that does not make us weak, it does not make us unspiritual, it makes us human. Following Jesus Christ was never meant to be a completely personal, private relationship. We were meant to stumble through this relationship with Him by being in relationship with other people. There are things that we learn about living from one another. There are things we learn about God from each other. There are things we learn about God's love from each other.
- F. For some of you, that's an easy lesson. You don't like to be alone. You constantly surround yourself with people, and we could easily fill this room with a group of people who would call themselves your "friend." But we're not just talking about accumulating friends.
- G. We are talking about living in what some people call community. We're talking about being a part of a group of people who know you, not just know your name, but really know YOU. They know all the great things about you that you want everyone to see, and they also know all the less than great things about you that you would prefer to keep hidden. They know that when you get tired or hungry, you act like a jerk. Or you're super silly. They know that when you are stressed, sometimes you shut down. They know the things you charge through and the things that scare you to death.

I think this is what God had in mind when He made Eve to be with Adam. He made Eve to "get" Adam, and for Adam to "get" Eve. He created more than a spouse, He created community. Do you believe that what God said is true? That it is not good for us to be alone? Do you believe that God created you to experience community with other people in addition to Him?

- H. Some of you don't think you need it. You feel like you're doing fine on your own. You think you can handle the loneliness, that you are okay by yourself for the long haul. You feel like you have managed most of your life without depending on other people, and there seems to be no good reason to count on them now. People are more trouble than they are worth. So you stay removed. You stay isolated.

Some of you have tried what you thought was community in the past, and things got ugly. You were a part of something that was okay for a while, but then things got very painful. People said or did things, and the group just fell apart. Now you're thinking, thanks but no thanks. Being alone may not be good, but it is better than that.

Some of you feel like you have community simply because you love being around people. You are with them all of the time. You have more friends on MySpace, more numbers in your cell phone and more names in your yearbook than anyone else you know. You think you have community. But no one really knows you. No one has the permission to dig deep into your life. No one really knows what's going on,

WE (I): THE OTHERS

TEACHING
SCRIPT

PG. 5

XP3

knows your insecurities and your fears. So even though you are surrounded by people all of the time, loneliness is still close by. Because it is possible to be around people all of the time and still feel all alone.

- I. But it doesn't really matter where you are on the spectrum of community, whether you have it or you don't, whether you want it or you hate it. The point is we are all the same when it comes to needing it. We were created to need other people in our lives. Right relationships, community and intimacy with people who truly know us—that is what God has in mind, that is what God says is good.

LANDING

- A. Where are you when it comes to community? Are you scared to death of it? Are you looking for it, but can't find it? Are you somewhere in the middle, between having okay relationships, but not having people who know the real you, in all circumstances? When it comes to relationships, what is your tendency? Do you trust people, or distrust them? Are you initially judgmental of people, or are you willing to give people a chance? Do you wonder how you can be around people so much of the time, but still feel completely alone? What comes to mind when you hear God say that you were not created to live in isolation?
- B. Listen to God say this: If you are alone, it isn't good. If you have been burned by people before, it isn't good. If you think that you can handle high school and life beyond it without quality relationships, it isn't good. You need a helper, you need community. And when it is lacking, it won't take long before you start to notice that something is missing. That everything else in your life may be great, it may be better than it ever has before in any other area, but if you are lacking community, it still isn't good. The garden of Eden lacked something before God made Eve. It wasn't until Adam found community that things were right. But for a lot of us, we are living like Adam was before Eve appeared on the scene. Most of us are living in isolation, though none of us really want to. And it isn't for lack of people, it is for lack of community. It is for lack of relationships that God created us for.

Today we just need to start by saying that God made us to need other people. And whether community is something that your heart craves or whether it's something you secretly fear, it's something you need. We need other people.

- C. So what makes you reluctant to believe this? What keeps you from being a part of a community? Are you afraid that someone will hurt you? Are you tired because you've been a part of some high-maintenance relationships? Do you just not like other people? Whatever it is, it's holding you back from knowing God in a deeper way.
- D. We need God. Each one of us needs a personal relationship with Him. But we also need other people, a community of other followers of Christ. Do you have one? And if you don't, why not?

[TRANSITION INTO SMALL GROUPS]

SMALL GROUP DIALOG: HIGH SCHOOL

WE:
THE OTHERS

WEEK 1

XP3-

**BOTTOM LINE: FOLLOWING CHRIST WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE DONE ALONE—WE NEED COMMUNITY.
SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: GENESIS 2:4-7, 18-23**

In following Christ, there is one truth that most of us forget—we were never meant to do this alone. We need other people. Your goal this week is to help students begin talking about what community means to them. Spend time on question 5, or a conversation similar to it, in order to work through student's preconceived notions of community that may be shallow or interest-specific. Let them see that real community can be something more authentic.

Warnings: Many students struggle with loneliness. This series may be painful for them as we talk about a need that they know all too well. Be sensitive to these student's needs. You may want to look for some one-on-one time to help counsel them. Remember: the more we stay focused on how we can provide community to other people, the more likely we are to find that people are also there for us. In other words, when we stop focusing on our own loneliness and choose to focus on being a good friend to others (regardless of their social position), we will usually find the kind of genuine community we are after.

CREATE MEANINGFUL CONVERSATION. ADJUST QUESTIONS AS NEEDED, AND DON'T FEEL LIKE YOU NEED TO ANSWER ALL OF THEM.

1. What did you think of the talk this week? What did you hear the speaker say?
2. Are you the kind of person who enjoys being alone and having quiet, down time (introverted), or do you always feel the need to be with people (extroverted)?
3. What did you think about the story of Christopher McCandless? Could you relate? What does his story have to tell us about our need for each other?
4. Christopher wrote in his journal that: "an unshared happiness is not happiness . . . happiness is only real when shared." What are some other things we share with people we are close to? (Think about your closest friends and family.)
5. The speaker mentioned that God created more than just friendships, He created community. What does "community" look like? Describe it.
6. How do you think community is different from a clique? (A clique usually includes people who are all similar. Community usually involves people who are different.)
7. What's the difference between having hundreds of friends on Facebook or sitting with a big group at lunch and really having community?
8. If you were God, why would you want people to live in community? What might be some benefits?
9. Do you have community in your life that looks like what we have been talking about? Who are the people that you would say are in that community? If not, what holds you back from having it?

NEXT STEP

This is a perfect opportunity for you to re-evaluate the community of your small group. Take some time this week to send an e-mail or other confidential notes to your group asking them questions about their connectedness to the group. Can they trust others in the group? Do they feel safe to share? Is this a place where they love others and receive love in return? If not, what can be done to help take your group one step further toward genuine community? You will talk more about this as a group next week, but this will help set the stage by letting students think about what they want to say in advance. E-mail the WE devotional #1 to your students this week.

Take time this week to start planning what your group will do for The XP for this series.



BOTTOM LINE: FOLLOWING CHRIST WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE DONE ALONE—WE NEED COMMUNITY. SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: GENESIS 2:4-7, 18-23

In following Christ, there is one truth that most of us forget—we were never meant to do this alone. We need other people. Your goal this week is to help students begin talking about what community means to them. Spend time on question 6, or a conversation similar to it, in order to work through student's preconceived notions of community that may be shallow or interest-specific. Let them see that real community can be something more authentic.

Warnings: Many students struggle with loneliness. This series may be painful for them as we talk about a need that they know all too well. Be sensitive to these student's needs. You may want to look for some one-on-one time to help counsel them. Remember: the more we stay focused on how we can provide community to other people, the more likely we are to find that people are also there for us. In other words, when we stop focusing on our own loneliness and choose to focus on being a good friend to others (regardless of their social position), we will usually find the kind of genuine community we are after.

CREATE MEANINGFUL CONVERSATION. ADJUST QUESTIONS AS NEEDED, AND DON'T FEEL LIKE YOU NEED TO ANSWER ALL OF THEM.

1. Are you the kind of person who needs more alone time (introvert) or more time around people (extrovert) in order to be energized?
2. Have you ever spent so much time alone that you just couldn't wait to talk to somebody? Why does that happen?
3. In Genesis 2, why did God go from declaring everything He created as "good," to declaring it "not good" for man to be alone? What was wrong?
4. What can we learn from the story of Christopher McCandless? Where did he go wrong? What were his final conclusions?
5. Christopher wrote in his journal that: "an unshared happiness is not happiness... happiness is only real when shared." What are some other things we share with people we are close to? (Think about your closest friends and family.)
6. The speaker mentioned that God created more than just friendships, He created community. What do you think "community" looks like in general? Describe it.
7. Based on this definition of community, do you think you have it? Why or why not?
8. Why do you think God created us to connect with others? Why do you think He felt it was important?
9. What is something you learned from the lesson this week?

NEXT STEP

This is a perfect opportunity for you to re-evaluate the community of your small group. Take some time this week to send an e-mail or other confidential note to your group asking them questions about their connectedness to the group. Can they trust others in the group? Do they feel safe to share? Is this a place where they love others and receive love in return? If not, what can be done to help take your group one step further toward genuine community?

E-mail the WE devotional #1 to your students this week.

Also, take time this week to start planning what your group will do for The XP for this series.

THE XP: WE LOVE IS A MOVEMENT

XP3



Moving from a “me” to “we” mentality can be a hard transition for all of us, especially students. We live in a me-centered world. But Jesus desired for us to love others. That truth is repeated in Scripture. But it seems, more often than not, we miss it. It seems that we, as the church, can become so preoccupied with the “me” that we neglect the “we.”

LOVE IS A MOVEMENT

This XP is about seeking to be active, caring, selfless followers of Jesus who look to meet the needs of those strategically placed within our own community of faith. We might not have to look any further than the students within our group or the families in our building to see people desperate to encounter a living Savior through us.

This XP will be driven by each small group. It will work best to brainstorm ideas during small group time of Session One or Two, and then plan the experience for after Session Three. Encourage each small group to identify a family or an individual within your church who is need of care. They can combine with other groups if they would like to work with more people to meet a financial need that may be bigger than one group can handle. Allow each group to really brainstorm about not just WHO they could show God’s love to, but HOW to meet that need. Get creative! The point is to come together as a community to display God’s love. Challenge them to think farther than just the immediate need as well. How could they be a community to this individual/family next week, next month, even three months from now?

Here are some ideas to get the brainstorming started:

- Find an older person who is truly just lonely, and would love to sit and visit with people to break up the monotony of his or her day. The small group could carve time out of their week to stop by in order to demonstrate God’s love.
- Find someone who has a financial need—maybe a family who doesn’t have money for groceries, can’t afford for their child to go to camp or fill up their car with gas. The small group could pull some resources to provide for this monetary or physical need.

Chances are there are dozens of people/families in your church who in some way or another are desperate to encounter God’s love from a community of believers in some form or fashion. And chances are many of these families are too afraid to communicate their need. They are too ashamed, too embarrassed or too uncertain of how people may react, so they stay silent instead. But what if that all started to change because your students started to embrace Jesus’ idea of community?

THE XP: WE LOVE IS A MOVEMENT

XP3



By serving within your church family, you can expand your students' definition of "WE" to mean more than just your small group. You can connect them with people they wouldn't normally interact with, people whose faces they would normally ignore. You can open their eyes to the stories of other people's lives and demonstrate how as a community, we can stand alongside each person in his or her time of need.

CONTACT US

If you have any questions about this XP, you can contact the XP3 team at xp3@rethinkgroup.org. Also, we would love to see pictures and hear stories about how this XP impacted your group. E-mail us and let us know, or post a message on the XP3 Facebook fan page.

HOME XP: WE

XP3

[FOR STUDENT PASTOR]

The week before you begin the WE series, e-mail the parents of your students to inform them about the new series and what students will be discussing. This will help keep your parents in the know, and it will give them an opportunity to stay involved in their child's activities. You may also want to include updates or reminders about important upcoming events, registration deadlines, retreats or church projects.

Use the e-mail to encourage your parents and celebrate each other's successes.

Note: You may want to use this opportunity to extend a personal invitation to your students' parents to be a part of the community of your church through small groups, a Bible study, etc. A great place to do that would be after the "Experience" section shown below.

Copy and paste the following description into your e-mail to help convey the main goal of this series.

E-mail for parents:

WE

In following Christ, there is one truth that most of us forget—we were never meant to do this alone. We need other people. It's critical not just because we need friends, but also because in community we understand more about who God is. We see how He is working in other people's lives. We learn things that God has taught them, and we get an opportunity to love and serve others. The WE series helps us discover the "WHY" behind community—why we need it, why we should pursue it.

WE: Week One (include date)

We need other people. We get that when we feel lonely, don't we? But the reality is that there are times when the last thing we want is someone around—whether it's our own grumpiness or because we just don't want to be hurt again. But God made us in such a way that people fill a very specific need in our lives. And while God does supply all our needs, He created us to need other people, too.

WE: Week Two (include date)

We talked last week about how we need people, and if we're honest, we all have realized that at some point or another. But there's a reluctance to take that next step because it's risky. It's scary. And most of all, it's messy. True community costs us something. But if we don't have it, it will cost us a lot more.

WE: Week Three (include date)

People's stories are powerful, aren't they? There's something about hearing what's going on in another person's life that puts things in perspective for us. We may be thinking that God has forgotten us, that He doesn't care about what's going on in our world, but then we hear someone share how God showed up when they really needed Him. And because of that, we begin to think that maybe, just maybe, He can be there for us, too. That's the power of community. It's how we see God at work in our world. It's how we grow closer to Him. And it's an important part of growing in our relationship with Him.

HOME XP: WE

XP3

PARENT CUE:

Over the next three weeks, we are talking to your student about the importance of community. What that means is simply this—we need other people. God never meant for us to go through this life alone. There are times when each one of us knows that very well, and then there are other times when it's the last thing on our minds. Wherever you are at, you need other people. And they need you. It's part of how we see God in action in our world. It's also how we learn more about Him and ourselves.

Recently, I ran across the following article from Carey Nieuwhof, a pastor in Canada. It's a very candid confession, and one that may reflect your story at some point in your life.

FIND A FRIEND

By Carey Nieuwhof

By default over the years, I have been a pretty private person. I handle most things pretty tightly. I don't have a lot of people who are close to me, but those who are close to me are people I trust implicitly and establish a deep loyalty to.

When I was going through a tough season a few years ago, I went to see some Christian counselors, and their helpful message was simply this—I couldn't go through this alone. Everything inside me said, "Yes, I can," but I realized they were right. I couldn't do it alone.

I remember the night I shared what I was going through with my community group at the time. I'm sure my pride had kept me from talking about it before. Plus, I had earlier been convinced I would just wake up out of this at some point and it would go away. I didn't need to tell anyone. Clearly, that strategy was failing. So I talked to our community group through some tears one night. The love, prayer, empathy and compassion that poured forth was huge. I was humbled and blown away.

Toni, my wife, continues to show an unbelievable kindness. And I have a handful of close friends near and far (some live a long way away), some colleagues and some staffers who tracked with me through this season. I am so grateful for them.

Friendship is still not easy for me. I am really quite private at my core. In this networked world, I know thousands of people by name, but if people get too close, I can still push away. I'm working on that. God's working on that. There has been some big progress on that, I think. But what I want to say is that I have come to realize that you can't do it alone. We are social beings. We are meant to be together.

I am always surprised that when I sit down with someone to talk through a life situation they are going through, and I ask them "Who else do you talk to this about?", the #1 answer is "No one," That breaks my heart.

If you're going through a hard time, find a friend. Talk to them. Pray with them. For me, it was hard, but life giving, to include a handful of people in a circle. It was life giving to see a group of people in my community group care deeply. We can't do this alone—and we were never meant to do it that way.