

This week Pastor Sharon brings us the message entitled "Better Together: What on Earth Are We Here For?"

Have you been trying to go it alone in your walk with Christ? Do you believe God intended you to face every challenge in life without the support of other believers? Not only does God want you to find a fellowship of Christ followers to be a part of but also He says that you need others in order to grow into the person He desires you to be. In a couple of weeks, Vineyard will embark on a quest to reach inward and outward in what we call "40 Days of Community." We will seek to deepen our love for one another within the church while extending the hand of compassion to those around us in the Hampton Roads community. So why are we doing this? Pastor Sharon gives us five reasons why we need each other to fulfill God's purpose.

The first reason is that we fellowship better together. There are four levels of fellowship to understand here. There is socializing together, such as when you do something fun with a group of friends. There is studying together, like studying the scriptures as a group to gain better understanding. There is serving together, such as working together in the Food Pantry or going on a missions trip. The least popular level, suffering together, consists of sharing in the sorrows and suffering of your brothers and sisters in Christ and can be the most rewarding.

Second, we worship better together. Our day of worship is a special day when we come together as fellow Christians, forgetting our troubles, and embracing each other as we give God praise for all He has done for us.

Third, we grow better together. Paul tells us that we, as the body of Christ, are fitted together to help each other, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love (Eph. 4:16). God designed you to be in community, and having that sense of community is crucial to your spiritual well-being. It is impossible to grow spiritually until you connect to the family of God.

Fourth, we serve better together. Imagine if God called you to deliver food to the starving people of Africa, but you couldn't afford the plane ticket, didn't speak the language, or didn't have any contacts there. Wouldn't you naturally seek out others who could help you fulfill your calling? We need others to serve God more effectively.

Fifth, we reach out better together. Vineyard has been reaching for years to the community of Mazatlan, Mexico. This past year saw the fruit of those efforts with the completion of work on the new church building there. It required lots of people praying, providing financial support, and going down to do the work. The result is something that will bless that community for decades to come.

As we prepare to launch new small groups and bring new people into our family of faith, consider ways that you can play a more active role in building a heightened sense of community. If you are already involved in a small group, what are some ways you can reach out to others both within and outside the church? Ask where you can help, and see how God finds the right fit for your talents.