

This week Pastor Ron brings us the message entitled "Setting the Table for God: How To Get the Most Out of 40 Days of Community."

A research study found that people who lived isolated lives were three times more likely to die than those who had active social lives and strong relationships. They also found that socially active people with bad eating habits on average live longer than isolated people with healthier diets. The evidence clearly indicates that having a strong network of friends and a sense of community is essential for your long-term health and well being. As Vineyard Community Church prepares to launch its *Forty Days of Community* campaign, this is an important time to think about why community is important and how you can be a part of it.

First, it's important to look back and remember God's faithfulness. God has always been faithful to Vineyard Community Church, seeing its pastors and people through every challenge and time of need. As you consider all the times the Lord met your needs, you can move forward with confidence on the road ahead.

Second, look ahead and celebrate your future. Just as God had plans for Israel, "to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future (Jer. 29:11)," so he has plans for you. As you share in God's plans for our church becoming more involved in the Virginia Beach/Hampton Roads community, you will be able to see how you are a part of something special. By sharing in the vision God has given us to grow and prosper, you can celebrate being a part of that.

Third, look around and commit to being a part of the community. Look for ways that you can become involved. Make a commitment to help grow that sense of community within our church and see how God blesses you.

Fourth, look inward and prepare yourself spiritually for the road ahead. Do three things to prepare: 1) set aside time for God in your daily life; 2) take inventory of where you are at spiritually; and 3) pray diligently that the Father will prepare you and use you for His purposes.

Fifth and finally, look up and get ready for an encounter with God. This may require that you be willing to leave the comfortable and familiar and try something new and unfamiliar. This may require a greater love of and trust in God than you have ever felt before. Be ready to "step out of the boat" and see how God shows up in your life.

As we are now in the final week of preparing our hearts, minds, and homes to welcome new people into our lives, ask yourself, "How can God use me?"