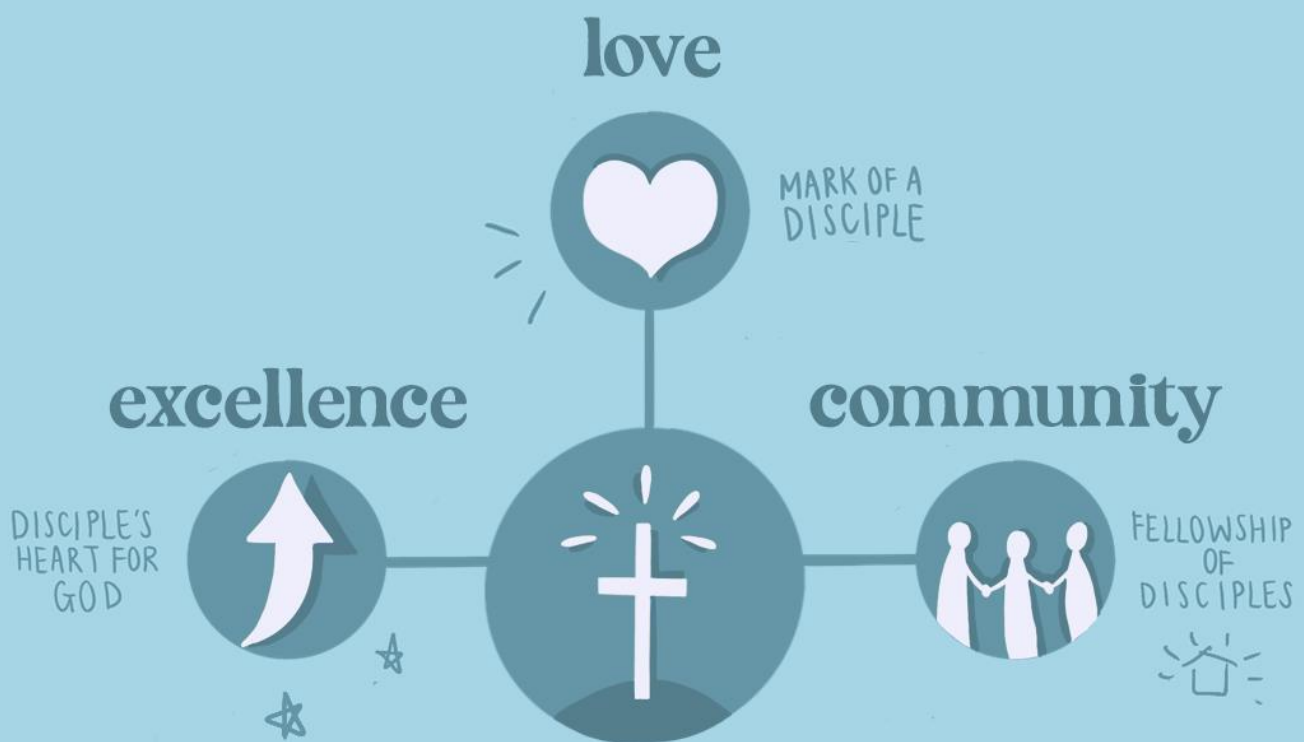


THE CORE VALUES

Discussion Notes



CHRIST
METHODIST CHURCH

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Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the Holy Bible, New International Version (NIV).

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IMPORTANCE OF CORE VALUES

Values keep us focused on the unique call God has given to us as a local church.

- Determine our distinctives.
- Dictate personal involvement and alignment.
- Communicate what is important.
- Shape the way we serve God, one another and the community.

Our core values play an integral part in influencing the way we live our lives as a disciple and disciple-maker. They form our mindset in the manner we connect with the community and the way we conduct ourselves. They guide us in achieving our mission, influence our decisions, as well as impact the everyday life of a disciple in the church.

- Love: Love distinguishes our discipleship. It is the key to being a disciple. Our response to God's love must be love. (John 13:34-35)
- Excellence: Mediocre shinning will not impact the world around us. As a disciple of Christ, God desires for us to give our best. (1 Corinthians 9:24)
- Community: You can have small groups and not make disciples, but you cannot make disciples without the small groups/community. (Acts 2:42)

To experience success and fruitfulness in life, having the right values is a necessary foundation. Without it, we will never survive success. Keep in mind that these values are intertwined. We pray that you will internalise them and let them become guiding points in your life and ministry.



HOW TO USE THE MATERIALS

GUIDE FOR FACILITATORS

We have prepared the discussion notes and videos for easy facilitation during your Care Group meeting.

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Before the Meeting

- Look through the notes for the week together with the accompanying video.
- Take time to internalise the notes.
- Allow the Lord to speak to you through the notes and prepare your own personal reflection and stories to share at the meeting. Sharing your personal experiences on these three core values will engage the members better during the session.

During the Meeting

- Begin with a time of worship to prepare the hearts of the members to get into the Word.
- Playback the recording during the meeting using the “Share screen” function on Zoom.
- You may wish to pause the video at the suggested segments for sharing and discussion. Encourage participation by facilitating the discussion questions at each segment.
- If you are unable to playback the recording, you may jump right into the discussion notes and share from the notes directly.
- At the end of each meeting, encourage the members to write down their take-aways from the discussion and the action plans they intend to set in place as they seek to live out the three core values as a disciple of Christ and as a care group. See Page 15.



LOVE

MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Icebreaker: If you were asked to create a “Love Olympics” based on 1 Corinthians 13, what sporting events would you include? Why?

What is Love?

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love is the mark of a disciple as John 13:35 tells us, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” Our involvement in religious activities (eg. prayer, fasting, worship etc) is not an accurate indication that we are a genuine disciple of Christ. Love is.

However, the word “love” is an overused word in our society today. Think about how many times you have used the word “love” this week or even today. I love the weather, I love the ice cream at McDonalds, I love your new pair of shoes etc. As a result of the diluting of this word, to say that “love” is a mark of a disciple does not carry much weight anymore. It has become a cliché.

It is time to reclaim this precious word by turning to the Scriptures to find out exactly what it encompasses. As we do so, we will see a different definition of love being lived out by our Lord Jesus Christ. The love that Jesus talks about needs to stand out in our testimonies and lifestyle. Let us show the world the uniqueness of this love that originated from God (1 John 4:7-12).

1) Love originates from God

- a) Our plumb line of love comes from God alone, not man. Genuine love originates from God. God’s love was manifested in His sending of His Son into the world in exchange for our place in eternity with Him.

1 John 4:7-8

*Dear friends, let us love one another, **for love comes from God.** Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*

Galatians 2:20

*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, **who loved me and gave himself for me.***

- b) Our love comes from His abiding love within our hearts. God is the origin, source and very essence of love. Hence, we need to tap into the source of love daily. Love is who our God is, and it is at the very centre of everything we know about Him. He has taught us much about love. Let us not forget that love is a relationship. God loves us and wants us to have a personal relationship with Him.

Acts 17:27

God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.

Question 1a:

How are we tapping into our Source of love daily?

Question 1b:

Love is not about how we feel. If we don't feel anything, will we still love others? Will we keep worshipping God? We cannot go around looking for a "feel-good" like of love. It is not to say that emotions are not important, but it should not be the measuring tool we use for love.

2 Samuel 6:14-16

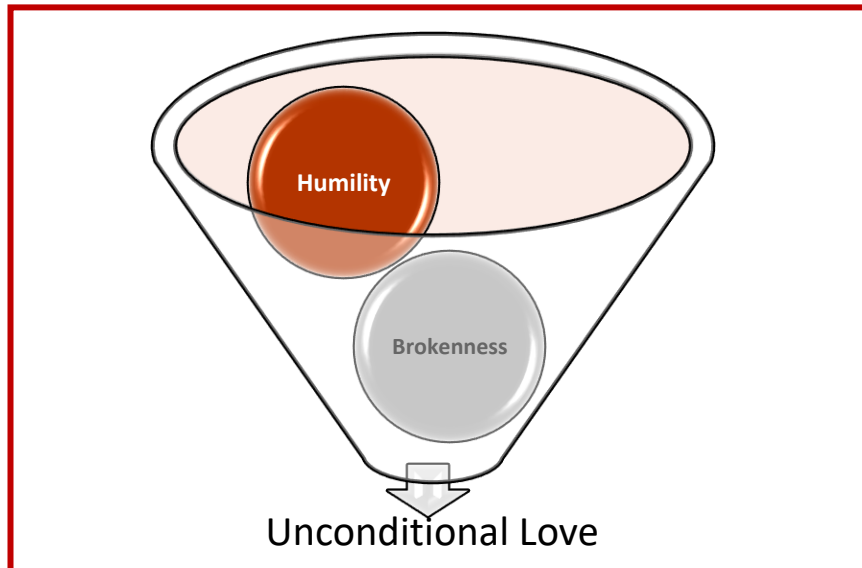
"Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the Lord with all his might, while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets. As the ark of the Lord was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, she despised him in her heart."

David's passionate love for God made Him burst into an undignified dancing, publicly exhibiting His love for God. Have we become too self-aware of the people around us, too inhibited in our expression of our love towards God? Discuss.

2) Love is unconditional

Have we based our love for someone according to how they can benefit us emotionally, intellectually or physically? The love that the Scripture is calling out is different; it is about exhibiting love even when we are despised, persecuted, rejected and even stoned.

To love unconditionally, we must adopt the two postures of **humility** and **brokenness**, which will lead to the dying of self and laying down of our rights. Only then can we learn to love unconditionally.



a) Humility

In Philippians 2:2-8, Paul asked us to be humble and value others above ourselves, to look not only to our own interests, but also to the interest of others. Jesus exemplified to us what humility looks like. He came down to our level, laid down His rights and humbled Himself at the cross.

b) Brokenness

Brokenness comes from a place of realising that it is God who has reached out to us first (Romans 5:8 and 1 John 4:10,19). It is a daily decision to die to ourselves, leading to a daily dependency on God. Only when we are broken and realize that we cannot do anything to earn credits with God, that all of us came from the same starting point, then are we able to love the others just as they are.

We can walk in humility and brokenness with a sense of honour and courage because we recognise that on our own, we have nothing, but in Christ, we have everything.

Love seeks the wellbeing of others, and there is no room for selfish desires. You will be willing to go the extra mile for a relationship of love; it involves the giving of self for the sake of others. It desires to see the success of another person.

Practical Handles:

- Continue to love/disciple even when we do not see results/change.
- Disciple the person according to God's agenda and timing.
- Love the seemingly "unloveable".
- Forgive.
- Overcome evil with good. As we deal with challenging situations, do not allow others to press our anger/resentment/reactive buttons.

Question 2

Is there someone in your life who has been unkind to you or someone whom you find difficult to love? Take some time to share with one another and how today's session has challenged you to respond in love.

But if you are still struggling to demonstrate love to this person, try praying a simple blessing over this person daily even if you do not feel like doing it. Surrender your thoughts to God and let Him change the way you perceive this person.

3) Love demands an action

Take a quick look at Luke 10:25-37 which illustrates love in action through the parable of the Good Samaritan. In ancient times, animosity existed between the Jews and the Samaritans because of their differences. Therefore, the command of the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 6:9, Leviticus 19:18) was limited to those of similar background during those times.

Luke 10:27

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, Love your neighbor as yourself.

- When Jesus was asked by the Jewish leader, "Who is my neighbour," He shared on the Good Samaritan to challenge the attitude of the day. Here was a man who was beaten by robbers and left to die by the side of the road. A priest and a Levite walked past ignoring the man who needed help. Finally, a Samaritan saw the victim and responded. The 2 Jewish leaders saw the person in need and deliberately avoided the situation, but the Samaritan showed us what being a neighbour is about. He **took action and showed mercy to someone who was different from himself**, having no regard to background, religion differences nor seeking for any potential benefits.
- In addition to this, we read that the Samaritan continued with his journey to do what he needed to do. He took care of wounded man but at the same time, he did not neglect what he had originally set out to accomplish, promising the innkeeper of his return to repay him.
- From this parable, we understand the 2 aspects of love: 1) Love your neighbour 2) Love yourself too.
- To love "your neighbour as yourself" you need to LOVE YOURSELF. We need to understand the value that God places upon us. We need to love what He loves, which is us. Learning to love ourselves prepares and helps us to love our neighbour.

The full-bodied definition of the word "love" teaches us that action must accompany love. The times when we have been wronged and hurt, our ability to love shrinks. It is circumstantial; based on how we feel about the other person and if loving will bring inconvenience to our lives. However, God has a higher standard.

1 John 3:17-18

*If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, **let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.***

Romans 13:8-10

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not covet," and whatever other command there may be, are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbour as yourself." Love does no harm to a neighbour. Therefore, love is the fulfilment of the law.

Our love for God is fulfilled when we love others, not merely in words but in action.

Love is active. When God commands His people to love His enemies, it is not just in thoughts but in action as well. This kind of love actively seeks out. Let us follow the example that Jesus sets for us in our journey of love. Instead of asking "Who is my neighbour?", we should ask "Who can I be a neighbour to?"

True love can only come from a genuine and constant experience of the Word of God, of the experience of the gospel. The Scriptures contain the measure of true love demonstrated by God, as well as His desire for us to walk in love. If you have experienced the love of God, demonstrate it by loving Him, others and continue to grow in your understanding of the greatness of God's love.

Question 3:

What does it mean to walk in love? In what areas have you fall short of what the Lord requires? Share some practical actions you can take to demonstrate love as the Lord has commanded.

Share how loving one another can become a powerful testimony of Christ in your life for others to see, that through it you can be the salt and light for Him.

Conclusion

The mark of a disciple is love. This is how we are to love; to walk in the love that Jesus has demonstrated. Let us be a people marked by the love of Christ and when the world sees the church in action, they can see the love of God in us that is the driving force but most important of all, they can see that God loves them. Let our love become our testimony of this God who loves us, that others may be drawn to Him because of this. Let us be true representatives of God on the earth.



EXCELLENCE

EXCELLENCE

DISCIPLE'S HEART FOR GOD

Icebreaker: Watch a video on the bible character Daniel: bit.ly/cvexcellence
(Daniel and the Lions - Beginners Bible from 10:58 to 20:16 mins)

What is Excellence?

Colossians 3:23-24

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Daniel 5:12, 14

He did this because Daniel, whom the king called Belteshazzar, was found to have a keen mind and knowledge and understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means... I have heard that the spirit of the gods is in you and that you have insight, intelligence and outstanding wisdom.

Excellence is about giving our best, whether in works or the development of character. As God's people, we are His representatives on the earth and therefore biblical excellence is about being God's image bearer to the world so that His glory can be accurately seen through us.

Daniel 6:1-4

It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss. Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.

Daniel was in an unfavourable situation. The jealous administrators and satraps conspired against and set him up to be thrown into the lion's den.

Daniel 6:10

Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened towards Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.

Question 1

Daniel was flawless in the way he managed every situation that came his way. He flourished and was committed to serving God in a secular environment. Why was Daniel distinguished from everyone else? What can we learn from the account of Daniel?

1) God cares about excellence

Does excellence matter to God? Does He care about quality? Is He concerned with how well things are done?

Colossians 3:23-24

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

The outward expressions are many times an expression of the posture of our hearts. The way we serve God, in the church, at homes, at our workplaces and at schools reflect the way we live out our faith. It reflects the level of commitment we have in doing things well, honouring God in every area of our lives. These reflect what is truly in our hearts.

Let us bear God's image with excellence.

Question 2

Comment on the statement "The greatest enemy to excellence is 'good enough'." Share your thoughts on how we can overcome the 'good enough' mentality in our lives.

2) Brings honour to God

Excellence is important in what we do (our works) and who we are (our character). When we have the spirit of excellence in the way we work and how we carry ourselves, we will be above reproach. The spirit of excellence does not only affect our work, it affects our integrity as well. Our values should be guided by the Word of God that we allow Him to speak into our lives and change us.

When we come to an understanding that this is the kind of attitude that God wants us to have in our daily life, then everything we do; every situation we find ourselves in, regardless of the people around us, regardless if anyone is watching, we will exhibit excellence. Our conduct in school, family or workplace honours (or dishonours) Him.

Question 3

Excellence is important in what we do (our works) and who we are (our character).

a) What we do (our works)

Are we giving God our best, constantly seeking to improve on the skills (gifts and talents) that God has given, or have we become complacent and stagnated? Reflect and share.

b) Who we are (our character)

Are we allowing God to mould and shape us so that we are exhibiting godly values in our life? Share your current state in life and what you can do to be more aware of this aspect in your life.

3) Gives new purpose to our work

If you change the way you see your job and view it through the understanding of serving the King of kings wherever you are placed, then your attitude will change.

Our secular vocation is not just an avenue to make a living; it is an assignment from Christ. Will the job be done differently by a Christian? What difference does your presence make in your workplace? Can anyone tell the difference at all? Are your professional ethics guided by your faith, or do you leave your Christianity at the door when you go into work?

1 Peter 2:12

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

We are working for Christ. Therefore, if something is being done for Christ, then we should give our best. We cannot compartmentalize our life. If this applies to our secular vocation, then it applies to other areas of life as well. Even the most mundane type of employment deserves our best effort. If this is what God requires of us, then we should strive for excellence in the church, in our families, in our marriages and in everything that we do.

Question 4

Excellence is different from perfection. It is heart above performance. However, that is not to say that we do not give our best. Excellence is about giving what God deserves which is our best.

Take some time to discuss the difference between perfection and excellence.

Conclusion

As a follower of Christ, we should pursue excellence in every area of life, because everything we do is done to honour and serve Him. We give God our best because He gave us His best. Our passion for Him must drive us towards **an outward expression**, that those outside the walls of the church will be blessed and be drawn to this God that we are seeking to honour.

Excellence in God's eyes is not being the best; it is doing our best. He deserves the very best we can offer (our time, abilities, energy, creativity etc). It does not matter what we are doing; we are serving the Lord. You may be a housewife, student, nurse, banker, engineer, or accountant, you are still serving the Lord in these places. When you become a disciple of Jesus Christ, you work for Him. The place where you work is just a location where you are placed by God to shine for Him. Excellence honours God and inspires people.

However, let us be careful that the passion that drives us does not turn negative whereby we use our own strength to make things happen, and are constantly in a state of stress as we pursue excellence in the Lord. God is not looking for perfection, but He is looking for our best. Let us give our best and allow God to handle the rest.



COMMUNITY

FELLOWSHIP OF DISCIPLES

Icebreaker: What would you do if you had the powers of God?

What is Community?

Galatians 6:2

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Koinonia is a Greek word that occurs 20 times in the Bible and its primary meaning is “fellowship, sharing in common, communion”, and is experienced in greater intensity in a small group setting. There was a natural and intentional embrace of community life in the Early Church (Acts 2:42-47). As we study the history of the Early Church, we are drawn into the vibrancy of their community; people doing life together. True community is not found but built. True fellowship connects.

If we profess to love God, then we will need to have an outward demonstration of that love. We will need to follow through horizontally on whatever we believe vertically. Our relationships with one another reveal to us what we really believe as opposed to what we think we believe, our convictions as opposed to our opinions.

1) **God provided a role model for community**

Jesus sets the example of a community for us to follow in the Gospels. He lived in a community. He and His disciples spent a lot of time together: travelling, eating, sleeping and working together. The Lord put great emphasis on the importance and value of community.

John 13:34

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

The Scriptures are loaded with instructions on how believers should interact and live in a community. These are known as the “one-another” commands. When we are intentional about guiding the church/small groups towards biblical community, we will then create more space for the “one anothers” where meaningful connection can be made, and community built.

Our relationships with one another reveal to us:

- What we believe in as opposed to what we think we believe in.
- Our convictions as opposed to our opinions.

Community is good. However, is our boundary line in the community solid, opaque, and meant to keep others out? Or are we inclusive in our community and always on a look out to invite others to be part of the community?

Jesus was always spending time with people and never excluded others. He sat with those who were considered outcasts and befriended any who were interested. Even the little children, He invited them to come to Him. He was hanging out with the sick, the sinners and the unpopular ones because He loved them.

Maybe our circles need to be enlarged. Maybe we should erase the chalk lines for good. God said "whoever," and He meant everyone.

Question 1

Share how you are applying 'Love' and 'Excellence' in your service to the communities that helps build lives that can be rooted in Christ? Are you bringing new people into your communities? Share some targets/goals for yourself or your group.

2) God warns against isolation

No man is an island. We need community to thrive and there is safety in community. The enemy can easily prey upon the isolated person that becomes separated from the community. A kidnapper will not attempt to take a child when he is with his parents/ group of friends. Likewise, when we stay close to our Heavenly Father or if we are in a life-giving community with accountability, the enemy will not be able to "kidnap" us from our destiny, and we can count on one another for support.

Proverbs 18:1

An unfriendly person (one who isolates himself) pursues selfish ends and against all sound judgment starts quarrels.

The enemy will do everything he can to isolate us:

- To get you hurt and offended.
- To isolate you with shame over some issue in your life.

A quote by Banning Liebscher, "Nothing destroys the power of shame or offense like choosing to move toward community."

Proverbs 13:20

Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.

Proverbs 27:17

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

Strength is not found in isolation; it is found in community. God did not create us to be loners. It is the enemy's evil plan to isolate us so that we miss out on the strength and support a healthy community can provide us.

Question 2

Share of a time when you felt or were isolated from the community, and what or who brought about the spiritual breakthrough for you to return and serve in the community again? Do you know someone (or yourself) who is going through this isolation now? Share how you plan to reach out to this person so that the care group may be able to pray for you.

3) God calls us into a community

Taking a quote by Eugene Park, "Community is never found, only built".

Genuine community is not built through social media platforms; not by joining a Facebook hobby group, via Instagram stories etc. It comes naturally when we enter into a relationship with Jesus.

What unites people together is not the fellowship, but the gospel truth that Jesus loves us and wants us to grow in Him. One of the ways we can grow in Christ is to be in a godly community that constantly reminds us of where our Source of life comes from.

Ephesians 2:19-20

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

Relationships become deeper and richer when it is anchored in Christ, and not in one another. We cannot be looking around for a community that fits our plan or schedule, but to build the household of God according to His plan and on the foundation of Christ.

Hebrews 10:24-25

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Question 3

Share and reflect how God is shaping you for service at home, office and church (communities)? Share one key transformation that God brought about in you that has uniquely equipped you for serving your communities?

Conclusion

We are all part of the same Body of Christ and we need one another.

1 Corinthians 12:20-21, 26

As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you"... If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Being in a community is a great way in which God uses friendship and the fellowship of others to draw us to Himself. It is not a coincidence that we are placed in a community we are in. As God directs us to this community, it is important that we find people who can walk with us through this life journey, encourage us when we are facing challenges, rebuke us when we are behaving defiantly towards God, and point us back to God should we stray away. As we engage in this habit of sharing and praying with one another, it will bring greater focus to our lives.

Do not wait for the moment of crisis to establish godly relationships in Christ. We are all accountable to God, and we all need someone in our lives that can help us stay on course until Christ returns.

Such relationships cannot be imposed. We need to seek out godly and mature characters that we are comfortable with and give them permission to ask us tough questions to help us stay on track. Once such a relationship is established, then honesty and vulnerability come into the picture. Community is where we grow. We cannot live without it.



GLEANS

MY ACTION PLAN

Write down what you have gleaned from these 3 sessions and the action plans you intend to set in place as you seek to live out the 3 core values as a disciple of Christ.

LOVE

EXCELLENCE

COMMUNITY

SOURCE QUOTED AND REFERENCE

- <http://michaelkelley.co/2011/06/the-most-neglected-component-of-discipleship/>
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/love-your-neighbor-as-yourself-part-1>
- <https://www.ibelieve.com/faith/10-ways-to-love-your-neighbor-as-yourself.html>
- <https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/what-does-it-mean-to-love-your-neighbor-as-yourself.html>

GRAPHICS

- Cover Page and Banners: Amanda Chuah
-