

# “Community Over Individualism”

COMPASS Sermon Series | Week Four | Newbreak Church

July 25th, 2021

**This week is about the centrality of community over individualism. This message answers the question: What is God’s design for community?**

For more insights relating to this week’s sermon, see <https://newbreak.church/blog/>. We post a new blog every Friday which coincides with the sermon passage or theme from that day.

## Start Here

- What is your favorite “summer food”? What makes it so special to you?
- Did you grow up with a strong sense of community?

## Going Deeper Into the Message

Read: Colossians 3:15-21

### **Point 1 – God’s view of how we do life begins at home with family.**

**15-17** Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness. Let the Word of Christ—the Message—have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense. And sing, sing your hearts out to God! Let every detail in your lives—words, actions, whatever—be done in the name of the Master, Jesus, thanking God the Father every step of the way.

**18** Wives, understand and support your husbands by submitting to them in ways that honor Jesus. **19** Husbands, go all out in love for your wives. Don’t take advantage of them. **20** Children, do what your parents tell you. This delights Jesus to no end. **21** Parents, don’t come down too hard on your children or you’ll crush their spirits. (Colossians 3:15-21, MSG)

Have you ever thought of all the Bible's instructions on discipleship and ethics as grounded in a strong sense of community? Furthermore, the assumption from the biblical writers is that these things will be applied to family life. Looking at the passage above, what stands out to you regarding community and ethics? What actions does Paul encourage the Colossian believers to focus on while in community together?

Most of the world, for most of human history, has had a strong sense of community. One's identity did not end with "me" but extended to how one is part of the community ("we").

For us, in America, we have to generally be aware that we are in a country that has a weak concept of community. In other words, we tend to value individualism over community. **We love the sentiment and ideal of community, but not the sacrificial practice that comes with community. At best, we flock to community when it is convenient.** Our cultural paradigm emphasizes individuality. While we are, indeed, individuals, and God has a personal relationship with all of us, we are not isolated beings. Plus, we are not meant to be individuals at the expense of community. Even our grand hope encompasses being part of God's family:

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also *members of his household* (Ephesians 2:19, NIV).

### Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- What are the benefits of a community-oriented culture over an individualistic one?
- Are there any benefits worth holding on to that come from individualism? If so, what would they be and why?
- What would it look like to value community more at the home front? What would it look like for you to value the community of your neighborhood?

#### —ADDITIONAL INSIGHT—

This additional insight is an excerpt from Newbreak's blog. To read the full blog post go to: [newbreak.church/community-individualism/](https://newbreak.church/community-individualism/)

Newbreak has always had a strong view of community. We are proud that the majority of our Church are involved in [Life Groups](#) and plea with all who make Newbreak their home to get involved in a Life Group. So, we wanted to give Pastor Brooks Fuller, who oversees the Life Groups ministry, a chance to speak to some key questions. His responses provide insight as to why it is better to find our identity in the context of community is better than an isolated and individualistic view of identity.

In what ways does the Bible make the case for someone to live in a community versus as a solo person?

I would argue that the Bible is a giant story of God inviting us into community with Himself and with other people of faith. In the garden, God clarified that it wasn't good for man to be alone so He provided Adam a companion named Eve. She was different from Adam but was a different type of companion from all of God's creation (Genesis 2:18, 20-25). Adam and Eve lived in harmony with one another and with God until sin entered the picture in Genesis 3. After eating the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve hid from God and hid from each other by creating coverings. It's interesting that they sought isolation from God and from each other. The vulnerability, oneness, and trust that they shared together were fractured by sin. Feeling disconnected from one another is a fruit of our fallen world.

The whole Bible highlights God's plan to create a community of faith that would share a common belief system, ethic, and eschatological course.

God birthed the Israelite community and tasked them with living out their faith together in the midst of a broken world. The Messiah came through this covenant community, which provided a way for the whole world to experience reconciliation and community with the Triune God. Through the work of Christ on the cross, God reconciled our broken relationship with Him (2 Cor 5:18-21) and broke down the walls that separated us from one another (Gal 3:28). We are now members of one Body (1 Cor 12:12-27) and part of the family of God (1 John 3:1-2).

How can American Christians who are part of a highly individualistic culture learn from cultures that have a strong view of community?

I think one of our values as Americans is the idea that I can do it myself. Most of us have heard the American phrase, "pull yourself up by your bootstraps." The basic idea is that I can succeed by myself and I don't need anyone's help to do it. The ironic thing about this expression is that it's physically impossible to do alone.

It's very easy to apply this individualist, "Lone Ranger" mentality to our Christian faith. We can easily isolate ourselves from others and measure our spiritual maturity by our devotional life alone. When we do this, we ignore the Scriptures that teach us that we are members of Christ Body (1 Cor 12:14-16), that loving God and loving your neighbor are

connected at the hip (Mark 12:30-31), and that we are called to “love one another as Christ loved us.” (John 13:34).

How did Jesus love the disciples? He spent time with them. He ate meals with them. He washed their feet. He served with them. He taught them. He corrected them. He did life with them. He gave His life for them.

The disciples learned very quickly that Jesus was calling them to love others as sacrificially and willfully as He did with them.

Read: Ephesians 1:5

### **Point 2 – God’s view of how we do life expands to our spiritual family.**

God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. (Ephesians 1:5, NLT)

God chooses to be our Abba, our Dad. He chose to adopt us as sons and daughters for Him. He has welcomed us into His spiritual family. God desires us to live at peace with each other. He wants harmony in our lives. To accomplish this, we have to work at loving each other, being kind to each other, and supporting each other.

When we become part of His family, we become a part of each other. We become brothers and sisters. In this family, we need to pray for each other, be in community with each other, build one another up. This can only take place when we truly know each other.

We have to build relationships. We have to do life together, be part of a life group. We have to celebrate together. We have to mourn together. We have to pray together. We have to grow spiritually together. We have to be accountable to one another. We have to watch the kids, help the sick, help the injured, congratulate the wins, go to the weddings, give advice, take advice, and point each other to Him. Only in doing this do we become who He has created us to be as individuals and as a group.

### Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- How does God’s concept of family inform us of His desired goal for us?

- In what ways am I building my spiritual family? Do I have a mentor, a mentee, an accountability partner?
- Am I committed to a Life Group? If so, how do I “do life” with them?

—ACTIVITY—

**Rediscovering the Table Over the T.V.**

For 50+ years the T.V. has been the centerpiece of the standard American home’s living room. Think about the last 10 or so homes you have been in. What is the couch facing? Likely the T.V. What does that subtly communicate about what we are gathering around?

Now, this observation is not trying to vilify or disparage T.V.s. Research from 2015 showed that 66% of Americans eat dinner in front of a T.V. Then, similar research from 2019 showed that 88% of Americans eat dinner in front of some screen (T.V., phones, tablets, etc.). What do these stats tell us about our current habits? How do you think the recent trend of eating in front of a TV as a family instead of at a dinner table impacts our relationships?

**The stats tell us that Americans see meals as “*me time*” over “*we time*.”**

This awareness has a chance to change our views and call us to action. And the change is simple. We can return to the table, leaving behind the T.V. trays, and embracing the messy, loud, but wonderful times together gathered around the table.

For some of you, this will be easy and you will change to having dinner at the table 7-days a week. For others, this might mean making a goal of how many times per week. Some families make a certain day of the week (let’s say Thursdays) dinner at the table. Find what works for your family. But we challenge you this week to rediscover the power of dinners at the table vs. dinners by the T.V.

—SUMMARY—

What is God’s design for community?

1) God’s view of how we do life begins at home with family.

2) God's view of how we do life expands to our spiritual family.

**—FINAL CHALLENGE QUESTIONS—**

1. How are you going to think differently in light of what you have read, heard, and discussed this week?
2. What is one thing you are going to change in your life in light of the sermon?
3. BONUS: For those of you with kids or around kids: What is one truth from this message that you can share with your kids?