

August 30/31, 2025

## **Intentional Community**

*Intentional Series*

**Philippians 2:1-13**

Pastor Matt Meyer

I'm going to start with a rather challenging quote this morning. Here it is: "He or she who loves their dream of community more than the Christian community itself, becomes a destroyer of that community, even though his personal or her personal intentions may be ever so honest and earnest and sacrificial." I'll say it for you again. "The person who loves their dream of community more than the Christian community itself, becomes a destroyer of that community, even though their personal intentions may be ever so honest and earnest and sacrificial." This is a quote from a book called *Life Together* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He was a pastor in the 1940s during World War II in Germany. He resisted the Nazi regime. It's a book about living together in the Community of Christ-followers. It's what we want to think about together today.

We're in this series called *Intentional* and today we want to think about *intentional community*. We want to think about what does it mean to intentionally engage in a community and participate in a community of Christ-followers that Christ has placed us in? What does that look like? Bonhoeffer is warning against idealism when it comes to Christian community. He's saying that if we become attached to our own personal ideals, our own ideas of what Christian community should be like, meaning: if I have this idea in my head of what the perfect church is, if I'm looking for people who always do the right thing, if I want harmony without any conflict, if I want a Life Group where people behave the way I like—where they're just like me, where they act like me, where they think like me—if that's what I'm looking for and that's what I'm going to cling to, he says, "If we become too attached to those things, we actually end up damaging the real community of people that exists right in front of us, because when love for the dream of community becomes stronger than the real people that Christ has placed us with, we can become impatient, judgmental, frustrated, and eventually destructive towards those very people." The dream of community becomes an idol, and actual brothers and sisters become a disappointment, even an obstacle to achieving that dream or realizing that dream, and this—I think this statement, this idea—can be such a challenge to us. And I think for many of us, we don't even realize sometimes how in danger we are of living this way.

We're currently, as Caleb said, in this open registration period for our Life Groups. This is a time when new groups are starting up, where ongoing groups are looking to add a few people to their group, where individuals and couples are looking to join; they're looking for a community to join. So here's the question, "What does it look like to become actual participants in the community, rather than destroyers of that community?"

Well, the Apostle Paul has some words for us on this topic, I believe, from his letter to the Philippians. So, if you want to follow along, you can turn to Philippians, Chapter 2. And while you're turning there, since we're jumping into the middle of a letter, I'm going to give you some background on Philippians chapter one. So, at the end of chapter 1, Paul begins to talk about some

things that are connected to chapter 2. The beginning of chapter 2, as you would expect it to be in a letter, Paul is talking about what it looks like, at the end of chapter 1, *to live in a manner worthy of the gospel*. Essentially, he's saying, "How do we live so that what we believe—the message that we are offering to people, the message that our lives are proclaiming—has credibility, meaning, essentially, that the love and the forgiveness of God for all people because of the cross, has credibility because of our lives?" And he describes that life as one of unity, that the Philippians would be standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel. Doesn't that sound like an amazing community to be a part of? This is chapter 1:27-30 that I'm summarizing for you here: *striving together, one spirit, one mind*.

So now in chapter two, Paul continues that same discussion. It starts with the word **Therefore**, meaning you're supposed to look back and see what's he referring to, which is why I just told you what he's referring to. But listen as he continues.

**Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.** (\*NASB, Philippians 2:1-2)

This section starts out with a bunch of *if* statements, kind of sounding like it's conditional, like if this isn't true, then, well, you're kind of off the hook. But that's really not true in the Greek. In the Greek, the grammar sounds more like this: If this is true, *and we know that it is*, so it's really more like a *since*, meaning, **...if there's any encouragement in Christ**—if you've been called alongside—that word **encouragement** means to call alongside. If you've been called alongside by Christ, to follow Him as a disciple, and we might stop and think to ourselves, "Yes, yes, that's true. That's why I'm here. I want to understand what it looks like to walk as a follower of Jesus, to grow." **If there is any consolation** (or comfort) **of love**, meaning we've experienced the love of Christ in our lives. And again we might stop and think, "Yes, yes, that's true." **If there is any fellowship of the Spirit**, meaning we have experienced it and we share in common the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit of God. Again we might think, "Yes, okay, yes, that's true too." **If there is any affection and compassion**, meaning we have experienced affection and compassion from Christ and from the body of Christ, His followers, again we might think, "Yes, that's true."

Then verse 2: **...make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose**. Just compare for a minute verse 2 of chapter 2 with the very end of chapter 1. The words are so similar. He's saying, "Stay living in that same way." Paul is saying, "If you've experienced those things: **encouragement** to follow Jesus, **comfort** of His love, the **fellowship** of the Holy Spirit with others, **affection** and **compassion**, and we know somehow that you have, then stay unified; love one another well!"

Well, why is he so intent on this twice within a series of four verses? I think because there is a challenge going on for them to actually live that way. We'll see why that challenge in just a minute, but now the question for us becomes, "How?" I think the Philippians were saying, "How?" Verses 3 and 4:

**Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interest of others.**

Now these verses can be really challenging. I think they're some of the most challenging verses in the Scriptures. If we were to really embrace them and seek to live them out, they are challenging. They challenge the culture that we live in. They challenge the culture that the Philippians lived in. **Selfishness** could be translated *selfish ambition*; (in fact it was translated that way earlier in chapter one). It means to promote yourself. It's a political word that means *to canvas for votes*. It's basically saying, "You should vote for me. You should like me. I have value." Here's why: "Come and be on my team. Come be with me...all for the sake of me!"

**Empty conceit** is very similar. *Conceit* means to generate self-glory. Empty conceit means it doesn't work. You've experienced empty conceit, or someone living in empty conceit, if you've ever been around someone who all they did was tell you how great they are. And you walked away from that conversation after fifteen minutes, or however long it was, and you didn't walk away, probably going, "Man, that person is amazing; he's so great." You most likely walked away like I do, going, "Phew, I'm glad to be away from that conversation", right? **Empty conceit**. They're trying to generate self-glory, but it doesn't work.

Now stop and think about these two words: **selfishness and empty conceit** for just a minute. Think about your own life. If you're honest, don't we all, at different times in our life, live from those two words, from that angle, in very subtle ways? We're looking for friends; we're looking for a community; we're looking for connection. We're hoping to find the right place to belong. Maybe I join a Life Group, hoping it's full of the right kind of people, and I hope they like me. I hope that I find a place to connect. I hope they think I'm a valuable person. And that idea, if you're honest about what goes through your head sometimes, doesn't that sound a little bit like a person whose dream of community that they're holding on to, is the way Bonhoeffer described it earlier? We may not be as overt about it, but I think we all operate at times from this place of *getting our needs and desires met*. We all have needs and desires to be seen, meaning that someone sees us. They understand who we are; they recognize who we are. To feel safe and secure means having relationships that are free from harm, that are deepening in trust and feel significant...meaning I want to know that I matter. We all have those needs, and it's often those needs that we're seeking to have met when we join a community of people. And don't misunderstand me, these are legitimate needs. There's nothing wrong with recognizing that those needs are there. Paul is saying, "Don't let those needs be what drives you. Don't let it be your driving passion," **but with humility of mind, regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.**

Do you see what Paul said there? He didn't say you can't look out for your own personal interests. He said, "*Just don't merely do that*. Don't only look out for your own personal interests. Look out for the interests of others, and **with humility of mind, regard one another as more important than yourselves.**" Humility in the first century, by the way, was not considered a virtue. The Greeks considered humility to be weakness. They were very strong proponents of selfish ambition. They were strong proponents of marketing yourself. It was a virtue to market yourself.

This was a culture that was shaped by Alexander the Great. He was a heroic ruler and leader. At the age of 20, Alexander succeeded his father as the ruler of Macedonia, which is where Philippi was located, and he very quickly, then, made himself master of all Greece. Then he set out the task of conquering the rest of the known world which he considered, by the way, to be a very small task. By the time Alexander the Great died at the age of 33, he had succeeded in conquering the rest of the known world. He had succeeded to such an extent that it made sense in that time, in the thought of that day, for him to be regarded as divine. In fact, Alexander himself had suggested that he should be regarded as a god. That is the culture.

So when Jesus comes along and He starts talking about humility, when Paul comes along and writes this letter and says, **with humility of mind**, it's a radical message. Humility doesn't mean thinking poorly of yourself. It doesn't mean walking along with your head down. "Oh, I'm just a loser; I'm not worth anything." That's not humility. Humility is just not thinking of yourself. It's putting others, seeing them as more important than yourself. And in a consumer culture like existed in Philippi, and in a consumer culture like we live in, where 24/7, all day, every day, we are encouraged to think about ourselves: How do people treat me? Do people like me? How many likes did I get on my social media post? Oh, I better do another one to get more likes. Humility of mind means I start to think and operate and look at life through a completely different grid. I start to think of others and their needs as more important than my own. So Jesus' teaching was radical.

Paul's letter here is radical, and Paul is about to bring Jesus, by the way, into his teaching and his letter as the supreme example of this type of living. Verses 5-8:

**Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant *and* being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**

Paul says, **Have this attitude in yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus**. Now there is another way of translating this. The ESV says it this way. *Have this mind among yourselves*. So it's not just individuals; it's the body; it's the believers. *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus*. (I just want you to note...make a note of that. We're going to come back to it later.) Paul says: **Have this attitude**. He's encouraging the Philippians to think in a certain way, namely, verse 6. **Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something, as a thing to be grasped**. Now, I think the NIV actually translates this verse better. Here's what the NIV says: *Who, being in very nature God, He did not consider equality with God as something to be used to his own advantage*. It's clearer.

Here's a couple of reasons: So first the phrase: **a thing to be grasped** from the New American Standard, translated differently, means to exploit something for his own benefit or *use to his own advantage*, which is exactly the way the NIV translates it, and that's easier for us to understand than *something to be grasped*. But secondly, in the original Greek language, the relationship between the words at the beginning and the words at the end of that verse, meaning between the word *being* in the NIV or *existing* in the New American Standard, and **something to be grasped** or *something to be used to his own advantage*. The relationship between those, how those words

fit together, could be translated differently. Some theologians translate it as a concession. Some translate it as more causal. I don't love the word causal, but that's the word they use.

Let me show you an example of what I mean. The New American Standard is a concession. It says that **although Jesus existed in the form of God, He didn't consider that as something to be used to His own advantage.** Now I think most of us hear that as, "Well, even though He was God, He didn't use that to His advantage, and He became a servant. So that's the concession. But many scholars think the relationship should be more causal, the way the NIV puts it: ***being in very nature God, He didn't consider that something to be used to His own advantage.*** It's saying, "Precisely because Jesus is God, precisely because He is equal with God, He didn't view that as something to be used to His own advantage, but He emptied himself and He took the form of a servant." Do you see the difference that makes?

Here's another way to think about this idea. When Bryan covered this passage in Philippians years ago, he said it this way. "Sometimes we say that the sin of Satan was that he wanted to be like God. That's not completely accurate. He did want God's glory. He did want God's power, but he didn't want to be like God. Satan wanted to exploit those things for his own benefit. And that's not like God at all."

This would have been, again, extremely radical thought for the Philippians. Remember, this letter would have been read to them orally. They would not have had a text sitting in front of them. I think when they heard this part, verse six specifically—and they couldn't have said verse six, because it didn't have a verse number, so they would have said, "Whoa, can you go back and read that sentence again?" The Philippians view of gods and goddesses was that they used their power to advance themselves. Like Alexander the Great, they used their power to subdue others into submission. They used their power to take advantage of weakness. And in essence, Paul is saying, "That's not what God is like at all. God's character is shown in Christ. And what did Christ do? He did not selfishly demand His due. He did not take advantage of what another would think He was owed. His equality with God led Him to view His status, not as a matter of privilege, but as a matter of self-giving. This is the attitude of Christ. Now, an attitude is somewhat abstract, and it's not usually seen until it expresses itself in some concrete way. Jesus did not just have an attitude. He expressed that attitude very concretely, precisely because Jesus existed in the form of God. He did not regard equality with God as something to be used to His own advantage. But verse 7: **He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men.**

Now there's a lot of debate over verse 7, over specifically what **emptied Himself** means. It's obvious that the text is talking about Jesus becoming human. That's not where the questions reside. The question is, "How does it work? When Jesus empties Himself, is He still God? And when He becomes human, is He fully human? How does all that work?"

Here's where the debate lies. The Greek word for *emptied Himself*, or *made Himself nothing*, if you're looking at a different translation, is the word *kenaō*, and it means *to make empty*, which is why it's translated *emptied*. But it can also mean to make something void or to make something have no effect, like if I took my debit card and canceled it, didn't cut it up, threw it in the trash, and somebody found it. They went to the ATM and tried to use it, but it would have no effect

because I had essentially voided it, the same way you void a check. But a lot of these young people in here today, don't know what checks are. (*laughter*)

So which definition is it? This is where some theologians would say **Jesus emptied Himself**. He laid aside His powers as God; He's no longer fully God. That's what emptied means, they would say. I would disagree with that. The idea doesn't make sense when you look at the text as a whole. The better way to understand the Greek word *kenaō* is the second definition, to make something void, to make something have no effect. Here's the reasoning behind it. First of all, that verb *kenaō* (empty) occurs four other times in the New Testament, so five total. But four other times—and all four of those, or all five—are used by Paul. He's the only one to use this word in our Bible, and all four of the other uses use the term not literally to refer to emptying something of the attributes or qualities it possesses, but figuratively, of nullifying something, making it of no account.

So scholars would say it's unlikely, then, if this is the way Paul has used the word four other times that he's going to use it differently in our text, that he's going to use it literally here. That's actually confirmed by the rest of verse 7, where Paul specifies precisely how **Christ emptied Himself, by taking the very nature of a bond-servant and by being made in human likeness**. Christ did not literally empty Himself of any divine attribute. Instead, He emptied Himself of a heavenly and glorious form, or nature, whatever that looks like, into an earthly and inglorious form. We know what that looks like. It looks like us. He revealed the form of God in the form of a slave and in human likeness. The very nature of a bond-servant or slave would have taken its meaning from the way slavery was understood in their day, and in a Greco-Roman society, slaves had virtually no rights. In the same way Christ refused to exploit the privilege of His deity. Giving up that right, He became a slave. **Being made in human likeness** means Jesus became human in every sense that makes someone human.

The book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus can sympathize with us because He was tempted in all things, just as we are, yet *He was without sin*. He understands exactly what it's like to be you or to be me. Also in Scripture, we are told Jesus is fully God. In Colossians it tells us that *the fullness of the Godhead dwells in bodily form in Christ*. He doesn't lose His divine attributes when He takes on human flesh. This is what theologians call the hypostatic union. It's the idea that Jesus is 100% God and 100% man, not 50% God and 50% man put together like this, but 100% God, 100% man, put together. It's a hard thing for us to understand, and, ultimately, I can't even fully explain it to you. It's a challenge. It's a mystery. It's a paradox, but we're shown it throughout the Scriptures. Jesus is unique. He is the God-Man. He's 100% God, 100% man, and ultimately, I take that by faith. Regardless of how well we understand the idea, it doesn't matter. It doesn't change the specific meaning. That does matter. It doesn't change the specific meaning of Philippians 2. In its context, Jesus, being in very nature God, precisely because He is God, He took the form of a servant and became like us. And in the next verse, verse 8, Paul takes us one step further. He says, **Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**

Paul is saying Jesus stooped even further than just becoming human. While in His human condition, His obedience led Him to the worst kind of death possible, **death on a cross**. In Paul's culture, this was the lowest you could stoop. And Jesus went all the way. He didn't hold anything back. One of the things Jesus is showing us is this: A true human is one who embraces obedience,

even if that path leads to humiliation. And it's not that God delights in humiliation, by the way, it's that what humans consider worthy of exaltation is primarily self-seeking in God's eyes, and what we consider humiliation is only so because we exist in a world that promotes self, not sacrifice, not God. This helps us understand the rest, the next three verses of the passage as well. The last three verses in this part are the Father's response to Jesus' actions. Verse 9:

**For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.** (Vs. 9-11)

Now, some theologians think of these verses as God the Father rewarding the Son for His actions. One of the biggest problems that I have with this view is it can make it seem like Jesus did what He did to receive this reward, this title, that Jesus did this so He would be exalted to the highest place. But that goes completely against how we've been understanding this text up to now. Jesus doesn't come to earth and take on flesh and become obedient and die on a cross to get a title. He does all those things because it's what it means to be God. He does all of those things to redeem us. He does all of those things to bring us back into relationship with Himself and His Father. When He comes to earth and takes on flesh, He's not disguising who God is. He's revealing who God is. When Jesus takes a towel, girds Himself with it and begins to wash the disciples' feet, He's not disguising who God is. He's revealing who God is. When Jesus is whipped and beaten and bloody and nailed to a cross, He's not disguising who God is. He's revealing who God is, because it's the nature of God to pour Himself out in love and sacrifice, which is why the Father responds the way He does, by exalting Jesus. He says, "Hey, I want in on this too. I want to reflect who I am, what I'm like."

So He gives Him the name that's above every name. Most commentators think this is the name **Lord**, which is mentioned in verse 11. **Lord** means *ultimate ruler*, the one who is in charge. This doesn't make Him higher than God the Father, by the way. It's actually a way of speaking of their unity. New Testament scholar Lynn Cohick says the term **Lord** in the Greek translation of the Bible, is the Greek Bible's way of referring to the special name of God, the name *Yahweh*, the personal name of God, the name which God revealed when He revealed Himself to Moses, when He makes a covenant with His people. So to speak of Jesus as **Lord**, is to indicate Christ's unity with the Father and the Spirit. It is to speak of the Trinity. They're all united in this action of saving us.

The Father is saying, "Yes," or "Amen" to Jesus' attitude and actions of revealing the true nature of the self-giving God. The idea is not that Jesus got the servant job done, and now He's exalted and gets to just sit around and be served. The Father is saying that what is forever exalted and praised and gloriously beautiful is servanthood, and self-giving, and humble love, and someday, someday everyone will recognize that **EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, everyone will confess** and realize the truth and begin to worship in awe of this amazing self-giving God. It is stunning to see the God that Jesus is revealing to us by His life and His death. But we've got one more thing to come back to. What does this mean for us? Can we have this attitude? Is Jesus just set up here as an example for us to follow? Should we try to live this way?

I don't think Paul brings Jesus into this discussion only as an example to follow. I think Paul would say Jesus is also the way that you can live this way. We cannot live this way on our own. That's why I wanted us to take note of the other way verse 5 can be translated. Listen to it again. **Have this attitude among yourselves, which you also have in Christ Jesus.** I think Paul is encouraging the Philippians to remember, not only did Jesus have this attitude and He lived this way, you also have this attitude available to you because you are **in Christ** and **Christ is in you**. All through Paul's writings, he talks about followers of Jesus, believers being put *in Christ* and *Christ being put in them*. If you've been called alongside to follow Jesus as His disciple, and you've accepted the call, then you have the Spirit of Christ in you, the Holy Spirit. And that Spirit has this attitude. That Spirit wants to live this way.

Another way of saying this is what Paul says in chapter 1, verse 6, a very well-known verse: **For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.** This is the **good work** God began in you. He is leading you by His Spirit into this type of life, a life of humility, a life of self-giving, a life of doing nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, a life of regarding others as more important than myself, a life of not merely looking out for my own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. The Holy Spirit is leading you to this type of life because it is the life of salvation, the life of following Jesus, the life that you've been called into. In fact, Paul says that in the very next verse, verse 12:

**So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling;**

Paul calls them, calls us, to obedience, referencing the obedience of Jesus from verse 8, which led Him to the point of death. And then he defines that obedience as **working out their salvation with fear and trembling**. So let's talk about that phrase for a minute, because it can be confusing.

First, it doesn't say work *for* your salvation. It says **work out your salvation**. Salvation is a gift of God by grace, that we participate in by faith. Secondly, we tend to think of salvation as this point in time where I trusted Christ...where I received Him...I accepted Him...I became a follower; however you phrase it. That's how we think of salvation. But in the Bible, salvation has a past, a present and a future tense, and it's used in all three ways. *We were saved from* the penalty of sin. *We are being saved* (present tense) from the power of sin in our lives, meaning, we are being transformed; we are being sanctified. We are being changed into different people, and then ultimately, in the future, *we will be saved* from the very presence of sin, so three different tenses in our passage. It's used in the present tense form, meaning referring to working out our sanctification or our transformation in Christ-likeness, which is why it says **work it out**.

The term was used to describe a mathematician working out a math problem. I think of it like a puzzle, like a jigsaw puzzle. If I handed you a jigsaw puzzle this morning, I'd give it to you as a gift. You'd have the whole thing in the box. You'd even have a picture of what it looks like on the front of the box. But you still have to figure out, work out how all the pieces fit together. Our salvation is like that. It's given to us as a gift. We have the whole thing right in front of us, this new life in Christ. We even have a picture of what that life looks like in the life of Jesus. But we still have to figure out how all the pieces fit together. I still need to figure out and work out how does this new life in Christ work into my current life each day? And we can only figure that out

by working it out, by seeking to live according to it. And here's the best news of all in the last verse of the passage. We're not expected to do it on our own. Verse 13:

**...for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.**

So who's working? I'm working it out; God is working. Who's working? Who's doing it? Both of us! He began the good work in me by giving me salvation, new life in Christ. I receive this new life each day by faith, as the Spirit of God continues to work in me, and I cooperate with that work. And this is all done, by the way, in a community. It's where we started today. Paul is writing this letter not to individuals, but to a community of Christ-followers in Philippi. So if we want to grow and be intentional about the growth we've been talking about for three weeks, we need to be in a community, and we need to be intentional about how we engage in that community. That means not clinging to my dream of community, because when the dream of community becomes stronger than the love for the real people that God has placed us with, we can become impatient...judgmental...frustrated...and eventually destructive towards that very community, those very people, because the dream of community becomes an idol, and actual brothers and sisters in Christ can become a disappointment and even an obstacle to that dream. So if we want to not cling to our dream of community, then we have to engage in that community and approach it the way Jesus does, with *humility, doing nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, regarding others as more important than myself, not merely looking out for our own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.*

And when you live this way, it is an act of trust. You say, "What do I do with my desires and my needs?" You entrust them to God and believe He's going to meet those. Jesus did this same thing, even on the cross. His last words He utters, "**Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit,**" and **He gave up His breath, breathed His last and He died.** It's an act of trust. It could look several ways. I'll give you a couple examples here.

It could look like being open and honest and vulnerable the way Emily told us about in the video this morning. It looks like listening to others and accepting others when they are where they are on their journey. It can look like being curious about what God might be doing in others' lives. It looks like praying for one another, can look like not keeping your group closed off, but opening it up to other people. It can look like challenging one another by speaking the truth in love, and it can look like being willing to listen when someone begins to speak the truth and love into your life and actually stop and consider what they have to say. And it looks like asking the Holy Spirit, "How do you want me to serve and love the people in my group?"

I don't know specifically what it looks like for you, but the Holy Spirit does, and He's leading you into that type of salvation life, molding you into the image of Christ. And I could go on and list the other 59 *one another* statements that are found in Scripture. We don't have time for that today, but we're not done talking about community. It's one of the themes of our study together this fall in the Epistles of John. Bryan is going to start us there next week,

I have one more statement for you, and then we'll pray. Growth in community takes time, but it doesn't happen without us being *intentional*.

Let's pray together:

*Heavenly Father, we are grateful for who You are, the self-giving God. Jesus, we thank You for coming to demonstrate that to us, dying for us, bringing us back into relationship and sending Your Spirit so that we are not left to figure out this salvation life on our own, so that we can engage intentionally with one another as You work in us. Would You help us to be open in these weeks to the things You want to do in us and through us by Your Spirit? We pray this in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.*

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