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community church

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Message: twoignite – 2Link

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Today, the igniter we're going to cover is called *2link...in community with other couples and be the body of Christ to each other*. (not just about going to church, but truly doing life with a handful of other Christ following couples). God has wired us to live in community, not to be islands unto ourselves (biblical principle applies to couples as much as singles). 2link, is clearly one I can speak from experience from my marriage. But even more, as my children have grown, moved out of the house and got married, I have a new understanding of the importance of community. You see, my kids both live far away, and I find myself, as their father, desperately hoping they find community with other believing couples where they live. I feel like I see with new eyes why my heavenly father wants community for his children.

So today, let me please speak to you as a father, who wants community for his children. My hope is that those of you who show up on Sunday and call this your home, but you don't really live in community with a group of Christ followers outside of Sunday service, will see the importance of connecting in community, and take that step.

There are 3 primary reasons I desperately want my children to be in community with other Christ following couples (explain the 3). Turn with me to **Gal 6:1,2** (*context = within community*)

In community...we speak truth to each other

People are going to sin. In fact, if you can't ever seem to find and stay in community with people, because sooner or later you discover they're jacked up, let me set you free of that. You can end your search, cause we're all jacked up, we all like sheep have gone astray, there is no one righteous, not even one. Not even you. That's right, mr and mrs think you've got it together, you're jacked up too. So if you're ever going to stay in community with people, just realize we're all in this mess together. We all mess up in our own ways, and if you give up on people when they mess up, you'll never be around people very long.

If the bible teaches us anything, it's that human nature is a frail thing, we wander from the truth easily...

Adam and Eve were living in God's perfect, unmarred creation. They had everything a human being could needed for life and happiness and fulfillment. What did they want? the one thing God told them they couldn't have. We come from frail stock.

David, king of Israel, a clear hero of the faith, called in scripture, a man after God's own heart...has an affair with Bathsheba then has her husband murdered. You know that, but what's most shocking to me is the part of the story that's rarely mentioned. At the time of the affair, David already had 6 wives and an untold number of concubines. I mean, really, you had to take someone else's wife! The six you had weren't enough? You couldn't just sleep with one of your concubines? You had to kill another man for his wife? And the list goes on and on. We are frail, prone to wander from the truth. This is why it says in 6:1, "*watch out, when you go to help that sinning person (and you should help them), be careful because human nature is so frail, you're prone to buy into the same lie they're buying into.*" You go to confront that person about cheating, and you start thinking, 'that cheating thing actually looks pretty good.' We're frail, so be careful.

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You know why marriages are frail...because marriage is the union of two frail people. A husband will buy into the lie of pornographic satisfaction. A wife will think she'll be happier if she leaves her husband for that guy at the office. A couple will be drawn in by the lies of creditors and make foolish financial decisions. Marriages are frail.

As a father, I know my kid's marriages are frail, at some point, one or both of them will buy into some lie in their marriage. So I long to see them in community with other Christ following couples, who will speak truth against the lie. You see, one of the primary tools for restoring people and bringing them back to health, is the caring group of Christ followers they do life with... *"you who are spiritual, should restore him."* You mature follower of Jesus in his or her life, you should speak truth against the lie they've bought into. You shouldn't just say what they want to hear; you need to have the courage to speak truth to your friends believing a lie. David was fortunate to have Nathan in his life, who had the courage to stand up to the king and say, that thing you did with Bathsheba was wrong and sinful and you need to repent. That's what should happen in biblical community, we speak truth to each other in love.

James 5:19,20, *My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.* You see, when we go astray, God's primary vehicle for bringing us back is the community of believers we do life with, having the courage to speak truth to us against that lie.

I want this for my children and their marriages. I want people around them who will care enough to speak truth to them. In isolation it's so easy to be deceived, because the lie just needs to deceive one heart, yours. But when you live in community, the lie needs to penetrate the entire community. That's far more difficult.

In community...we carry each other's pain

Gal 6:2, *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.* Again, the context is a community of Christ followers, in which each of us at times have heavy things happen in our lives. In those times, the community is supposed to gather round you and help you carry that burden. You may say, *'I don't need that, I'm a strong person. I do for myself.'* Great, then you'll be really useful to the community, helping other people carry the heavy stuff in their lives. But, even you strong ones, trust me, sooner or later, when you least expect it something really heavy is going to happen to you, and you're going to wish you had a community of close friends to help you carry the burden (*Brian and I carrying shed*).

Sooner or later a bomb is going to drop in your marriage...loss of job...infidelity...cancer...addiction. This Friday I sat with a 32 year old widow mourning the sudden loss of her husband. Bombs of all sizes drop on us and our marriages. If you think it's never going to happen to you, you're wrong, and if you try to carry the burden yourself, you might just crumble underneath it. That's why God wants his children living in community, so we can help each other carry the burden that might crush us if we try to go it alone.

That's why we have so many support groups here at Mission, divorce recovery, cancer support group, men's unemployment group, new abortion recovery group called Forgiven and Set Free. And of course, our flagship, Celebrate recovery, every Friday night. We have all this because we don't want hurting people stuck carrying their burden alone and being crushed under the weight of it.

This is how God expects us to live in community with one another...**1John 3:16-18, *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.***

God knows life is hard, bombs drop on us. They can tear us apart if we try to carry it alone. But if we live in community with other Christ followers, together we can weather the storm.

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I want this for my children. I want them to not only be going to church, but truly doing life with a handful of other Christ following couples, because I know a time is coming when some bomb is going to drop in their marriage, and I long for them to have a caring community there to help them carry that burden.

And we raised strong kids that should be able to help others carry their heavy load.

Here's another reason, as a father, I want my kids to be living in community...

In community...we grow deeper and go further

I want my kids to live truly significant lives, and that doesn't happen in isolation. In isolation, we can only accomplish so much, we can only grow so much, our own capacity becomes our limitation. But in community we have the collective capacity of a group of people, and together we can grow deeper and go further.

This is how God has designed the body of Christ, **Eph 4:11-16** (description of how God built and designed the body to function effectively in community).

11-13...God gifts every person in the body with a spiritual gift. If you're a believer you've been gifted by God.

1corinthians 12:7, *Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.* (each one).

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The purpose of our giftedness is to prepare us for works of service, to do the good things God has for us to do. I believe God has gifted men in our church in construction so they can build out our village in Fiji. I believe he gifted our medical and vision team so they can bless our village in Chikudzler. I believe he's gifted our children's ministry workers to love and teach kids, so they can grow in the Lord along with you...so that together, in community we can do the big and beautiful things God has called us to do.

Together we can go further and accomplish more significant things than we could ever do alone.

(example from triathlon training)

14-16...in isolation it's hard to grow. If all you do is come to church, but you're not connected in community with Christ followers beyond Sunday, it's easy to stagnate spiritually. And that's a dangerous place to be. In isolation you're more easily swayed by falsehood. But when we live in community, we help each other to grow in Christ. And notice this important last phrase... ***"as each part does its work."***

As each one of us does our part, together in community we grow deeper and we go further than we could ever accomplish on our own.

As a father, I want this for my children. I want them as husband and wife to grow deep in the Lord. I want them to live significantly with a group of people collectively doing big and beautiful things for the kingdom.

And I know that happens in community. I know if they isolate themselves they stagnate and they'll live spiritually insignificant lives.

I want this for my marriage. Kay and I have a few goals for 2010, and one of them is to live in closer community with a handful of Christ followers, sharing communion, caring for one another, spurring one another on to grow in Christ.

I want to encourage you married couples, singles, everyone here, to pursue community beyond Sunday morning. **2link...we want to make it easy for you (explain 8 on 8).**