**Study Series: A Long Obedience in the Same Direction**

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**Lesson Title: “Community” (pp. 78-87)**

October 18, 2020 Session 07

**The main point of this lesson is:** God designed Christians to live in community.

**Focus on this goal:** To help adults increase the value they place on guarding the fellowship of their faith community.

**Key Bible Passage:** Psalm 133

During the Session

**Step 1. Introduction / Discussion Starter**

**Invite adults** to recall long trips they’ve taken with family or friends.

**Ask:**

1. When did the trip begin to become less than fun?
2. What makes traveling with other people challenging?
3. Then why do we keep traveling with others?

**Remind adults** the Songs of Ascents were sung by Jews as they pilgrimaged to Jerusalem.

**Ask:** What almost certainly happened among those pilgrims on that long hiking and camping trip?

**Declare** these pilgrims sang a song about getting along with one another, not because it came easily, but because living in united community was worth it.

**Note** in this session the group will examine a short psalm that encourages believers to see and guard the value of traveling this Christian journey together in a faith community.

**Invite a volunteer to read** Psalm 133 from Day One (p. 78). (**If desired, read** last paragraph of Day Two, p. 81.)

**Step 2. Day One – “Like Costly Anointing Oil Flowing Down Head and Beard”**

**Ask:** What percentage of believers would you estimate are members of the Christian church?

**State** the first sentence of Day One (p. 78) declares that percentage to be one hundred. When people put their faith in Christ, they become members of His family.

**Determine** what is true about any family.

**Discuss** Day One, activity 1 (p. 79).

**Ask a volunteer to read** the margin/pull quote in Day One (p. 79).

**Use the list** in Day One, activity 2 (p. 79) **to explore** different ways Christians act in the family of faith.

**Step 3. Day Two – Not Like Paying Taxes**

**Declare:** If we want to act like loving brothers and sisters in an imperfect, but committed, family, we need to grasp the immense necessity and value of Christian community.

**Using** Day Two material (pp. 80-81), **briefly relate** how all of Scripture emphasizes that community is essential.

**Discuss** Day Two, activity 1 (p. 80).

**Examine** how some people view living in Christian community the same way they do paying taxes.

**Read and discuss** the Day Two margin/pull quote (p. 81).

**Complete** Day Two, activity 2 (p. 81).

**Step 4. Day Three – Two Ways to Avoid Community**

**Ask:** Why might we sometimes want to say, “How good and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters stay away and leave me alone”?

**Discuss** Day Three, activity 1 (p. 81).

**Analyze** why it’s so difficult to live in unity and harmony.

**Ask a volunteer to read** the Day Three margin/pull quote (p. 82).

**State:** Because this is such an arduous task, many believers avoid community. Some ways of avoidance are obvious, they just don’t go to church, or slip in and out without connecting with others.

**Identify** from Day Three (pp. 82-83) two ways people who attend church regularly still avoid community.

**Read and discuss** the last Day Three paragraph (p. 83).

**Invite a volunteer to read** Proverbs 27:17.

**Ask:**

1. How can living in community with other believers, especially difficult believers, sharpen us?
2. How can not living in community spiritually dull a believer?

**Step 5. Day Four – Each Other’s Priest**

**Request a volunteer read** Psalm 133:2.

**Explain** the use of oil in Scripture and its meaning in the context of Psalm 133 (p. 84).

**Discuss** Day Four, activity 1 (p. 84).

**Read and discuss** the second Day Four Bonhoeffer quote (p. 84).

**Invite a volunteer to read** Psalm 133:3.

**Explain** the significance of dew to the people of Israel and its meaning in the context of Psalm 133 (p. 85).

**Explore** how believers having attitudes of fresh and expectant newness toward one another both reveals and grows a genuine community of faith.

**Invite responses** to Day Four, activity 2 (p. 85).

**Step 6. Day Five – Rousing Good Fellowship**

**Read** the final phrase of Psalm 133.

**Analyze** when and where this great blessing of eternal life occurs.

**Invite responses** to Day Five, activity 1 (p. 86).

**Declare:** We cannot create something as valuable as a community of faith, only God can do that, but we can maintain and guard it diligently.

**Discuss** Day Five, activity 2 (pp. 86-87).

**Step 7. Live Out the Lesson**

**Note** that J. R. R. Tolkien’s The Fellowship of the Ring is a beautiful allegory of the necessity, difficulties, and beauty of traveling in community. At one point on their difficult pilgrimage, Frodo, the protagonist, declared it seemed like he couldn’t trust anyone. His companion, Merry, replied, “It depends on what you want … You can trust us to stick to you through thick and thin—to the bitter end. And you can trust us to keep any secret of yours—closer than you keep it yourself. But you cannot trust us to let you face trouble alone … We are your friends, Frodo … We are horribly afraid—but we are coming with you.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Urge adults** to consider prayerfully: Can your faith community trust you to:

* Show up consistently?
* Make every effort to preserve unity?
* Relate to them as anointed?
* View them with expectancy?
* Love, accept, and forgive them unconditionally?
* Stick with them through thick and thin?
* Be their true friends?

**Close in prayer.**

1. <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/7565516-it-depends-on-what-you-want-put-in-merry-you> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)