

# Gospel in Life (Timothy Keller)

## Session Four: Community - The context for change

Welcome, opening prayer and worship

(5–15 minutes)

Pray as you begin, asking God to be at work in your group.

Summary of the previous session

(5 minutes)

**[Read the paragraphs below aloud to summarise the main points of the previous session.]**

Last session we saw that nothing is to be more fundamental than God to our happiness, meaning in life, and identity. We saw, however, that we easily create idols.

An idol is anything besides Jesus Christ that we feel we must have to be happy, anything that is more important to our heart than God, anything that is enslaving our heart through inordinate desires. Martin Luther said that under every behavioral sin is the sin of idolatry, and under every act of idolatry is a disbelief in the gospel.

As we look now at the idea of a Christian community, keep in mind that idolatry is also one of the key problems we face when it comes to creating community.

Bible study

(20 minutes)

**[Read aloud Phillipians 2:1-11 and then work through the questions below.]**

1. Looking at verses 2-4, what can we infer is the problem that Paul is addressing in the Philippian church?
2. What are the four grounds for unity and humility that Paul lists in verse 1? How do these grounds lead to unity and humility?
3. Verse 5 says, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." What do we learn about Jesus' attitude from verses 6-11?
4. In his book *Love in Hard Places* Don Carson writes, "The church is ... made up of natural enemies. What binds us together is not common education, common race, common income levels, common politics, common nationality, common accents, common jobs, or anything else of that sort. Christians come together... because they have all been saved by Jesus Christ and owe him a common allegiance... They are a band of natural enemies who love one another for Jesus' sake. Do you agree with his assessment? Why or why not? Share examples."

**[Read aloud 1 Peter 2:9-12.]**

DVD presentation

(10 minutes)

1. Was there anything from the DVD that was new to you, or had an effect on you? Did you hear anything that raised more questions in your mind?
2. We heard in the DVD that we are “a holy nation” – different, distinct from the world and the people around us. And yet at the same time we’re supposed to be “a royal priesthood” – deeply involved in the lives of the world and the people around us. Do you feel that you are a part of the sort of community described in the DVD? If not, why not? What can you do to make this happen?
3. “We will not know God, change deeply, nor win the world apart from community.” To what extent have you experienced this?
4. What practices make a good, strong, healthy Christian community? Brainstorm practical ways by which your own group can deepen its life together as a community.
5. How can we love people we do not naturally like?
6. Look at the following list derived from Romans 12.
  - Love honestly, speaking out against what is wrong. (v.9)
  - Love even unattractive people, because they are your brothers and sisters. (v.10)
  - Love by making others feel honored and valuable (v.10)
  - Love by being generous in practical ways with your home, money and time. (v.13)
  - Love without bitterness. Don’t “pay others back,” or hold resentment against others. (v.14)
  - Love with empathy. Be willing to be emotionally involved with others. (v.15)
  - Love with humility. Be willing to associate with people who differ from you. (v.16)

In which areas do you, as a group, tend to be the weakest, and why? What practical steps could you take to improve?

Thank God for your Christian community and pray for Christ’s love to ignite your heart to love, share with, and serve others continually. Pray that you would be the sort of community you discussed through this study.