



PERSPECTIVE: “Shaped for Community”

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Mark Wiltshire

This Study Guide provides a summarised study with additional discussion questions based on the scriptures mentioned in the sermon.

Connect:

“Loneliness is one of the greatest public health challenges of our time.”

Teresa May

Engage:

1. UK Gov. research on Loneliness (15th Oct 2018):

- *Up to 1 out of 5 of all UK adults feel lonely most or all the time.*
- *Evidence shows that loneliness is as bad for your health as obesity or smoking.*
- *Loneliness is linked to damaging conditions, such as heart disease, strokes and Alzheimer’s.*
- *At any time, 200,000 older people have not had a conversation with a friend or relative in more than 1 month.*

Framework:

1. LONLINESS does not necessarily mean ISOLATION...

“Lonely adults consume more alcohol and get less exercise than those who are not lonely. Their diet is higher in fat, their sleep is less efficient, and they report more daytime fatigue. Loneliness also disrupts the regulation of cellular processes deep within the body, predisposing us to premature aging.”

Dr John Cacioppo, research Professor Uni. Chicago

2. **“Alameda County Study” (California) - This famous US research project tracked lives (relationships/health/mortality) of almost 7,000 ordinary people over 20 years.**
 - Most isolated people were 3 times more likely to die than the most relationally connected people.
 - People with bad health habits but strong relational connections lived significantly longer than people with good health habits but were isolated.
 - Research Shows: People can feel lonely even when surrounded by lots of people, especially if the relationships are not emotionally rewarding.
 - Dr Carla Perissinotto, University of California, asserts “most lonely individuals are married, live with others and are not clinically depressed.”
3. How can you solve the problem of loneliness?
4. What if there was someone who could solve the problem of loneliness?
5. Someone did, Jesus! His solution, the church. God made us for Community, people are designed for it.
6. Read and discuss Acts 2:1-4; the community experienced God together in ways no one had ever experienced before.
7. Read and discuss Acts 2:42 - 43 & 47

“Laying down the 4 marks of the church.”

(Can't separate, leave one out or it's all damaged)

Tom Wright

- ⇒ (Acts 2:42) **“Devoted Themselves** - “to be, to exist, to happen, to be present”
8. How is God’s word changing my life?
 9. Is social philosophy having more impact on my life?
 10. Discuss - Why the need to reshape?
 11. Because love must be worked at – Read John 13:34-35
 - The words “*one another*” are mentioned three times in these verses alone.
 - Not that you won’t argue or have differences with those around you, but you must love.
 - Nobody’s perfect. Even biological families have problems.
 - People don't point to a building and say... “that's my family”
 - Jesus came to start a family, Gods family, of which all are welcome.
 - Fellowship helps sustain a ‘living faith’ - INCLUSION

“The most terrible poverty is loneliness, and the feeling of being unloved.”

Mother Teresa

12. How does a healthy community form?
13. Healthy communities form through ‘doing life with “one another”’. The best environment to form living spiritual relationships is through **Life Groups**.
14. **We Belong to Each Other (Romans 12:5)** – there are 59 “*one another*” commands in New testament.

Here are some examples:

- **Agree with** (1Cor 1:10)
- **Honour** (Rom 12:10)
- **Don't Lie to** (Col 3:9)
- **Serve** (Gal 5:13)
- **Forgive** (Eph 4:32)
- **Speak truth** (Eph 4:25)
- Submit to** (Eph 5:21)
- Be Sympathetic** (1Pet 3:8)
- Harmony** (Rom 12:16)
- Be at peace** (Mk 9:40)
- Encourage** (1Thes 5:11)
- Be devoted** (Rom 12:10)

"Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

Galatians 6:2

- **"Bear"** ... carry them together/support (Do you see a way to help?)
- **"Burdens"** ...heavy load, "troubles" (If the burden is shared, it is halved!)
- Depression, deep shame, problem in relationship, personal issues.
- ***"When people understand your burden and they still love you, somehow it becomes lighter..."*** (Mark Wiltshire) - Anyone can do this.
- "Law of Christ" is to Love one another (New Command, John 13)

15. People around us are carrying heavy weights, we just don't know or realise. Make a list of people you know that are struggling:

Name	Practical way I can help them
	1. 2.
	1. 2.
	1. 2.
	1. 2.



“Therefore welcome one another Just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.”

Romans 15:7

- Accept people (invite warmly by hand, as if into our home)
- People do not easily feel accepted. They may feel ashamed.
- They may fear rejection and hide their story.
- They will glorify God...praise Him for His love (Missional)
- Expect... Look to ‘discover’ your Godly potential

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed.”

James 5:16

- Confession, prayer and healing (physically and spiritually)
- Jesus draws attention to things people want to hide (but loves us)
- Zacchaeus (took selfishly from others)
- Woman at Well - many husbands (John 4)
- Peter denied Jesus (three times)
- Jesus came to save sinners, not provide a club for the perfect!
- Every sinner leads a double life – need a safe place to heal.
- Healed? Because Jesus knows the worst but still loves me.
- ***“To be fully known and still loved is very powerful.”***

16. Ask yourself, how can I reshape my fellowship at BCC?

17. Read Hebrews 1-:24-25

18. How can we encourage each other?

19. How can we be there for ‘one another’?

- Gathering together increases capacity
- Bible comes alive and faith is motivated

20. Life groups are a place of fellowship – Spiritual, Relational, Trust, Fun, Missional

How can I connect to a Life Group at BCC?

* Choose Today - to give it a go

* Sign Up – <http://www.bcc.church/life-groups>

* Let us know where we have gaps!

* Consider leading a NEW group (We will train you)

Prayer:

“Father help me to understand the power of your love and how I can make a difference to the lives of others around me. Help me to grow stronger spiritually in your family and to know your guidance as we meet authentically with one another. In Jesus name, Amen.”

Going Deeper

Personal Spiritual Response

How is God speaking into your life right now? What decisions need to be made?

Have you made a personal commitment to fully trust in Jesus? Have you been baptised? If not, there is information at bcc.church/baptism to learn more.

Why not contact the Pastoral team to consider whether baptism, an Alpha Course or joining a Life Group could be a next step for you? Contact info@bcc.church for more information.

Serving Opportunity

BCC's directory of service opportunities <https://bcc.church/ministries> may help you find an opportunity to grow spiritually, whilst helping others.