



DEXTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

7643 Huron River Drive

Dexter, MI 48130

734-426-8480

WHY WE NEED EACH OTHER

October 1st, 2006

By Matt Hook

Based on thoughts by Rick Warren

We're going to begin our worship service with a quiz. What do these movies have in common?

The Mummy

(Why are you going in there?!)

The Return of the Mummy

The Hills Have Eyes

The Blair Witch Project

Scream 1,2,3

And Then There Were None

Bruce Lee Movies

Skeleton Key

Why do they run down a dark alley...all alone???

Friday the 13th

Scary Movie 1,2,3

Alien

10 Little Indians

Predator

The Shining (Red Rum)

Battle Royale (Japanese)

Silence of the Lambs

The Haunting

The category that fits best is "movies in which people go off by themselves and get killed." There are certain rules that one must abide by in order to survive a horror movie. We'll skip the first two, but number three is never, ever, ever, under any circumstances say, "I'll be right back...". Don't go in there (or out there) alone!

I can't help but think about the theological implications of this...Adam and Eve break covenant with God for the very first time by eating the forbidden fruit. Notice the serpent gets them to do it one at a time. Then, what do they do? They hide. Alone. Away from God. Away from and accusing each other.

So much of our society is still there...hiding in the bushes...blaming one another...saying "I'll be right back!" So, Church, what are we doing about it? We're turning the lights on. We're taking back the night. We're taking back our lives, our souls, our purpose for living, and our community. We're beginning today, on World Communion Sunday. Welcome to 40 Days of Community!

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: 10 If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! 11 Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? 12 Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

40 Days of Community. WHY? Because isolation is way too common today.

- Remember, that's when you get picked off, when you cool off, and drop out.
- Back row, front row, new to the area, or long-time folks, we're in it together!

Today is the beginning of a revolution. It's going to start with a very radical counter-culture message. What I want to talk to you about this morning is the exact opposite of what you've been taught most of your life. But God promises that if you'll do this, if you'll do it *His* way that you'll never again have to struggle with loneliness. You'll be able to overcome things like fatigue and fear and frustration and failure. That if you'll do what He talks about you'll be able to handle depression and despair and have that replaced with hope. It is the concept of community.

As Americans we idolize independence. In America we have the Declaration of Independence. We have bought into a myth that says that the key to happiness is independence. If I have relational independence, financial independence, independence in every other area of my life, if I don't let anybody get too close to me but I'm totally self sufficient, then I will be happy. And yet God says that the key to happiness is not independence but inter-dependence. We need each other. We belong to each other. We need community in our lives. God wired you to go through life not as a solitary individual but in community.

The Bible says in Romans 12 *"Since we are all one body in Christ we belong to each other and each of us needs all the others."* We need each other. God says community is not optional. You may not feel it. You may feel like "I'm very self sufficient. I don't need other people in my life." But the truth is you absolutely have to have other people in your life if you're going to be all God wants you to be.

Two years ago we did 40 Days of Purpose. The big idea of that spiritual journey over was that God put you on earth for five major purposes. You're here not just to use your life the way you want to use it but to fulfill the five purposes God uniquely created you to fulfill.

Today I want us to start a journey on an even bigger idea. That is you cannot fulfill God's purposes for your life by yourself. There's no way. There's no way you can be all God wants you to be, and do all God wants you to do by yourself. You have to do it in relationship to other people. We need each other and we belong to each other in the body of Christ.

1. I NEED OTHERS TO WALK WITH ME.

What does that mean? It means I need you to help me grow spiritually. Colossians 2:6-7 says *"Just as you received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk in Him."* The Bible often compares life to a walk? Why? Because you're on a journey. You don't just sit still in life. You're not where you used to be. You're not where you're going to be. You're on a journey. So it calls the spiritual life, the Christian life, a walk. Throughout the New Testament we're told to walk in wisdom, to walk in love, to walk in light. We're told to walk in obedience, in the Spirit, walk as Jesus walked. Many, many other ways the Bible tells us that we are to live life.

But here's the key to your journey: you were never meant to walk through life alone. This has nothing to do with whether you're single or married. Nothing at all. We have many single adults in our church who are very involved in deep, meaningful community. We

also have married couples in our church who are desperately lonely. Marriage does not solve the issue. Community does.

“It is not good for man to be alone.” Gen. 2:18 (NLT) Notice when God says that in Genesis, sin hadn’t entered the world yet. The environment was perfect. Even in the Garden of Eden God said “It’s not good for man to be alone. God hates loneliness. So God created our physical family and our spiritual family. Your physical family is the one you grew up in. Your spiritual family is the one you have the rest of your life and into eternity. Your spiritual family, God’s church, is going to go on forever and ever. And God says I want you to be connected in My family, the church. The Bible says, *“Let us not give up the habit of meeting together... Instead, let us encourage one another.”* Heb. 10:25a (TEV) Note that when this was written, the author was not really talking about being with 350 people on Sunday mornings only, but being in a small community of people, small enough to encourage you.

- **Community is God’s answer to: loneliness.**

Loneliness is nothing more than the longing for belonging. And God gets specific. In 1 Cor. 14, Paul writes *“When you gather, each one of you be prepared with something useful for all: Sing a hymn, teach a lesson, tell a story, lead a prayer, provide an insight... Take your turn, with no one person taking over. That way... you all learn from each other.”* 1 Cor. 14:26, 30-31(Mes)

“As each part does its work, it helps the other parts grow, so Christ’s whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.” Eph. 4:16 (NLT) That’s what God wants in your life and He wants it for all of us. He wants us to be healthy and growing and full of love. That’s my prayer for you as your pastor. I want you to be healthy and I want you to be growing and I want you to be full of love. There’s only one way you can do that. You’ve got to get with other Christians to walk through life with you.

You can’t learn community without being in a community. That’s why during the next 40 days I’m asking everybody here this morning to get in a small group for just six weeks, because you can’t learn about community without being in community. *“Open your homes to each other without complaining.”* Peter 4:9 (TEV) We need people to walk with us.

2. I NEED OTHERS TO WORK WITH ME.

God has put you and me on earth to do a certain work that only you can do. Ephesians 2:10 says *“God made us to do good works, which He planned in advance for us to live our lives doing.”* Eph. 2:10 (NCV) God’s purposes are more important than your plans, your dreams, and even your failures. And God’s purpose is that you and I use our talents and abilities and time to help somebody else. The word is service, or ministry. ALL of us are not pastors, but all of us are ministers. And without everyone doing their part, you get worn out, even burned out. That’s why we’re supposed to work together. *“Two people are better than one, because they get more done by working together.”* Eccl. 4:9 (NCV)

- **Community is God’s answer to: fatigue**

God has called this particular Church on the River to serve. It’s the fabric of our church. So we’re taking on big problems—like homeless support, hunger ministries (like the CROPwalk today), and many others. We’ve got to involve an army of people to really make an impact! You may be tired because you don’t have the relationships built in to

support you in what God has called you to do. *“Every time we get the chance, let us work for the benefit of all, starting with the people closest to us in the community of faith.”* Gal. 6:10 (Mes) I need people to walk with me through life and work with me through life, and also...

3. I NEED OTHERS TO WATCH OUT FOR ME.

I need people who will defend me, stand up for me, and protect me. Who will help me stay on track and watch my back. We all need this because we all have blind spots. I love living next to the Boyds, and across from the Butlers and down from the Knapps. They watch our house when we're gone! Paul writes *“Look out for one another's interests, not just for your own.”* Ph. 2:4 (TEV) Is anybody looking out for YOU? And is anybody watching out for your soul? *“Keep being concerned about each other as the Lord's followers should.”* Heb. 13:1 (CEV) Notice it says “KEEP being concerned.” That means not just once, but over and over.

Most Christians live in defeat, through habits you can't break, hurts you won't let go of, resentment you build, hang-ups, problems, circumstances, and relationships that hurt you. Why? Because we try to fight our spiritual battles on our own. And that's stupid. You're never going to win against the devil on your own. You need other people who will watch out for you and help you. *“A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.”* Eccl. 4:12 (NLT) (That's a small group! Like a braid, it looks like only two, but the third strand holds it together.

- **Community is God's answer to: defeat**

Don't be a loner. “If one person falls, another can reach out and help. But people who are alone when they fall are in real trouble.” Eccl. 4:10 (NLT) *I'm grateful for a church where men and women can be honest enough to talk about weaknesses. Maybe you're here with something in your life you want to change, and you've tried on your own. But you can't change on your own. If you could have, you would have, but you can't so you won't. So you need other people: to walk with you, work with you, and watch out for you.*

4. I NEED OTHERS TO WAIT AND WEEP WITH ME.

To wait and weep. These are the people who wait while I'm waiting for the bad news. And they weep when I get the bad news. The longer I live, the more I realize the inevitability of crises. I used to admire those who seemed to avoid it; but I realize it's more a matter of what you do WHEN it hits, not IF it hits. Because life hits us hard sometimes. *“You should be like one big family, full of sympathy toward each other...”* 1 Peter 3:8a (LB) *“If one member suffers, all suffer together.”* 1 Cor. 12:26 (ESV)

- **Community is God's answer to: despair**

There are situations that nobody should ever have to go through alone. Nobody should ever have to wait in the hospital while a loved one is in a life and death surgery. Nobody. No woman should ever have to wait alone waiting for the lab report back on a problem pregnancy. Nobody. Nobody should have to wait for news from a battlefield alone. Nobody should have to stand at the edge of an open grave alone. Nobody should have to wait at home alone for the coroner to come and publicly identify the body of a loved one who just died. Nobody. Nobody should have to spend the first night alone after their husband has died or wife has died. Nobody should ever have to spend the first night alone when their wife has just walked out. Or their husband's walked out. *“Be happy*

with those who are happy, weep with those who weep.” Rom. 12:15 (TEV) “Encourage each other and strengthen one another.” *1 Th. 5:11 (GW)* Many things, including death, are inevitable. The time is now to build a safety net, a network of support. They’re called friends. Get it in place now. What is God’s safety net? A group of other believers. You don’t need a hundred. You only need 5 or 6. But it’s a group of believers committed to you.

5. I NEED OTHERS TO WITNESS WITH ME.

You have a life message God wants you to share with the world. It’s part of your mission. And there is great power in group witness. To share the love of God, love God’s family. Jesus said “*Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are My disciples.*” John 13:35 (NLT)

For some reason, witnessing to my faith is one of the scariest things. (You’re thinking “What a dope to become a pastor!”) But it’s true: I would never do “man-on-the-street” interviews in AA if it weren’t for Brett or Todd who’ve gone with me. Look what God’s Word says: “*The Holy Spirit doesn’t want you to be afraid of people, but to be wise and strong, and to love them and enjoy being with them.*” 2 Tim. 1:7 (LB)

- **God’s answer to fear is: community**
- “*...You are working together and struggling side by side to get others to believe the Good News.” Ph. 1:27b (CEV)*

We all need each other. We need other believers to walk with us, to work with us, to watch over us, to weep with us and wait with us when we need to wait, and to witness with us. Say this, “I really, really, really need a group.” That is your declaration of interdependence.

Let us pray: Father, it’s time for the church to be the church. And it’s time for a revolution of love and fellowship and community. Please begin it in our hearts. With all my heart, Lord, I know that every church will start fulfilling God’s purposes together. Dear God, forgive me for the times I felt like I didn’t need other people in my life. I want to be a part of what You’re doing on earth, Your family the church. I want to experience real community. I’m tired of superficial. Help me to risk—not “Going out there alone,” but to open myself up to learning about community. Please bless our church and every new small group forming during this 40 Days of Community. Amen!