



community:

**A Four-Week
Student Discipleship Journal**

this book belongs to:



HELPING YOUTH WORKERS
MAKE DISCIPLES & DEVELOP LEADERS

Community: A Four-Week Student Discipleship Journal

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STARTING NOW

It doesn't take much more than a quick browse on Facebook, the news, or a YouTube comment section to learn that our world really struggles to get along. Each of us can think of at least one or two opinions or beliefs we hold that another person would strongly disagree with. Not only does this describe the world at large, but it is just as true inside of our churches!

Jesus knew this was going to be the case. He's not surprised by our fighting. But still, he says this:

"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another," (John 13:35).

This may be the one thing that almost everyone can agree on: we should love each other. However, anyone who has spent more than 10 minutes with another human can attest that this is harder than it sounds. Jesus doesn't tell us to love each other—to live in unity—because it's comfortable for us but because he has a purpose for community, no matter how hard it is. Our unity is supposed to tell the world about the God who holds us together as his people.

HOW IT WORKS

This book has four weeks of journal pages to help you journey down the road of discovering what true, Christian community looks like, where it comes from, and why it is critical for us to pursue. Each week takes you through seven days of questions to get you thinking, Bible studies to shift your perspective, and challenges to stretch you out of your comfort zone. Then, on the seventh day of the week, you'll get a break to recharge for the next week. It'll help you get into a rhythm of learning, growing, and putting that knowledge into action.



Throughout this journal, you'll also find the **MARKS OF A DISCIPLE**. These are things that Christ-followers are committed to and have in common, like connecting with God through prayer, applying his Word to our lives, serving without personal agendas, managing God's gifts, and many other things.

Remember, you'll get out of this book what you put into it. The challenges you'll encounter won't always be easy—they're designed to stretch you! Take a risk and use this journal to run hard toward God. When we make ourselves available to him, he'll transform us and use us in ways that will blow our minds!

week one

The Problem

week one

Intro

Look at the world and what do you see? Natural disasters, war, hate, crime, and chaos seem to be the headlines every day. Have you ever thought about the fact that all of this either comes from or causes conflict and disconnection with others? Close to home, there are times when it seems like everyone is against us. Our friend talks badly about us, authority figures tell us more about what we do wrong than right, while we just want someone to have our backs. Did you know that the disunity of the world is actually a symptom of our sin and separation from God? Instead, Jesus intended the unity of those who are in relationship with Him—the church—to stand in stark contrast to the disunity of the world. This is the heart of the community Christ-followers are called to. We need each other. None of us were meant to live alone, wondering how to get over our doubts and questions about God. Something changes in us when we live in community with other Christ-followers, and as we learn to care for each other, it actually changes the world around us.

**“BY THIS ALL PEOPLE WILL KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY
DISCIPLES, IF YOU HAVE LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER.”**

John 13:35

DAY ONE:

What is Community?

Community. It comes from the Latin word *communis*. According to the Cambridge English Dictionary, this is also the root for the modern word *common*. Basically, a community is a group of people who have something in common. It could be almost anything: a geographical location, a hobby, or a favorite sports team. But that one thing must *unite* them; otherwise, it's not a very strong community. So what unites a community of Christ-followers? Worship style? A building? Christian community is meant to be focused on Christ. This kind of unity isn't easy, though. It may mean we have to look beyond ourselves and our preferences and focus instead on what we share in Christ.

JOURNAL QUESTIONS

Think about a community you're a part of with members you know well (e.g., family, sports team, band, etc.):

What is the one thing/purpose that defines this community?



List five ways the members of your community are different from each other:



How much do these differences affect your ability to be united in your purpose?



What are you able to accomplish when you *are* united by your purpose?



How can living outside of community hold us back from a life that feels complete?



DAY TWO:

I Want Community!

Have you ever seen a little kid have a full-blown temper tantrum? It usually involves crying and sometimes even kicking and flailing while the words “I WANT!” are shouted in a high-pitched squeal. Tantrums like this usually end around age 5. Imagine the Corinthians’ surprise when the Apostle Paul called them out for having a full-blown spiritual temper tantrum! Instead of focusing on what unified them, they were fighting because they were focused on which religious teacher they preferred. They were missing the point that following Jesus was more important than getting their own way. Have you ever had jealousy and personal preference get in the way of working together with other Christ-followers?

Study the verses in **1 Corinthians 3:1-5** carefully by using the **OPA** method for Bible Study: Observation, Principles, and Application.

Helpful tip: the more effort you put in to making observations, the easier the principles and application will be to see.

“BEHOLD, HOW GOOD AND PLEASANT IT IS
WHEN BROTHERS DWELL IN UNITY.”

Psalms 133:1

OBSERVATION:

Compile all the facts found in these passages. Try to make 15-20 observations about what you read.

PRINCIPLES:

Draw a few principles from the observations you made. What is God trying to teach you in this passage?

APPLICATION:

How will you apply these principles to your life? Be specific—a good application will tell who, what, and when.

DAY THREE: #nofilter

With social media and other public forums, it's easier than ever to share about ourselves. It's funny how we can feel like we are both more known and more alone than ever before. While people might learn facts about us, it doesn't necessarily mean we are a part of each other's lives. It's tempting to "filter" our true selves, perhaps to make a picture look better. Even in-person, we can put on the "I'm good" filter with family and friends when things aren't good at all.

Today, pay close attention to what you share with your friends via text, social media, or any other avenue (even face-to-face). Don't do anything differently than you would normally do; just look at what you say and the way you respond to others.

Check off all of the ways you chose to interact with people today:

- ☐ I shared information (practice schedule, homework, work, etc.).
- ☐ I shared a story about myself/my life.
- ☐ I shared someone else's story/post.
- ☐ I shared a picture...
- ☐ ...and I used a filter.
- ☐ I talked about someone else I'm frustrated with.
- ☐ I gave a one-word answer when someone asked how I was doing.
- ☐ I shared about a struggle I'm having.
- ☐ I asked someone to pray for/with me about something.

Journal your answers to the following questions:

- When was the last time you asked someone to pray for you or shared an honest problem with someone (even via technology)?
- How did that help you?
- How can your in-person interactions be like a “filter” you use in social media?
- Why does authenticity build better community?
- Name one thing you can do to change your interactions with others to build better community. *Hint: It might help to look at what types of interactions you checked off on page 9.*

DAY FOUR:

Sinners Want Their Way

“Sinners want their will to be done, and they will fight with whoever gets in their way. Consequently, sinners are much better at making war than they are at making peace, much better at hatred than they are at love. They are much better at causing division than they are at creating unity.”

PAUL DAVID TRIPP ¹

Without Jesus, we are all sinners. You might remember that verse in Romans 3 that says, “For *all* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” (emphasis added). In other words, if it were up to us, we would always want our way and do whatever it takes to get it. It’s hard to live in community when you are constantly fighting to get your own way. Think about it: when you are focused on getting what *you* want, the focus goes back on *you*. You stop worrying about the needs of others or what they want. The truth is that we are all sinners wanting what we want. It is only with Jesus’ love and power that we can get past our own selfish tendencies to work with others or care about them at all.

Look at the quote above again. Underline the point you have the hardest time accepting. Consider that quote as you answer the following questions:



Why do you think that people cause more division than unity when left to their own devices?



Have you ever had a friend who only thinks about him/herself? Write down how you have felt hanging around with him/her:



Now think about a good friend who makes you feel cared for. How is this friend different from the one who only thinks about him/herself?



Which one do you prefer spending time with and why?



How can you be the kind of friend who creates peace and unity?

DAY FIVE:

Stop Squabbling

Imagine you used to be a slave, but then God miraculously split a sea in half so you and your entire community could run across to the other side. On top of that, God has promised to take you to a land of plenty. Your community sends 12 guys ahead to make sure God is telling the truth about this place. They come back and say, “Yes, it is beyond amazing!” Most of them also say, “But the people living there are scary giants. We should just give up and go back to being slaves.” Two guys disagree, saying, “God *promised* us this land. We can do this with God on our side.” This leads to a huge fight. Fear takes over. People lose faith in who God is. It’s a crazy scene that breaks community apart. What would you do?

Study this passage from **Numbers 13:25-14:12**, using the **SPECK** method outlined below. The acronym SPECK is simply a way to help you remember this Bible study technique so you can use it to learn from other passages later.



SINS TO AVOID

Make a list of any sins—wrong actions, attitudes, or thoughts—mentioned in the passage.



PROMISES TO CLAIM

Make a list of the promises in this passage. Promises give us confidence when we doubt God or face difficult times.



EXAMPLES TO FOLLOW

What examples do you find in the passage? Is there a right way of thinking or acting described in the passage that you should take as an example for your life?



COMMANDS TO OBEY

Write out all the commands you find. If a passage encourages you to take a certain action, take it as a command and write it down.



KNOWLEDGE OF GOD TO APPLY

What does the passage tell you about God that you can apply to your daily life? God's character shines throughout Scripture.

DAY SIX:

We Weren't Meant to Be Alone

Busyness. School. Life. Sometimes we can go through our days and never really take the time to be part of a community. However, one of the first things God said to the first person he created was that it wasn't good that he was alone (Gen. 2:18). God went on to tell Adam that he needed someone there to walk through life with. He needed community. Community is what we all need, but it feels risky to be vulnerable in a world that so often focuses on appearances. Just being with a group of people doesn't necessarily mean that we feel like we belong and can open up, so we often wait for others to make the first move and come to us. The trouble is that if we all did that, no one would ever make a move. Your challenge today is to take the first step toward community by opening up with someone and being vulnerable. It may feel awkward, but being in community is worth it. Do at least two of these things in the next two days:

- Sit with a friend at lunch and have an intentionally deeper conversation than usual.
- Text a friend to ask how you can pray for him/her today.
- Contact a friend to ask how things are going in his/her life right now.
- Connect with a friend to explain that you have been thinking about this idea of community. Then ask what he/she thinks it means.
- Talk to a friend about struggles you have with God. Then ask if you can pray together about these struggles.
- Text a friend to ask if there is anything you can do to help him/her today. Then do it.

Once you have completed two challenges, journal here about how it felt—why and how these steps might help build a greater sense of community.

CHALLENGE 1:

CHALLENGE 2:



Disciples of Christ live in community, willing to carry each other's burdens. (Gal. 6:2)



day seven

SABBATH

Have you ever heard someone refer to Sunday as the Sabbath? That means it's our day of rest. So today, that's your challenge. Rest! Reflect on what you've learned so far, the challenges you did, or Bible verses that stuck out to you. Spend some time praying and talking with God. Recharge your batteries and refresh your mind. Then come back tomorrow ready to go deeper.

*"And on the seventh day God
finished his work that he had done,
and he rested on the seventh day
from all his work that he had done."*

GENESIS 2:2