

1: Christian Community Just Between Us

Transformation is an ever changing process that shapes the life of a Christian, a congregation, and a city. Transformation begins in the life of an individual person (man, woman, boy, or girl) who becomes a Christian.

Disciples Called To Witness: As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. A Christian life lived with charity and faith is the most effective form of evangelization. Evangelization testifies to the transformative power of the Gospel and the mission of the Church to sanctify society, hand on the faith to future generations, strengthen the faith of her members, and renew the faith of those who have slipped away from the Church: It is therefore primarily by her conduct and by her life that the Church will evangelize the world, in other words, by her living witness of fidelity to the Lord Jesus - the witness of poverty and detachment, of freedom in the face of the powers of this world, in short, the witness of sanctity. The witness of Christians, whose lives are filled with the hope of Christ, opens the hearts and minds of those around them to Christ. This openness to Christ is a moment of conversion metanoia. In the National Directory for Catechesis, the Catholic bishops of the United States have provided catechetical methodologies that foster and sustain an evangelizing culture of witness. Methodologies Catechetical methodologies are based on the proclamation of the faith from Sacred Scripture and Tradition and their application to human experience, or they are based on human experience examined in light of the Gospel and teachings of the Church. For these methodologies and the programs based on them to be effective, they must be grounded in witness to the Gospel. This section explores the following methodologies: Being a disciple is a challenge. Fortunately, one does not become a disciple of Christ on his or her own initiative. The work of the Holy Spirit within the Christian community forms the person as a disciple of Christ. One seeking to learn how to be a disciple of Christ does so through apprenticeship. Those seeking to return to the faith are seeking to live a life of discipleship, to follow in the footsteps of Christ. To those seeking answers to the increasing secularization, individualism, and materialism of society, a Christian life provides a powerful witness to the Gospel. Additionally, the works of charity and justice as well as the promotion of solidarity, justice, peace, and stewardship of creation build up the Kingdom of God. Social justice and direct service opportunities provide powerful experiences with the person of Jesus, especially for adolescents and young adults. Service, when understood as serving Christ in others and as a means to share the Gospel, has the ability to bring the server and the one being served closer to Christ. It is in the parish that one becomes engaged with the Church community, learns how to become a disciple of Christ, is nurtured by Scripture, is nourished by the sacraments, and ultimately becomes an evangelizer. Successful evangelization and catechetical initiatives must be focused on the parish and parish life. The parish is where the faith is passed down, lived, and sustained for all members of the Body of Christ, most especially for those members seeking to return. Popular Devotions and Piety The active participation and practice of the liturgy, prayers, devotions, and popular piety of the Church provide a powerful witness to the faith. By participating in Mass, learning common prayers, and practicing devotions, a person appropriates the teachings of the faith. The use of gospel music by the African American community and liturgical movement by the black community should be fostered. The rich traditions of prayers, liturgy, and devotions such as Akathistos, Paraklesis, and Molebens of our Eastern Catholic Churches are a great grace and blessing. The desire of returning Catholics to reconnect with their cultural devotional practices should be encouraged and fostered, as it presents an opportunity to invite them into a prayerful relationship with God. The Christian Family A culture of witness is sustained within the Church through marriage and the family. The communal relationship that exists between and among the three Persons of the Trinity is the model for Christian marriage, 43 and through the Sacrament of Matrimony, married love actually participates in Trinitarian love. It is within the Sacrament of Matrimony that the husband and wife evangelize, become evangelized, and share their witness of the faith to their children and to society. The family founded on the Sacrament of Matrimony is a particular realization of the Church, saved and saving,

evangelized and evangelizing community. Their shared wisdom and experience often constitute a compelling Christian witness. Catechists, together with the pastors of the Church, are entrusted with the duties of teaching the faith, overseeing sacramental preparation, supporting the formation of consciences, and developing a love of prayer in those they catechize. Additionally, Catholic schools and their teachers are witnesses to the faith. For over one hundred years, the Catholic school system in America has prepared generations of disciples in this country and been a powerful evangelizing presence. A vibrant Catholic identity and active promotion of gospel values in Catholic schools help foster future generations of disciples and evangelists. Religious Experience Discipleship is rooted in human experience. It is through human experience that one enters into a dialogue with modern culture. These concrete actions of the Holy Spirit are numerous. Some common examples are retreats, direct service opportunities, parish prayer groups, Bible study programs, and involvement in the ecclesial movements. It is through the prompting of the Holy Spirit that one comes to understand the Good News of the Gospel. Catechesis helps them relate the Christian message to the most profound questions in life: The first methodology is deductive, while the second is inductive. For a detailed examination of these two methods, please see NDC, no.

2: 7 Awesome Christian Songs about Encouraging One Another

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Its capital was Carthage. We may think of Rome as the center of the Roman Empire. But while many roads of culture and society met in Rome, many also ran through Carthage as a major center of imperial trade. And along with all this, Carthage was the cradle of Latin theology. Raised in a pagan family, he was educated in Latin grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy—the standard curriculum for boys who wished to become lawyers or civil servants in the Roman government. Sometime in middle age he converted to Christianity and was ordained a presbyter. Tertullian was the first major theologian who wrote extensively in Latin—bringing new challenges to the theological enterprise. His earliest works defended Christian beliefs and practices that pagans often misunderstood. Ever the lawyer, Tertullian the apologist subscribed to the view that the best defense is a good offense. His treatises *To the Gentiles* and *Apology* directly attacked pagan beliefs and practices as superstitious and immoral, and argued that the Christian life as taught in Scripture and practiced in the church was morally superior. He also encouraged virgins to keep themselves veiled. He had no patience for laxity; certain moral lapses after baptism, especially adultery and murder, were for him the same as rejecting and abandoning the Christian faith, or apostatizing. Pagan reason had nothing to do with it. Pagan philosophy was filled with errors and at odds with the Gospel—how could it be used to explain the logic of Christian faith? I am not ashamed—because it is shameful. The Son of God died: He was buried, and rose again: The truth of the Gospel and the faith of the believer could not rest upon philosophical proofs. The second great North African theologian in this era was Cyprian of Carthage. He, like Tertullian, was not born into a Christian home; he converted from paganism sometime in his mid-forties and distributed some of his money to the poor. He began as an orator and teacher of rhetoric; a priest in Carthage recognized his talents and encouraged him to enter the priesthood, which he did shortly after his baptism. Not long after his ordination, he was elected bishop of Carthage. Cyprian had just been consecrated when a great crisis arose. But for Christians, to offer sacrifices—sprinkling incense before a statue of the god or goddess—was idolatry. In fact, it was apostasy, the denial or betrayal of Christ. Some Christians refused to perform the sacrifice and were imprisoned or executed. Instead of facing martyrdom, Cyprian went into hiding and directed church affairs in secret through letters. Some priests believed that performing sacrifices could never be forgiven. Others were willing to accept their repentance and take the lapsed back into communion. One priest, Novatus, who had refused to sacrifice and was therefore imprisoned, claimed that his endurance of persecution had gained him authority to forgive the lapsed. Novatus and his fellow confessors refused to wait for Cyprian and began issuing letters of pardon to the lapsed. This threatened to divide the North African church. In the Easter season of , a council finally met at Carthage. This speech survives and is known as *On the Unity of the Catholic Church*. Cyprian argued that, although the devil wages external war on the church through persecution, the more dangerous threat comes from the deceptive war he wages through heresy and schism. The question of forgiveness for the lapsed must take a back seat to the greater problem of division. Although made up of many individual congregations, the church is one, and Cyprian compared it to many beams of light from one sun: How could one identify the one true church? The answer for Cyprian was the doctrine of apostolic succession. Cyprian argued that the authority to forgive sins, preach the Gospel, and govern the church given to a bishop at ordination was ultimately derived from Christ and the apostles. Since Christ gave the authority to forgive sins to Peter and the other apostles, the only bishops who had that authority were those who received it in a line of succession passed from the apostles. Those people who claimed to be bishops but did not receive this authority do not in fact have the power to forgive sins. You cannot have God for your father unless you have the Church for your mother. For he who has not been ordained in the Church can neither have nor hold to the Church in any way. The lapsed were to be allowed

back into communion if they sincerely repented, though at first those who had participated in heathen sacrifices were only allowed back at the point of death, and lapsed clergy were not allowed to resume their functions. In the persecution resumed. This time Cyprian did not go into hiding. When he and other clergy refused to sacrifice, the emperor Valerian threatened them with execution. Just like Tertullian and Cyprian, Augustine had to confront disputes about the purity and unity of the church. The controversy rocking the church of his era was the Donatist schism. By Catholic Christianity was the minority church in North Africa. In the majority was a faction called the Donatists. Under the Great Persecution " , Emperor Diocletian " had ordered clergy to hand over Bibles and other sacred books to be burned. Then the persecution ended, and the traditores wished to continue functioning as priests. The church now faced a troubling question: Does the effect of the sacraments depend on the moral purity of the priest? The North African church split. Some followed the priest Donatus, from whom the movement took its name. He insisted that the purity of the church depended on the purity of its priests and bishops. He considered baptism or Eucharist performed by a morally impure priest invalid, and he included apostasy in that impurity. He even went so far as to sanction measures by the state to suppress the Donatists particularly a violent sect known as the Circumcellians. Beginning in , Augustine also launched a theological attack on the Donatists. Therefore, sacraments performed in the name of the Trinity and using the proper form are valid regardless of the character of the presider. Ironically, the very act of schism was, for Augustine, a sign of the absence of the Holy Spirit from the Donatists. For Augustine, schism was completely antithetical to the love of God, and the Donatists were anti-Christians who undermined the church by promoting division. Rather Christians must remain united and love one another in spite of their differences until the differences are resolved. Thus the love of the Spirit would preserve harmony within the community of believers. They made the same confession of faith in Christ and the Trinity. They had the same sacraments and read the same Scriptures. So why, Augustine asked, should they separate? He claimed that the Donatists must have lacked a patient and forbearing love for those who did not conform to their ideal of holiness. And in lacking love for fellow sinners, they showed that they lacked the love given by the Holy Spirit. Augustine claimed that true believers and followers of Christ would not leave the church. Augustine derived this claim from his interpretation of two verses in 1 John: How can we be born of God so as to be without sin, and yet be lying if we claim to have no sin? Augustine said that, although Christians fall into minor sins, there is one sin that no true Christian can commit: Ultimately in June a council of bishops met at Carthage to resolve the controversy. The Donatists were forced into union with the Catholics. Yet Augustine and his North African brethren remind us that the early Christians saw the church as intended by God to be one. Its unity comes from a common confession of faith, maintained by a mutual love. The ideal of being the church is about a way of loving God and neighbor that resists, even in the face of great difference, the willful impulse of schism.

3: What is a Christian? True Meaning of Following Jesus Christ

Trying to fulfill these "one another" commands helps to reveal our sin, drives us to Jesus in repentance and faith, and causes us to depend on the Holy Spirit for transformation. Community is the laboratory in which we learn to rely on God's grace and experience the gospel's transforming power.

What does it mean to love one another? As I have loved you, so you must love one another. How do we do this? A distinguishing mark of being a follower of Christ is a deep, sincere love for brothers and sisters in Christ. The apostle John reminds us of this fact elsewhere: In giving this command, Jesus did something the world had never seen before—He created a group identified by one thing: There are many groups in the world, and they identify themselves in any number of ways: One group has tattoos and piercings; another group abstains from meat; yet another group wears fezzes—the ways people categorize themselves are endless. But the church is unique. For the first and only time in history, Jesus created a group whose identifying factor is love. There are no rules about diet or uniforms or wearing funny hats. Followers of Christ are identified by their love for each other. The early church demonstrated the type of love Jesus was talking about. There were people in Jerusalem from all over the known world Acts 2: This was love in action, and you can be sure it made an impression on the people of that city. First, how does Jesus love? He loves unconditionally Romans 5: Believers are to love each other like that. Second, how then can the believer in Christ love as Christ loved? The believer in Christ has the Holy Spirit living within him 1 Corinthians 6: By obeying the Spirit, through the Word of God, the believer can love like Christ does. He also shows the love of Christ to friends, to family members, to coworkers, etc. To love like that, there must be a change of heart. A person must realize that he is a sinner before God and understand that Christ died on the cross and rose again to provide him forgiveness; then he must make the decision to accept Christ as his personal Savior. In Christ he knows that he is genuinely loved by God. The new life the believer receives includes a new capacity to love like Christ loves, for the believer now has living within him the unconditional, sacrificial, forgiving, eternal, and holy love of God Romans 5: To love one another is to love fellow believers as Christ loves us.

4: A Model of Spiritual Transformation | www.enganchecubano.com

As I have loved you, so you must love one another. John By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. Romans Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.

Transforming the Life of a Christian Transformation is also a process that involves a "paradigm shift" - changes in the way we think and act. Sometimes this "shift" is known as "seasons" in our life when changes occur in our motivation, interests, and activities. The word paradigm comes from the Greek word paradeigmia which means "pattern" or "example," from the word paradeiknunai meaning "demonstrate. These patterns paradigms govern our lives and direct our actions. Our paradigms also result from the relationships that impact our lives and the influences of our culture. Paradigms are also influenced by our objective and subjective perception of reality. Objective perception is what we see based upon facts that can be verified. Subjective perception is how we see perceive it based upon personal interpretations, values, and judgments. When our most fundamental assumptions are shaken leading us to an entirely different ways of looking at things, then we experience a "paradigm shift," an often radical change of paradigms. In many ways becoming a Christian is a paradigm shift, where everything we once accepted as real, true, and important is called into question by the claims of Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Bible. As Christians we experience a "paradigm shift" or radical change in our thinking and our behavior. The Apostle Paul encourages us to follow through with these "paradigm shifts," which lead us into a transformation process that changes our lives for Christ. In terms of our thinking Paul says, Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Instead, fix your attention on God. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you Romans We can help empower transformation in the life of a Christian. The transformational tools we use include: Also included are Spiritual Gifts and Personality Profiles. We may ignore it, but we cannot evade it. Our risen Christ left this legacy - the magna charta of the church. He provided both the model and the method. His life - and death - recast the lives of men. He demonstrated that you have not done anything until you have changed the lives of men. Much of the feverish and frustrating activity of the contemporary church is devoid of relevance and fulfillment. Entertainment, not education, is our program. They are looking for an involvement with eternal bite. There are no short-cuts to making disciples. Unfortunately, many churches for whatever reasons have fallen short in their efforts to transform the lives of Christian into fully devoted disciples of Jesus Christ. Transformation is an "intentional process" that requires much investment in the building of solid relationships. Consider the following illustration. The vertical dimension of the cross represents our relationship with God; the horizontal dimension represents our relationship with people. Where these two intersect is the "heart" of the gospel. Both are just as important as the other. Christianity is all about right relationships, both with God and with people. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself Matthew By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another John John the Apostle said: My dear, dear friends, if God loved us like this, we certainly ought to love each other. No one has seen God, ever. But if we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and his love becomes complete in us - perfect love 1 John 4:

5: How to Love One Another Even Other Christians

Serve one another and submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. This list just scratches the surface, but it is enough to remind us that we need the community of faith to grow up in Christ. Christian community is the place of our continuing conversion.

At the mere mention of the word community, people often eye you as if you had dropped in from another world, smile tolerantly, and hope you change the subject. Good, sensible, Christian people. Or that they have to abandon their fertilized lawns and move to the inner city. The idea of community is, in a sense, from another world, a world very unlike our own. But it is neither from the world of communes in Vermont nor from the placid world of cookies and tea Christians share before they rush back to their isolated lives. Community is from the world as God wants it to be. It is the gift of a rich and challenging life together, one that we need and can receive with joy. Christian community is simply sharing a common life in Christ. It moves us beyond the self-interested isolation of private lives and beyond the superficial social contacts that pass for "Christian fellowship. We know all too well that maturity takes time. We know less well that it also takes our sisters and brothers in Christ. Love one another, forgive each other, regard each other more highly than yourselves. Be friends with one another, kind, compassionate, and generous in hospitality. Serve one another and submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. This list just scratches the surface, but it is enough to remind us that we need the community of faith to grow up in Christ. Christian community is the place of our continuing conversion. Its goal is that, individually and together, we should become mature, no longer knocked around by clever religious hucksters, but able to stand tall and straight, embodying the very "fullness of Christ" Eph. When I confess my sin and they forgive me, I know that God forgives me, too. When they pray for my brokenness, I know that they are sharing in the healing work of Jesus. In our dog-eat-dog, enemies-with-their-teeth-bared world, when we feel the crush of hostility and of our own failures, to have our Christian community surround us with compassion and encouragement lightens our loads, strengthens us, and gives us the courage to keep on trying. A Source Of Accountability and Guidance The community also furthers our continuing conversion by being a place where we teach each other and hold ourselves accountable to each other. When I hear what God is teaching others, it teaches me, too. When I submit to the guidance and scrutiny of my brothers and sisters, it forces me to grow and to be accountable to the commitments I make. Ignoring this powerful element is one of the main reasons many small groups never really experience Christian community. They prefer to remain superficial. Inadvertently, perhaps, they enter into a pact of mediocrity in which they tacitly agree to let all the members "mind their own business" and not to hold people accountable either to each other or to the teachings of Christ. I tend to overfill my calendar with activities, projects, and meetings, a flaw that, for me, has spiritual roots. When I began work on my first book, I took the idea to a group of trusted Christian friends who knew about my weakness. We had a wonderful and terrible meeting. After listening to me for a while, they said they thought God wanted me to write the book. They also asked to see my appointment calendar. I took their counsel, although giving up some of those plans made me heartsick. I also sent each of them a schedule of my "writing days" as a further step toward accountability. It is clear now though I knew it then that they were right. If I had failed to submit to their wisdom under God, that book would still be merely a few notes in a manila folder. It works, instead, to encourage us and help us in our growth and commitments. We may ask for guidance about how to handle a difficult relationship on the job or about how to put together a family budget that reflects our commitments about lifestyle and giving. The community gives us a place to air our growth and our struggles, our successes and failures. It simply gives us a way of guiding each other ever more fully in the ways of Christ. Both by instruction and by example, the New Testament teaches us to pray and to pray for one another Eph. We are called as well to a life of worship and praise. Yet, frankly, our experiences of prayer and worship in the church often shunt us toward merely watching others pray and take active roles in worship. We need a lab. We ourselves need to pray for each

other. Each of us needs to be prayed for personally. And the small community is precisely the place where we can experiment and learn the life of prayer. When I am not involved in a Christian community, it is the times of prayer and worship that I miss the most. Many of us are never really prayed for beyond a brief mention in one of those quick-and-dirty list prayers. I once privately offered a simple prayer of blessing for a friend who had been in public ministry for many years. I was overwhelmed when he said to me afterward, "No one has ever prayed for me like that before. Similarly, as we learn the ways of worship in the small community, we not only deepen our own lives but also enrich the life of public worship. In my experience, community is at its best when it becomes a workshop for prayer and worship. A Place To Serve The community is also where we learn to strip away our self-interest in order to serve others. It is here that we learn to share what God has given us, whether it be goods or spiritual gifts. It is also here that we learn to be served, though we are sometimes prideful and reluctant like Peter, who balked at Jesus washing his feet Jn. Sometimes we are the washers and sometimes the washees, but in many ordinary ways we can learn what submission and service mean. One community I know gave time and money so a mother worn down by the demands of young children could take a spiritual retreat. Others have found practical ways to swap mowers and ladders and child care; some have explored group buying to help each other grow in stewardship. In whatever ways, community means watching over one another for good, knowing that as we serve, all of us are growing stronger in Christ. Such communities, by their character and their action, witness to the power and presence of God in the world. They are models of what God wants for all of humankind. Too often, unfortunately, this beacon of witness has fallen far short in candlepower, especially where Christians have accommodated darkness rather than penetrating it. In these clusters of Christians, people should be able to see what they hope for but hardly expect: People of widely different social statuses and professions honoring each other rather than putting each other down Gal. People who tell each other and everyone else the truth, rather than lying out of convenience or cussedness Eph. They can see a people who are no longer captive to the spirit of the times. They will see love and acceptance, compassion and kindness, commodities that are in short supply in any age. And where they see this, the stark contrast of these communities compared with the world around them is itself a very compelling witness. They carry "the ministry of reconciliation" 2 Cor. That work goes forward visibly in many ways. One Christian community spends enormous energy trying to meet the plight of the homeless. Another works to rehabilitate homes of the poor and the elderly. Yet another quietly yet actively pursues a ministry of prayer and healing. And still others focus directly on evangelism, on feeding the hungry, on getting justice for the oppressed, and on much more. Function Over Form Some Christians feel that they must follow the call to community in rigorous, perhaps even radical, ways. We can thank God for the example of our brothers and sisters in communities such as Koinonia in Americus, Georgia, and Sojourners and the Church of the Savior in Washington, D. They help teach us principles that God wants for the whole Christian fellowship. Structure is not the point; relationships are. The good news is that community is a gift God offers to pour love out on us all. Getting Small Even though forms may not matter much, size does. For community to be specific and personal enough to reach its potential, we need groups small enough for everyone to be directly involved. The practice of the earliest Christians suggests a small scale. And it is clear that when Paul advised the Corinthians that "everyone" should be ready with a psalm, some instruction, or a revelation, he expected the meeting to be small enough for everyone to participate 1 Cor. The lived reality of communityâ€”in whatever form it takesâ€”holds great promise both for the Christian fellowship itself and for the world at large. For Christians it provides a place where together we can change and grow strong in following Jesus. A Call to Community The practice of Christian community, quite simply, makes the gospel a lived reality. It embodies a specific, personal way of life together in Christ. And it is necessary. When we imagine that we, as Christians and humans, can live in total independence and self-sufficiency, we are deluding ourselves. God, from the beginning, never intended that we should go through the world "alone. Without experiencing such life together, we will not discover how wonderful the news about Jesus really is. Community is not to be feared, but welcomed. The reward is to enter into life as God intended it to be lived from the beginning. How can we

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balk at an offer like that?

6: 23 Bible Verses about Community - www.enganchecubano.com

Bear one another's burdens. Accept the reality of that following God's call to bear other's burdens will be costly, inconvenient, and disruptive. Ask God to help you do so anyway.

Some picture a solitary individual meditating or praying. Three Aspects of Transformation The issue of spiritual transformation is not new in the Christian faith. It has been a primary issue, though perhaps given different labels, throughout church history. From the time the Spirit of God descended upon the believers in Jerusalem, God has been transforming the souls of individual believers in the context of local Christian communities. Nor are small-group Bible studies, personal Bible study, Sunday school classes, or even one-on-one discipleship sufficient for growing Christians when they focus solely on communicating biblical information. Three broad approaches to spiritual transformation have developed. Fellowship Model One approach is to create fellowship opportunities. Churches develop structured settings for members to build relationships with others. They may launch small groups that meet in homes. They may convert their Sunday school classes into times of social engagement. The fellowship model focuses on corporate prayer for one another, growth of interpersonal intimacy, and support for each other in times of need. This approach effectively connects believers within a church body. Spiritual Disciplines Model A second approach emphasizes disciplines such as meditation, prayer, fasting, and solitude. Such writers as Dallas Willard and Richard Foster have done excellent work on spiritual disciplines. This approach takes seriously the inner life and intimacy with God. However, when used in isolation, this approach can make people think spiritual transformation is a private matter. Even though the spiritual disciplines include communal elements worship, service, and fellowship, some people treat the private exercises silent retreats, journaling, meditating on Scripture, prayer, and fasting as primary. Counseling Model The third approach relies heavily on personal introspection. Christian counseling emphasizes areas of surrounding sin or personal character flaws that cause interpersonal problems or destructive behavior. Usually in one-on-one interaction, the counselor probes for the root issues hidden beneath the surface problem. This approach focuses on identifying and dealing with those internal obstacles that prevent spiritual growth. Dealing with the issues is a key component in spiritual transformation. The fellowship model can fail to guide believers toward growth. The spiritual disciplines model can neglect to emphasize authentic and intimate Christian community, which is necessary for growth. The counseling model can fail to value the role that spiritual disciplines can have in growth. The series tries to balance the inward and outward elements of spiritual transformation. Experiencing divine power through relationships; Striving together toward maturity in Christ. We believe a particular context is essential to the transformation process. That context is authentic community in which people come to trust each other. Though one-on-one relationships can be effective, we believe that multiple relationships are more effective. While one individual can spur another toward growth, that one individual has limited gifts and abilities. They need to see potential blind spots or obstacles to their spiritual well-being and learn to deal with the root issues beneath their areas of struggle. This process involves the transformation of the whole person in thoughts, behaviors, and styles of relating with God and others. It results in a life of service to others and witness for Christ. He is the One adored by those who experience His presence and are transformed by Him. They, in turn, seek to exalt Him in the world. And though the Spirit of God is the One who transforms souls, each individual has personal responsibility in the process. Many spiritual disciplines can contribute, yet God is primarily concerned with transforming the whole person, not just patterns of behavior. For this reason, no one method be it a traditional spiritual discipline or another method is the single critical component. Still, all small-group ministries need consistent coaching for the lay leaders. The group leaders need ministers and pastors to train and encourage them. A small-group ministry will raise all sorts of issues for leaders to deal with as people become honest about their lives in a trusting community. Another may feel discouraged when group members drop out. Still another may wonder how to deal with two group members who are consistently angry with each

other. Knowing how to do personal Bible study and how to share Christ with others are praiseworthy skills. Developing these skills, however, is not the end goal but the means by which we live out who we are as new creatures in Christ. This series proposes that the Christian life involves: Identity To understand our need for transformation, we must understand who we are currently, both as individuals and as members of the body of Christ. Who we are has undoubtedly been shaped by our past. Therefore, we explore various aspects of our identity, such as our heritage and temperament. What do these tell us about who we are and what we value? The interaction during this study bonds us and builds trust among us. Our goal is not to analyze, criticize, or control each other, but it is to grow and affirm what God is doing in and through one another. In Identity, we ultimately want group members to see themselves in light of their identity in Christ. However, many of the values we actually live out stem from such influences as temperament, family background, and culture. Not all of those values are contrary to our new identity in Christ. For example, the value one person places on honesty, which he learned from his parents, is affirmed by his identity in Christ. It can take a long timeâ€”more than a lifetime allowsâ€”for the Spirit of God to transform our values to line up with our new identity in Christ. We cooperate with the Spirit when we reflect on what our values are and how well they line up with our identity in Christ as described in Scripture. One of the most significant characteristics of our identity in Christ is that we are now part of the body of Christ. The Christian life cannot be lived in isolation. Community So, while talking about my place in Christ, I need to pay attention to our place in Christ as a community. Understanding our corporate identity in Christ is crucial for a healthy community transformation process. The Community study helps a group not only understand how a Christian community develops but also experience a growing sense of community. In order to experience intimate community in the biblical sense, we must learn to reveal ourselves to others. We need to honestly, freely, and thoughtfully tell our stories. Our modern culture makes it easy for people to live isolated and anonymous lives. However, we desperately need to keep intentionally investing in significant relationships. Rather, this lifestyle is a commitment to let God continue to spiritually form us. As people share their stories with each other, a deep level of trust and commitment grows. Integrity By the time a group has experienced Identity and Community together, members have built significant intimacy and trust. Many believers greatly underestimate the necessity of intimacy and trust for successful growth in Christian holiness. But we must be able to share honestly those areas in which we need transformation. We need others who have our best interests at heart. They must also be people we trust to hold sensitive issues in genuine confidence. Why does the pursuit of Christian holiness need to occur in community? There are at least two reasons. First, we need accountability in the areas of sin with which we struggle. When we confess our struggles to a group, we become accountable to all of the members to press on toward growth. In addition, the corporate, or group, setting increases the likelihood of support from someone else who has struggled in the same way. He or she may have different areas of struggle. In the counsel of many who care for us, there can be greater wisdom. If some believers are blind to being hospitable, the hospitality of another believer can spur them on to develop that quality in their own lives. If some never think about how to speak encouraging words, the encouraging speech of another can become contagious. Ministry With Identity, Community, and Integrity as a foundation, believers are prepared to discern how God wants them to serve in the body of Christ. Nor is this a matter simply for individual reflection. Rather, we can best discern where and how to serve while in community with people who know our past, interests, struggles, and talents. How many terrific musicians are sitting in pews every Sunday because they lack the confidence to volunteer? Those gifted people might merely need others who know them well to encourage them to serve. Session Aims states a goal for you as an individual and one for the group. Preparation tells what assignment s you need to complete ahead of time in order to get the most out of the group. Content provides material around which group discussions and exercises will focus. Conclusion wraps up the session and sets the scene for the next one. In this way, each session includes all three aspects of transformation: Through all of these means, the Spirit of God will be at work in your life. A Method for the Biblical Exercises The biblical exercises will guide you through a self-study of a passage that relates to the

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session topic. Pay attention to the following categories: Identify persons in the passage: Identify subjects in the passage:

7: See how these Christians love one another | Christian History Magazine

Since members of the Christian community are children of God and members of God's family (1 John), the love they express to one another should be like family love. It is not, of course, identical to natural family love, but it should be like it.

The group they formed was, in many ways, very different from what we know as the Church today. As a result, these early Christians brought about the most amazing and powerful transformation the world has ever known. Think about it for a minute. Christians emerged in the midst a tremendously diverse Roman melting pot of social and religious ideas, and through purely peaceful means completely changed the Empire and united it under the banner of Christianity. And they did it without a single mega-church, television program or website. They simply opened their homes, spoke the truth fearlessly and trusted God for the results. Long before Christianity became a dominant political power, it was a divine movement of God. Long before Christianity found a comfortable home in church buildings, it was an active body of passionate believers: Christians Were Bound and United By A Common Truth Early observers of the movement recognized the first believers were committed to an important objective truth claim: Jesus Christ is God Himself and the only way to enter into a personal relationship with the Creator of the Universe. This common truth and relationship to Christ became the unifying force behind the movement of God. Look at what Tertullian a church scholar who lived in North Africa c. We meet together as an assembly and congregation, that, offering up prayer to God as with united force, we may wrestle with Him in our supplications. This strong exertion God delights in. We pray, too, for the emperors, for their ministers and for all in authority, for the welfare of the world, for the prevalence of peace, for the delay of the final consummation. Christians Were Characterized by Uncommon Joy In the midst of terrible persecution and hardship, these early believers were able to stay focused on God instead of their own situation. As a result, regardless of their personal circumstances, they were able to live with joy. Read these words from unknown author of the Epistle to Diognetes written c. They are unknown and condemned; they are put to death, and restored to life. They are poor, yet make many rich; they are in lack of all things, and yet abound in all; they are dishonoured, and yet in their very dishonour are glorified. They are evil spoken of, and yet are justified; they are reviled, and bless; they are insulted, and repay the insult with honour; they do good, yet are punished as evil-doers. When punished, they rejoice as if quickened into life; they are assailed by the Jews as foreigners, and are persecuted by the Greeks; yet those who hate them are unable to assign any reason for their hatred. And if any righteous person of their number passes away from this world, they rejoice and give thanks to God and they follow his body as though he were moving from one place to another. And when a child is born to them, they praise God, and if again it chances to die in its infancy, they praise God mightily, as for one who has passed through the world without sins. Christians Were a Fearless and Animated People, Not a Passive Church Early Christians did not go to church, they were the church; they did not attend church services, they impacted their culture as the people of God. They assembled not as the end goal, but as a way to equip themselves to be the people God intended them to be and do the work God intended them to do. Listen again to Tertullian: The world took notice. As for their servants or handmaids or children, they persuade them to become Christians by the love they have for them; and when they become so, they call them without distinction, brothers. They do not worship strange gods; and they walk in all humility and kindness, and falsehood is not found among them; and they love one another. When they see the stranger they bring him to their homes and rejoice over him as over a true brother; for they do not call those who are after the flesh, but those who are in the Spirit and in God. Christians Gave Sacrificially to the Needy These early believers understood why God had given them the limited wealth they had. They did not have the burden of having to support programs or pay for a church building. Meeting in homes, and led by regular men of character, these first believers were able to pour all of their financial gifts into the care of the needy. In fact, over and over again in scripture, this is the only thing offerings were used for. On the monthly

day, if he likes, each puts in a small donation; but only if it be his pleasure, and only if he be able: Laymen of Character Led the Movement The New Testament repeatedly describes small groups of believers lead by laypeople called elders. These elders were not paid staff, but simply men of character who rose to leadership based on their passion and gifting. Look at what Tertullian observed: There is no buying and selling of any sort in the things of God. They represented something noble and pure, and were influential in their communities. Read these words from the Epistle to Diognetes c. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity. The course of conduct which they follow has not been devised by any speculation or deliberation of inquisitive men; nor do they, like some, proclaim themselves the advocates of any merely human doctrines. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers. They marry, as do all [others]; they beget children; but they do not destroy their offspring. They have a common table, but not a common bed. They are in the flesh, but they do not live after the flesh. They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives. The soul is dispersed through all the members of the body, and Christians are scattered through all the cities of the world. The soul dwells in the body, yet is not of the body; and Christians dwell in the world, yet are not of the world. The invisible soul is guarded by the visible body, and Christians are known indeed to be in the world, but their godliness remains invisible. The flesh hates the soul, and wars against it, though itself suffering no injury, because it is prevented from enjoying pleasures; the world also hates the Christians, though in nowise injured, because they abjure pleasures. The soul loves the flesh that hates it, and [loves also] the members; Christians likewise love those that hate them. The soul is imprisoned in the body, yet preserves that very body; and Christians are confined in the world as in a prison, and yet they are the preservers of the world. The immortal soul dwells in a mortal tabernacle; and Christians dwell as sojourners in corruptible [bodies], looking for an incorruptible dwelling in the heavens. The soul, when but ill-provided with food and drink, becomes better; in like manner, the Christians, though subjected day by day to punishment, increase the more in number. God has assigned them this illustrious position, which it were unlawful for them to forsake. From the Apology of Aristides: Clearly the early believers were living their faith, and not merely going to church. In fact, there was no institutional church to go to, even if they wanted to. Yet the movement was impossible to stop, and it eventually encompassed the known world. Where did these early believers come up with this notion of the Christian life that is not dependent on buildings, paid staff, or programs? They got the model from their predecessors as described in the scriptures: And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. The first community of saints reflected the power and design of God in their lives as a family of believers. This early history of the church simply reflected the teaching of the Bible as it recorded the nature and essence of the very first community of saints in this passage in the Book of Acts.

8: Harvard Christian Impact

While one individual can spur another toward growth, that one individual has limited gifts and abilities. Also, though we value the spiritual disciplines, we see them as means toward the end of complete transformation of the believer's inner and outer life.

9: St John's Anglican Church Greenwood – Know God, Love one another, Disciple others

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Rather Christians must remain united and love one another in spite of their differences until the differences are resolved. Thus the love of the Spirit would preserve harmony within the community of believers.

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The Prestige Press and the Christmas Bombing, 1972 Memoirs concerning the ancient alliance between the French and Scots Proposed soldiers home, near Denver, Colo. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH : drug company ad What Is Cultural Conditioning? Interview with Charles Burnett Michel Cieutat and Michel Ciment/1990 I. Ionian science before Socrates. Human Aggression (Perspectives in Social Psychology) Soviet power, the continuing challenge RECONSTRUCTIONS: The Space of Women in the Works of Paz and Adelaida Paterno Hp fax 1010 manual Rivers of a Wounded Heart Engineering draughtsman. Economic institutions compared Are you having sex for fun and babies? Ciceros three books touching the nature of the gods An Introduction to Ear Disease Ralph sarchie beware the night Grange of Illinois. The Australian Defence Force reserves The far and the deep. Poems of Ella Wheeler Wilcox Percy Blandfords complete outdoor buildings book 5. Christians and psychotherapy Nassau County Ny Atlas A whole-body dentists initial exam Dream Master Gladiator The practice of history Report on alleged exodus to western United States at Port Huron Australian sketches made on tour. The road through wonderland The Modern Civil Aircraft Guide Marketing management russ winer and ravi dhar 4th edition Introduction. Towards thinking about sensation in Tudor religion Marketing questions for bank exams Architecture of Bhoslas of Nagpur Helping individuals, families, and groups with stressful life transitions and traumatic events Innovation and entrepreneurship wiley 3rd edition Indian books to Catherine the Queen.