

40 Days of Community
SERVING TOGETHER
October 16, 2005
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[intro slide] Welcome today to our continuation of the 40 days of community. Over the past four weeks, we've been looking at the fact that God has a purpose for your life and my life. Not only that God has a purpose, but that God has 5 purposes for your life. And here's the real point of all of this...you were never meant to live out God's purposes for your life by yourself!

We were made for community! We were made for fellowship. We were made for relationship. It's the way God wired us, and God doesn't want you to go through life by yourself. Whether you ever marry or not is irrelevant, what matters is you need people in your life for deep significant relationships. It is through these relationships that God wants to work in your life!

And so, we've looked at how we worship together, how we fellowship together. We've looked at growing together. We've looked at reaching out together. And today, I want us to look at serving together.

And over the past four weeks, we've looked at how God says, "I created you for a purpose, but those purposes cannot be fulfilled on your own." You have to have other people in your life to do it.

Basically, it comes down to this: **[slide] God has designed us to be on a TEAM.** Living the Christian life is a team oriented life, not a solo event. God did not design us to be lone rangers. Rugged individualism does not promote God's kingdom or spread God's love. Real, authentic community does. It's all about the relationship! Our relationships with God and with one another.

I have heard the statement, "nothing is as lonely as having something to share and no one to share it with." I can adapt that statement in lots of ways, and I think the sentiment is still true... *Nothing is so lonely as having something to celebrate...a hardship to endure...and having no one.*

That's why Jesus wants us to be on a team. He spent the bulk of his ministry developing a team to carry out his mission. They in turn, went into the world to share the good news of his resurrection, and how did they do it? They built more teams. They went out in teams, and then they built communities of faith.

They lived out something that we probably know in our heads, but haven't quite lived out, and that's that we need each other. Listen to what the Bible says in Romans 12, **[slide] – "Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of Christ's body."**

Think about this for a minute. God is telling us, "I want you to work together because really, nobody's got it all together." We all have weaknesses. We all have strengths, and God equally divided the strengths so that we would need each other. And he wired the universe that way so that nobody is totally self sufficient.

In this passage, the Bible compares the church to a body, the body of Christ. And he says, “You know, we’re all different parts.” Some of you are the hand in the body of Christ. Some of you are the foot, the eye and the ear and the nose; lots of us want to be the mouth. But the fact is we all are a part of it...we are all on the team, and disconnected from God’s family, we don’t have a whole lot of relevance. It’s all about being part of the team.

A funny thing about teams, you need a lot of different skills and abilities and personalities to make up a good team. And being on a team helps us accomplish more than we ever could on our own!

I played on lots of teams growing up. Some very successful and others not so much. The best team I was ever on, however, wasn’t in sports, it was in music. I was always a jock-wanna be, but in the end, I became a band-geek! But this was one awesome band, and it was a great team! It made me feel connected to something much larger than myself.

40 Days of Community has been about building teams...many of you have joined one of the small groups we formed just for this 40 days. Many others were already part of groups or ministry teams that already were your teams. And today, to offer another way of being on a team, we’re hosting a ministry fair in the lobby. What we invite you to do is go out there and find a place where you can serve, as a part of a team.

This is important, because “**Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of Christ’s body.**” Jesus calls us to be on the team, his team, where we will find meaning and purpose.

So what does it take to build a team? Well, that’s what we’re going to look at today. What does it take to build a team? And you can apply this. I’m so excited because you can apply this in so many ways.

If you got a group of friends and you want to turn them into a team of friends, you do four things. If you’ve got a marriage or a family and you want to build it into a strong team, you do four things. If you want to turn your office or where you work into a real team spirit, you do four things. If you want to take your small group and you want to make it more effective and draw everybody closer, you do four things.

And we’re going to look at those four things; and just for fun, I put them in an acrostic ‘TEAM’.

First, it takes [slide] **TRUST**.

On teams, each person has a role, a responsibility. Good teams develop trust in each other. So this mean two things...first, we need to be trustworthy people. Being a trustworthy person means being reliable, confidential, and relational. This makes sense, right? I mean, would you want me on your team if I am not reliable, if I don’t keep confidences, and if I remain aloof from my teammates? Of course not, it’d be like inviting the plague into your business!

So being a trustworthy person is one part of this. The other part is entrusting others with responsibility. To build a team, you must trust others with responsibility. You can’t do it all yourself! You have to spread responsibility around. If you go home today and you watch a game on TV, you know that a quarterback cannot pass to himself. And if the team is going to win, the quarterback has to pass the ball to somebody else, or he has to hand it off to somebody

else. The number of times that the quarterback actually gets to score are very, very few. And when he does, he's got a team full of blockers to thank! Most of the time, he is simply handing it off to somebody else.

Whether your team is your small group, your ministry team, your vocational team, or your team at home, the question is, who do you need to hand off to in your group? What do you need to hand off to them? It will help you develop greater trust on your team.

For those of you in small groups doing the 40 days of community, let me suggest that you share responsibilities. Different people take turns leading the discussion, or parts of the discussion. Others take responsibility for organizing your project, or whatever. Share responsibility and be trustworthy.

Ok, so we have trust, next step in building teams, [slide] **EMPATHY.**

It takes not only trust but it takes empathy to build a team and First Peter 3:8 from the Bible says this, [SLIDE] ***“Live in harmony with one another. Be sympathetic.”*** Now you can't have the first part until you've got the second. You're never going to have harmony with your friends, with your wife, your husband, your boyfriend, your girlfriend, the people you work with, the people you go to school with. You're never going to have harmony until you've got the second thing, sympathy. Sympathy creates harmony.

Now everybody needs empathy for two reasons. It meets two fundamental needs in your life:

First, everybody has a need to be understood. Everyone wants somebody in their life who goes, “I get you. I understand you. I know where you're coming from.” We all have a deep need to be understood.

And second, everyone has a deep need to have their feelings validated. You need somebody in your life who goes, “You're not weird. You're okay. I've been there. I've had that. You're not going crazy. I wanted to send my kids to military school too.” You know, stuff like that. Somebody who validates the frustrations, the feelings, the fears, the fatigue, the failures that you experience in life. That's what empathy does.

Now if you're going to build a team, at work, school, wherever, you can build empathy into your team by taking the time to do things that help people feel understood and validated.

Some of you discovered the power of empathy on Saturday with Hearts and Hammers project. The most powerful ministry we did that day was not the projects of painting, roofing, yard work, etc. The most powerful ministry we did that day was listening to, understanding and validating people. I have heard stories from several sites, but I want to share one from my site.

I watched with great joy as a few people from our team had long conversations with our homeowner. And in their listening, they discovered her love for plants, and her desire to have some plants that were in pots planted into the soil. So they took the time to put those plants where she wanted them, and I listened as they shared life stories with each other. Later, I asked our homeowner how it made her feel for those people to do all that for her. She said it

made her feel important! Listening and responding with love, that validates people. That's empathy.

OK, so trust, empathy, and **[slide] ACCOMMODATION.**

What do I mean by accommodation? I mean, making room. Making room for people in your life. Making room for their differences, their needs, their ideas, their faults, their personalities. Making space in your busy life for others....that's accommodation.

I don't know how long ago, but some years ago, the team that is Saint Paul's decided that there wasn't enough room for people and that we needed to make space for others to be in this church. So first we started a new worship time and asked team members to go to a new service, and they did! Not only did we start a new service, we adapted our worship style to help those who didn't have any previous tradition of church feel at home. Then we needed to build more physical rooms, so we asked the team to pay for making new space for new people. And they did! And then, even in the new space, we had to create new worship times and ask people to go there and make room for others....and you did! What a great team! And Saint Paul's will continue to do whatever it takes to make room for others.

What will accommodation look like in your small group, or your ministry team? Well, it's going to mean that people will be willing to leave their cozy, friendly small group to help start a new one to accommodate new people! One way to keep accommodation before your group is to always keep an open chair in your group setting. It could mean that your ministry team finds new ways to divide tasks, and invites others to get involved, giving ministry away instead of staking a claim of ownership on it. Bottom line is this: it means that WE are willing to make changes and adjustments for others, not the other way around.

This is what Paul meant when he wrote in Romans 15: **[slide] Each one of us needs to look after the good of the people around us, asking ourselves, 'How can I help?'**

So to build your team, open up more space in your life for your family team, your vocational team, your ministry team, or your small group?

The last step, **[slide] MISSION.** Teams aren't created just to exist for themselves. They have to have a purpose. They have to have a cause. They have to have a mission. They are trying to accomplish something together. That's what makes a team a team. It's not just a little get together bless me clique where we contemplate the body's necessity for ear wax. No. It's for a purpose.

The Bible says in Philippians 2 verse 2, **[slide] "Be of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose."** What we are trying to build here at Saint Paul's is a church that is united in it's spirit and purpose. We're doing that by building teams who are living out our mission of leading people to an active faith in Jesus Christ. And we believe that an active faith in Jesus Christ means people living out the five purposes we are talking about right now...worship, fellowship, growth in Christ, Reaching out, and Serving...and doing it all with others. We are better together.

And the way we plan to fulfill the passage from Philippians 2 **[still on screen]** of maintaining love, united in spirit and intent on one purpose is to for our church to be a team of people living

out our mission in teams. A team of teams. It's kind of like the Redwood trees, the tallest trees in the world that can grow up to 500 feet tall. They always grow in groves, never alone. Why? Because they have shallow roots, but they intertwine their roots and they hold each other up.

And that's a picture of community. That is a perfect picture of fellowship, or teamwork, of what God wants the church to be, or what God wants your small group to be. We are a network. This is a large church, but we are a network of small groups that hold each other up. And no matter what happens, there is that intertwining. There is that common mission that holds us together so we can hold each other up.

So Jesus' plan is that we do life together. That we live out Christian life in teams. That we serve as a body. Did you know that Jesus said, "You will do greater things than I."? He said that to his disciples...and the you is plural. What he's saying is "You all, my team, my church, You all – together – will do even greater things..."

Powerful things happen when we serve God by serving others, even when we do it as individuals. But I am even more amazed at what God accomplishes when we serve together, in teams.

We have plenty of examples here in our own church. The outreach ministry of the Salvage Yard grew out of a small group that was born during the 40 days of purpose campaign. That team has nurtured this vision into reality. That vision was too big for one person to carry it.

Some small groups during this 40 days are doing some amazing things: from visiting and entertaining at nursing homes to cooking gourmet meal at Lafayette House to being a supportive and encouraging force for a single parent. A couple of groups are teaming up to take on some extensive home repairs for an elderly lady. These are ministries that are beyond the scope of an individual and will all be bridges that will carry the power to connect people to God's love.

A very fascinating example of the power of serving together happened last weekend at Hearts and Hammers. A single, elderly lady named Velma just thought a group was coming to work on her house. A group from Saint Paul's, led by Larry Courtney was just going to work on her house....but a whole lot more happened. I'll let Larry and Velma take it from here.

Show video –

Isn't that amazing! Velma told me that the invitation to come to church was an unexpected gift from God! A lot of God's gifts were shared that day! Gifts of peace of mind, gifts of thankfulness and appreciation, gifts of being remembered, gifts of the company of others, and gifts of grace and love. We didn't do hearts and hammers to get someone to come to church here. That wasn't the point at all. It was just a blessing that came out of a team's willingness to serve – a blessing for Velma and for Saint Paul's.

If God is calling you to serve on a team today, we have prepared a place for you to search out what it is God may be leading you to do. We're highlighting six ministry areas that are ready to put you on the team and get you in the game; Salvage Yard, Hospitality, Facilities care and technology, Children's ministries, Student ministries and Caring Ministries. Don't just walk on

by. Stop, look around, ask questions, and join a team with a mission to serve that is much bigger than you.