Community: If you could go back in time and witness one event in history, what would it be?

Why does community matter in the Christian life? Can a person be a faithful Christian without the church?

Community matters for several of the reasons mentioned in the sermon. First, Christianity is by nature a corporate faith. Hebrews 10:24-25 makes it clear that it’s a sin for Christians to habitually neglect meeting together. Second, Christian community keeps us on the right path of fleeing sin and pursuing righteousness. Third, Christian Community is a means that God uses to help us persevere in the faith. I included the word “faithful” intentionally. A person can be saved without ever being involved with a church. We are not saved by going to church. Nevertheless, in order to be a faithful Christian, we must be active in a biblical local church. This is an important distinction to make. Given the corporate nature of our faith and the dozens of “one another” passages in the Bible, we cannot live the life God intends for us to live alone.

Read Hebrews 3:12-14.

What does it mean that sin is deceitful? How can we guard against the deceitfulness of sin in our lives?

The deceitfulness of sin means that sin is tricky. Sin often appears beautiful and pleasurable in the moment when we are tempted. But what we can’t see in that moment is the consequences that will surely come. Sin has both consequences for our lives now and for eternity if we don’t repent and trust in Christ. Sin is deceptive, manipulative, and tricky, and if we aren’t careful, we will end up neck deep in something we never imagined we could do. The way that Hebrews 3:12-14 encourages us to guard against the deceitfulness of sin is to exhort one another every day. So community is huge in this. I would also add being diligent in spiritual disciplines keeps us on guard—being in the Word daily, praying, etc.

What are some practical ways that we can exhort one another every day to follow Jesus?

Encourage your group to get really practical here and commit to hold each other accountable to do the things you list here. In my sermon, I listed several ways that I think we can do this. This is a quote from my manuscript:

“This text is teaching us that we are to come along side our brothers and sisters and help them run this race together. What does exhorting one another look like in our lives?”
• It means *reminding* each other of the gospel regularly. Let the person and work of Jesus Christ be a regular topic of conversation.
• It means *warning* each other about the dangers of sin and temptation. When you see your brother or sister in a situation that can lead to sin, love them enough to warn them.
• It means *encouraging* each other when we are going through a difficult situation or struggling with sin.
• It means *worshipping* with one another regularly, both on Sunday mornings and in small groups.
• It means *instructing* one another regularly with the truth of God’s Word so that we can grow in our knowledge of God and our faith in Him.
• It means *praying* for each other regularly, both in good times and in bad. Your small groups should have time set aside in each meeting for sharing prayer requests and praying for one another. You should be daily lifting up your brothers and sisters in this church in prayer.
• It means *loving* your brothers and sisters in Christ by always seeking to do what will encourage them to pursue holiness.”

Read Psalm 32:1-5. Why is confession so difficult for us? What are the benefits of confession?

Here are some reasons I thought of. Consider these and others your group might name, and consider how you can think more biblically about confession together and counteract these.

-Pride: it hurts our ego to confess that we are messed up. We want everyone to think we have it all together, and it hurts for us to show our weakness to others. Often it is pride that holds us back from being honest about our sin.

-Fear: we often think, “what will this person think of me when they find out what I’ve done?” Fear keeps us from confessing because we don’t want to deal with the potential fallout of our actions.

-A lone-ranger mentality- some people think they don’t need to confess their sin to others because they think they can handle it on their own. They think can dig they can dig themselves out of the hole they are in without the help of others.

-Lack of trusted community- some don’t confess their sin because they don’t have someone in their life they trust enough to confess what’s going on.

Confession is beneficial because it brings restoration and healing in our relationships with God and with others. It clears our wounded consciences when we are under conviction of sin. Confession builds deeper relationships with our fellow believers by enabling us to relate to them. Confession strengthens our relationship with Christ as we learn to depend on Him.
Have each group member share a struggle, temptation, or sin in their life, and spend some time praying for each other.

This is an invitation for those in your group to be open. As a group leader, be prepared to start and answer this question first. I have found that my group is always willing to be more open if I model openness for them. Be sensitive to the struggles in your group, and spend some intentional time praying for one another.