The Essence of Community...

**Community** (ke-myū’ni-tē) - *Similarity or identity. Sharing, participation and fellowship.* Community . . . it can be hard to define? At Fellowship, we strongly believe in the concept of biblical community that is expressed on different levels, including small groups. When you take the three ingredients of Truth, relationship and accountability and combine them with love for God and love for people, something supernatural can take place. That’s why we work so hard to facilitate our small group ministry, which we call Community Groups. essence (ĕs’ens) *The intrinsic or indispensable properties that serve to characterize or identify something.* The essence of Community can be captured in three key words: BELONG – GROW – SERVE. When you find a place to belong, grow, and serve, you have found authentic community. Examining these essentials is helpful in understanding what community at Fellowship is all about.

**A place to (bĭ-lông’)** - *To be a part of something.* Everyone has the desire to belong. In our youth, we begin to ask ourselves “Where do I fit in? Where are people like me?” Over the course of our lives we continue to search for people to whom we can relate and places in which we can feel comfortable. We all want to be part of something bigger than ourselves. True community offers just that place ... a place to know and to be known in a real and authentic way. It is a place to develop and live with healthy relationships.

**A place to (grō)** - *To develop and reach maturity.* Healthy things grow. When we plant a tree, we expect to see it grow and mature; eventually providing fruit, shade and natural beauty. We expect children to grow into adults. The right conditions must exist for something to thrive and grow. Community is the place where we feed our souls with the Word of God and are nourished by love and acceptance from others – an intersection of Truth meets life. Add to that healthy accountability and community becomes an environment that we can grow in Christ - likeness.

**A place to (sûrv)** - *To be a servant to.* Jesus said,“He came not to be served, but to serve…” (Mark 10:45). When we find a place to belong and a place to grow, we naturally will want the opportunity to serve. Service can be as simple as helping your neighbor carry in their groceries or as involved as an on-going relationship from which you expect nothing in return. In Community, there are many opportunities to harness the power of a group to serve in ways that an individual could not. A meal for the hungry, home repairs for the elderly, yard and house work for the ill, the list goes on and on. Each time we do an act of service in the name of Jesus, He gets all the glory and glorifying Him is what we were all made for (Isaiah 43:7). Community is the place where we are able to serve one another, our neighbors and perhaps even people we will never meet, all in the name of Jesus Christ.
Establishing Community & Accountability

The Big Idea
Believers need one another in accountable relationships to pursue Christ-likeness, His mission and walk in repentance of sin.

Starter Question
What comes to your mind when you think of the word “accountability”? Share about stories you have seen or experienced of good and bad accountability.

The word “account” is taken from the Greek word logos, which means “spoken word”. In this context, it is a spoken answer or explanation for something done. Accountability means “answerable to”. We are answerable to God (Romans 14:12). It carries with it the idea of taking responsibility for, or owning up to, our actions. We must give an account. Our need for accountability is rooted in the fact that our sin nature causes us to blame others or shirk responsibility.

Main Focus

Scripture & Discussion
1. Why we need accountability:

   Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. Why are 2 better than 1 in relationships?

   *They have good reward for their toil. They can be lifted up when they fall. They keep one another warm. They can withstand an enemy together. BIG IDEA: A man/woman alone is a defenseless and helpless man/woman.*

   Read Hebrews 3:12-13. Why are we to exhort one another daily? Explain how sin can deceive someone without accountability in their life?

   *We pursue accountability to protect one another against the deception of sin. The word used in most translations is “hardened” by sin’s deceitfulness. It means to be obstinate or stubborn. We become so prideful that we do not see the callousness of our heart. We can be tricked into thinking we are okay compared to others.*

   Read Hebrews 10:24-25. What two actions are “stimulated” by meeting with one another? In verses 19-23 what is our foundational motivation meeting together for encouragement?
The Greek word used for “stimulate” in the NAS is paroxusmos. It carries with it the idea of irritation or incitement. The ESV renders the phrase “stir up”. In healthy accountability, we “irritate” one another unto actions of love and good works. The focus is not necessarily on what sins we are to avoid, but on the fruits of the Spirit we are to pursue. The finished work of Jesus in His atonement for us is the motivation for this exhortation.

Read Romans 1:11-12. Why did Paul desire to spend time with the believers in Rome? Share an example about being encouraged by the faith of someone else.

Paul longed to spend time with the believers in Rome so that he could use his spiritual gifts to strengthen them and so that they could mutually encourage one another with their faith.

Read Galatians 6:1-2. How do we help one another when caught in sin? How have you seen this in a real-life situation?

Paul says we are to 1)gently restore a brother or sister in the faith, 2)be on guard of our own temptation and 3)bear one another’s burdens.

2. What type of person/persons should we pursue for accountability?

Wise - Read Proverbs 13:20. What does it mean to “walk” with wise men/women? What is wisdom?

“Walk” means to spend time with, learn from and practice God’s commands together. Wisdom is the ability to apply the principles of God’s Word to everyday life and situations.

Honest – Read Ephesians 4:14-16. What does it mean to speak the truth in love?

We need a person in our life who is caring enough to be truthful with us for our own benefit. The context here is taking responsibility to use our gifts to build up the body of Christ by help others mature spiritually.

In verse 14 he notes why we build others up: to protect against false teaching and human deceit.

3. What type of person/persons should we avoid in an accountability relationship?

Read Proverbs 1:15-16.

We are not to walk with people who run to evil. These are people who always seem to be pursuing situations and initiating trouble. What is an example of this quality?
Read Proverbs 24:21.

*We are not to walk with people who lack a reverent fear of God and authority.*


*We are not to walk with people who are lazy, gluttonous and drunkards. These are examples of people who are given over to idolatry of pleasure and have a bent in their life towards sloth.*

4. **The Atmosphere of Accountability**

**Elements** - Healthy accountability includes confession/repentance of sin, encouragement from the God’s Word and humble intercession for one another.

**Environment** – The ideal environment includes freedom to be honest and vulnerable. Each participant should engage the relationship with a teachable heart – one who is secure enough to be held to his/her word. This involves a posture of humility, not arrogance or defensiveness.

**Areas** - One may consider the Five M’s as a beginning guide to areas of accountability: mission, marriage, materialism, media and moral choices.

**Accountability to Worship** - At the heart of all sin is a worship issue. Behavior modification is not the goal of accountability. The disease of sin is misplaced worship and the cure is the preaching the gospel to ourselves in victory and defeat. Accountability seeks to replace idols in our heart that cause sin and misplaced worship. Healthy accountability turns the affections of our heart God-ward. Motives for fighting sin such as punishment, penance, or fear of what others will think rarely produce changed lives. The Holy Spirit uses the Gospel, what Jesus has accomplished, as the key motivation and life-change tool of healthy accountability.

**Application**

Identify 2-3 men/women in your life who could ask you any question. Come up with a list of practical and heart-centered questions to guide your accountability. (Men should meet with men. Women should meet with women.) Identify the different areas of your life that you need accountability in pursuing Jesus.

**Memory Verses**

Hebrews 3:13 and Hebrews 10:24-25
For Further Study

*Cultivating a Life for God* by Neil Cole. In the Appendix, the author offers excellent lists and examples of questions for accountability and transformation groups.

*Fight Clubs: Gospel-Centered Discipleship* by Jonathan Dodson. This is a great treatment on the centrality of Jesus and the Gospel in accountability. The author identifies solutions to avoiding legalism and license in accountability relationships, while promoting an atmosphere of repentance.

www.navigators.org. There are various articles on this site that deal with practical ideas on accountability.