

new COMMUNITY

And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." And immediately they left their nets and followed him. (Mark 1:17-18)

If there was anyone who could have lived their life and accomplished their calling alone it would have been Jesus, but He didn't. This was one of the first things He set out to do when he started His public ministry because He would need people and people needed Him. In other words, He created a community.

The disciples were no different from all of us, some had shady histories and made poor choices, or shunned by society, but they were still chosen by Jesus. Even Judas who would choose to betray Jesus just a few years later, was still called to community. Jesus knew community would be mandatory for what they were called to do, it would make each of the disciples better, it would also give them purpose. We read throughout the New Testament the disciples didn't always get along, they didn't always see eye to eye, they didn't always like each other, but their ability to work through their differences brought unity and power to what they were called to do.

Today's culture can encourage us to avoid community, to be isolated, to fear being in relationship with others. The importance Jesus placed on community is still applicable today. That is why connect groups are such an important part of being planted at Shoreline City. We recognize community is essential for us to develop and grow into the men and women He has created us to be. We may find ourselves in a group with people we maybe wouldn't have chosen because they think different, look different, vote different, they are in a different tax bracket or relationship status. This doesn't mean we are in the wrong group, it means we have been presented with an opportunity to grow and mature, to fight

for unity and understanding.

Community is actually a gift, when we live our lives inside of a bubble it stunts our growth. When there is friction, we are taught empathy, compassion, curiosity about people and perhaps your new best friend is sitting in that group with you. When you are planted in community, you don't walk through life alone and you are less likely to quit and uproot yourself when things get hard because you have people that have become family surrounding you. Jesus shows us that He needed community to accomplish His purpose and teaches us we need community to accomplish ours.

CHALLENGE

If you have not yet been plugged into a connect group, you can find one here. If you have been in a connect group for a while, now it's your turn to lead one! Find a friend (or two) and text "GROUPS" to 73000 to find or host a group.

PRAYER

FATHER THANK YOU FOR THE GIFT OF COMMUNITY. I ASK THAT YOU WOULD SURROUND ME WITH MEN AND WOMEN WHO WILL PUSH ME CLOSER TO YOU, GIVE ME THE BOLDNESS TO STEP OUT THIS YEAR AND GET PLANTED IN A CONNECT GROUP. HELP ME FIND THOSE PEOPLE WHO WILL PULL GREATNESS OUT OF ME, WHO WILL CHALLENGE ME, LOVE ME, ENCOURAGE ME, HOLD ME ACCOUNTABLE, CELEBRATE WITH ME AND SURROUND ME WHEN DIFFICULTIES ARISE. I THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR THOSE YOU BRING INTO MY LIFE, HELP ME TO SEE THEM AS THE GIFTS THEY ARE, IN JESUS' NAME. AMEN.