



## LESSON ONE: HEART-FOCUSED COMMUNITY INTRODUCTION

### Why Community Matters

*“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” Acts 2:42 ESV*

Can you think of any Christian group or church who would *not* describe themselves as valuing community? We know community is important. Some churches even put it in their name. But doing community well isn’t easy. In fact, in our modern world it’s a bit of a lost art. In this course, we want to help you think through why community matters, how we create healthy communities, and dive into what “heart-focused community” is all about.

Using the acrostic T.E.A.M., this session unpacks four principles for why Christian community matters: Transformation, Endurance, Accountability, Mission. It takes all four of these characteristics for us to overcome areas of our lives where we feel stuck and in bondage.

- **Transformation.** A transformational community is like good garden soil. The better the soil, the easier it is to grow.
- **Endurance.** In this broken world, one thing that turns suffering into trauma is when we feel all alone in it. When our community walks with us through the hard things of life, it makes endurance that much easier.
- **Accountability.** When we have allies and accountability, we are much more likely to do the tasks it takes to grow our capacity.
- **Mission.** One reason we form communities in the first place is the pursuit of mission. Christian communities are **Kingdom Outposts**. We are called to be ambassadors of the Kingdom of God. Kingdom Outposts have an eternal mission with ramifications beyond our own lives. We are part of a story bigger than ourselves.

The goal of this session is to understand four characteristics of effective community.

## Reflect:

- What is your initial feeling when you hear the word “community”? What emotion(s) does it bring up and why? (*e.g., joy, confidence, anticipation, hopelessness, anger, disgust, etc.*)
- With this in mind, what do you hope to get out of this course? List a few hopes or goals.
- **Consider the communities in your life** (*e.g., family, church, Bible study group, school, work, neighborhood, recovery group, sports club, book club, hobbies, etc.*). On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being least true and 10 being most, rate the effectiveness of your **core community** regarding each principle from the session. How transformational is your community? How missional? How supportive or equipping? Mark your answers on the scales and use the space below the chart to reflect about your experience. (*If tracking multiple communities, try color-coding your marks or using shapes to represent each.*)

| TRANSFORMATION |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| ENDURANCE      |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| ACCOUNTABILITY |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| MISSION        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| 1              | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

- **Consider your current community(ies).** On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being least true and 10 being most, rate the status below. Are you primarily isolated and in need of a community? Is your core community relatively positive, but shallow? Is your community toxic? Is your community good and ready to be great? Mark your answers on the scales and use the space below the chart to reflect about your experience. *(If tracking multiple communities, try color-coding your marks or using shapes to represent each.)*

| ISOLATED |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| SHALLOW  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| TOXIC    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| GOOD     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |
| 1        | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

### Ask God:

*NOTE: This section is designed to facilitate conversation with God in prayer. If you're unfamiliar with conversational prayer, you may want to read through the guide called "How to 'Ask God.'" This can be found in the Resources and Helpful Info segment near the beginning of the course.*

- God, thank You for wanting a relationship with me and for creating me for community. What do You want me to know as I step into this course?

### **Practice:**

*NOTE: Keep this worksheet! You will need it for Lesson Ten.*

These Interactive Application worksheets are designed to help you navigate the journey of learning to walk in the Spirit.

**We recommend that you keep them together in a folder or three-ring binder.** This will become a keepsake record of the progress in your journey.

Don't underestimate the importance of this. Without a written, tangible record, we often forget how far we've come. With a record, we can marvel at the goodness of God in our lives. We see this biblically in verses like this one:

*At the LORD's direction, Moses kept a written record of their progress. These are the stages of their march, identified by the different places where they stopped along the way. Numbers 33:2 NLT*

### **Go Deeper:**

*The Other Half of Church* by Michel Hendricks and Jim Wilder

### **Next Steps:**

Congratulations! You are on your way. Be sure to move on to Part Two of Lesson One as you continue going deeper on your walk with God!