

**Intro:** It is possible to be with people...and still alone! (Restaurant Parents/Kids) Worship: Surrounded by...never connect  
Continue our series today titled "The Path" as we look at what we are Riva call The Path Of Discipleship.

We have identified 6 specific actions that we believe rise from the NT and make up the essentials of being disciple  
At RTBC 6 specific actions

*Worship Weekly, Gather in a Group, Serve On A Ministry Team, Give Generously, Share Near and Far*

- Last week: Worshipping Weekly, This week: Gathering in a Group.
- Last time we talked about this path, we titled the series: The Weakest Link: (All important, Only as strong as...WL)  
Let's look at WHY it is so important to be a part of a Group that helps you grow spiritually

## **1. Being Connected In A Group Is God's DESIGN For People. Gen 2:18**

*"The LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone...'"*

When we think of this passage we typically think of this as a marriage verse, and that is true. But, it is MUCH more!

I believe it is a fundamental principle of how we were created...We were Created for Community!

Yes, in a marriage relationship....and in a family relationship...but in all different kinds of relationships

Illus: As Independent as our Culture is...we get it...Think about the BEST, most loved and popular TV shows all time

- Cheers: *"Where everyone knows your name!"*
- Friends: *"You can never have enough friends"*
- This is Us: *"This is love...This is life..."*

Think about all the things these shows have in common:

- ~A place to belong...to know and be known
- ~A place to be accepted and loved with all your limitations
- ~A safe place to hear a hard message no one wants to share
- ~A safe place of accountability to help you stay "on track"

Applic: We ALL need those kinds of people in our life. We were created to live that way. We were made for community  
When we choose to live without community, we LIMIT the depth of our personal growth...spiritual and otherwise

## **2. Being Connected In A Group Is God's PLAN For Spiritual Growth. Luke 6:12-16**

I think its important for us to pay close attention to the way Jesus lived and made disciples.

Look at this: The VERY FIRST THING Jesus did when He wanted to grow some people spiritually was create a group.

At the beginning of His ministry he called the group together, and then for the next 3 years he taught them...

Why? Because of what we see in the OT: *"As iron sharpens iron so one person sharpens another."* Prov 27:17

5 Ways Jesus "Sharpened" The Disciples in His Group

- **He taught them how to pray:**  
Lu 11:1 *"One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.'"*
- **He taught them how to understand the bible:**  
Mt 5:21-22 *"You have heard it said....But I tell you...."*  
Took the opportunity to correct the misunderstandings about the bible for His disciples and others  
Much of the sermon on the mount is exactly that. Jesus is simply explaining how to understand scripture  
Illus: That is one of the best parts of a group. You are THERE to learn...no one expects you already know!
- **He taught them how to get along with one another!**  
A lot of people think, "Oh, church is awesome...all those nice, well intentioned people...all just getting along!"  
That's not what this is all about...it's about LEARNING HOW to get along!  
Just because you are in church..doesn't make life easier..in fact, I think it's harder!  
Anytime you have a people who care and believe deeply about something...different viewpoints.  
Illus: Mark 10:37;41: **Let one sit on left, one on right: When ten heard they were displeased!**  
**Applic:** Don't you love that! Even among the 12...the Apostles...they were normal people!  
Granny H. *"He was a man before he was a preacher!"*  
This is one of the things that happens in a good group...You learn how to get along! (Make you better!)
- **He taught them how to serve.**  
John 13:1-7 Vs 14: *"Now that I have washed your feet, you also show wash one another's feet."*  
This is one of the best parts of being in a group at Riva.  
Many of our groups serve together...Things like City Serve, Food Pantry: Diff ministry opportunities  
Sometimes we have entire groups created around service! (Tyler Heights)  
In Ministry EVERYTHING is much easier...when the burden is shared!  
When Jesus sent them out to start THEIR public ministry...Sent them out Two by Two! (Knowing I Got your back)
- **He taught them how to love others....**

- He taught them how to love others

You see Jesus doing this over and over in front of His disciples!

Samaritan Woman: John 4:27 *“Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman.”*

Leper: Mt 8:3: *“Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man.”* (Leper)

Simon’s House Lk 7:39 *“If he knew what kind of woman she was...”*

Zacchaeus, Matthew, Woman caught in adultery... blind, lame, Jesus cared for them all...Publically!

Over and over again Jesus taught them...THIS is how you love people

More is CAUGHT than TAUGHT!

Applic: Here is what I want you to see. Jesus had 3 years to get a group of people ready to impact the world...

To start a group that would grow into the church, lay the foundation for thousands of years of ministry

To take what He started individually, and inspire 12 men to give everything they had to keep his ministry going

And he did that...By founding a group...and teaching the disciples...in the context of that group.

I think Jesus did that because He knew what we are just beginning to learn.

There are some things that happen in groups...that will not happen in individual prayer and study.

We grow into the disciples God wants us to be in the context of a group.

### 3. Being Connected In A Group Gives Us The Support We All Need For The Ups And Downs Of Life. Rom 12:15

Ro 12:15 *Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.*

Again I want to look with you at the life of Jesus, and how He was connected to His disciples.

You see Him living out both sides of that equation in the context of the Apostles

In fact, just like in our daily life, you see both parts, one after the other!

- Jesus rejoiced with His Disciples:

Lu 22:15 And he said to them, *“I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.*

Idiom: *“With desire I have desired! “With everything within me: I longed to spend this time with you!*

*“I would have given ANYTHING to be with you at this time.”*

Applic: Jesus is telling the disciples...I wanted/needed/longed to spend this time with you!

- Jesus leaned on His Disciples in tough times.

Mt 26:37-38 *“He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.”*

One of the things that we learn in the life of a group is that we don’t have to face the difficult times alone. God created us to be in community. When we have that, others that care for us, and are committed to us life is much better. When we learn how to lean others, it lightens our burden.

~Sorrow is cut in half when it is shared.

~Joy is doubled when it is shared!

Applic: Boyce Mixon in bible college:

Almost nothing in common: We were both pretty handy. (I was painter, he was carpenter: Work days: Together)

23 and 68...Working together one day...Made an offer...I didn’t even think about it. I didn’t need anyone

*“You are far away from home...no one to count on in trouble. When day comes...would call brother, father...”*

3-4 years later...On way to hospital for birthing classes...truck broke down in bad place.

No one to call...no money for a tow truck...Boyce Mixon...

CONCL: Groups are about a LOT more than just study...or fellowship: Doing life together

- Designed to give us people in our life that we all need!
- God’s PLAN for growing us. If you are not in a group...you will NEVER become the disciple God wants u to be!

~Study Groups: SS classes, Bible study groups

~Ministry Groups

~Fellowship Groups

~Intensive discipleship groups.

Here is a statistic I learned almost 40 years ago...it hasn’t changed.

Join a church...have about 6 months to meet 7-8 people...

Don’t feel connected...many people drop out...because they don’t feel like they belong

You HAVE to get connected with others...and Worship isn’t enough

There is a group for everyone...wherever you are in your spiritual life...

From a first time never been in a group

To a long time...I have been there for years

The only mistake you can make with a group at RTBC...is NOT getting in a group!