

Gathering Guide

for Communities and Friends

The Insanity Loop (The Practice of Practice)

3/24/2019

Where We Are In The Bible

This week we are looking at Paul's letter to the Ephesians, specifically Chapter 5:15-21. Try to read all of Chapters 4-6 to gain a more complete understanding of Paul's concern for how the believers should act and interact with each other.

Lean In

- The Practice of Practice is in its most simple terms the way we grow in our faith in the context of the local community of faith – the church. Reflect on your past times of greatest spiritual growth. When did that take place? What role did the church (or special people within the church) play in your growth?
- Paul starts out this passage with a warning to the saints in Ephesus to be very careful because the days are evil. He encourages them to live wisely. On a scale of 1 to 10 – how evil would you rank the days we are living in? What does it mean to you for a Christian to live wisely in 2019? Why can this be difficult at times?
- In verse 18 Paul says “be filled with the Spirit. Describe what a Spirit-filled life looks like.

The Big Idea

The Christian life was not meant to be experienced in isolation. Withdrawing from regular fellowship and worship with our brothers and sisters in Christ can stunt our spiritual growth and leaves us in the insanity loop of a stale Christian walk – and with the possible addition of isolation, loneliness, and despair. We need each other!

Where To?

- **Community** is the first “C” of Practice mentioned in the Sunday morning message. Although the Bible does not provide an “order of worship” or a worship manual, we do see glimpses of how the community of believers interacted. Read Acts 2:42-47. What do you find attractive about this model of community? How is this different compared to today? What similarities are there?
- **Celebration** is the second “C” of Practice. Read Philippians 4:4. On a scale of 1 to 10 – how are you doing at following Paul's twice stated command to rejoice? On that same scale – how are we faring in rejoicing as a church in our times of meeting together in community? How can our celebration be meaningful and not feel contrived?
- **Confession** is the third “C” of Practice. Read James 5:16. Most of us probably think confessing our sins to one another would be intimidating and embarrassing. So who would like to go first in your group? (JUST KIDDING!) Under what conditions would you be willing to follow the instructions of James in this verse? What are the possible consequences of hiding secret, unconfessed sin in our hearts? What impact may confessing to someone have?
- **Communion** is the fourth and last “C” of Practice. The early Quakers saw the abuses and lack of real meaning in the physical practice of communion in the church and concluded that true communion with God is inward and spiritual. Therefore, the practice of using the elements of bread and wine fell into disuse. Most Evangelical Friends have reinstated the practice of serving communion and find great value in the ordinance. What value do you find in observing The Lord's Table? How can it become more than just another ritual?

Prayer Focus

Father, even at creation you said it was not good for man to be alone. Thank you for the community of believers you provide to help us in our commitment to grow spiritually and to get to know you better. Help us to celebrate together the good things you do for us and to provide for our care. Lead us to confess the sin we have hidden in that secret place, and draw us to genuine, daily communion with you. Whether we eat, drink, or whatever we do – may it all be for your glory! Amen.

