



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

FORMED FOR GOD'S FAMILY – FELLOWSHIP Week 3. Cultivating Community (p146-152)

1. Community Requires Commitment. On page 146, Rick Warren says, “many people grow up in families with unhealthy relationships, so they lack the relational skills needed for real fellowship.”
 - How do you go about establishing fellowship/community with someone who has never had a good relationship with others modeled for him or her?
 - How can you help that person learn fellowship skills?
2. Cultivating community takes honesty. Page 147 says, “Most people have no one in their lives who love them enough to tell them the truth (even when it’s painful) so they continue in self-destructive ways.”
 - Why do you think most people are reluctant to talk to a believer about sinful, negative or self-destructive behavior?
3. Also on page 147, Warren states, “*An honest answer is a sign of true friendship.* Sometimes this means caring enough to lovingly confront one who is sinning or is being tempted to sin.”
 - Have you ever confronted a believer about sinful behavior?
 - If so, describe how you went about it.
 - How did it turn out for you?
 - If you haven’t, why not?
4. Warren elaborates on honesty and states on page 148, “Until you care enough to confront and resolve the underlying barriers, you will never grow close to each other. When conflict is handled correctly, we grow closer to each other by facing and resolving our differences.”

- How should we address conflict in our family, in our small groups, and in the church?
5. “Frankness is not a license to say anything you want, wherever and whenever you want. It is not rudeness” (page 148).
- Give an example of a time you approached someone in less than a loving manner.
 - How did that situation turn out?
6. Cultivating community takes humility. Page 148 states, “Self-importance, smugness, and stubborn pride destroy fellowship faster than anything else. Pride builds walls between people; humility builds bridges.”
- What do you think about this statement?
7. “This is the other reason we need to be humble: Pride blocks God’s grace in our lives.” Page 149
- A question to ask yourself: are you getting in the way of God’s favor and grace because of prideful behavior?
8. Rick Warren says on page 149, “You can develop humility in very practical ways: by admitting your weaknesses, by being patient with others’ weaknesses, by being open to correction, and by pointing the spotlight on others.”
- Which one of these practical ways to develop humility do you struggle with the most and why?
9. “Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less. Humility is thinking more of others. Humble people are so focused on serving others, they don’t think of themselves.” Page 149
- Share some examples of humility (i.e., someone or some act of humility you have observed.)

10. Cultivating community takes courtesy. On page 149, Warren says, "Courtesy is respecting our differences, being considerate of each other's feelings, and being patient with people who irritate us."

- How do you feel when your opinion is not respected?
- How do we as a church go about creating a culture of respect?

11. On page 150, Warren says a key to courtesy is understanding why people are hurt and where they are coming from. "Instead of thinking about how far they still have to go, think about how far they have come in spite of their hurts."

- How does looking at people from this perspective further the concept of respect and community.

12. Cultivating community takes confidentiality. "Gossip always causes hurt and divisions, and it destroys fellowship, and God is very clear that we are to confront those who cause division among Christians. They may get mad or leave your group or church if you confront them about their divisive actions, but the fellowship of the church is more important than any individual." Page 150-151

- Discuss this statement.

13. Cultivating community takes frequency. On page 151 it says, "Community is not built on convenience (we'll get together when I feel like it) but on the conviction that I need it for spiritual health."

- Why do you think some church members don't invest the time to fellowship with other members?

14. On page 151, Warren states, "If you are a member of a small group or class, I urge you to make a group covenant that includes the nine characteristics of biblical fellowship: We will share our true feelings (authenticity), encourage each other (mutuality), support each other (sympathy), forgive each other (mercy), speak the truth in love (honesty), admit our weaknesses (humility), respect our differences (courtesy), not gossip (confidentiality), and make the group a priority (frequency).

- Does your group encompass these nine characteristics?

- If not, what steps can your group take to accomplish this?

15. "When you look at the list of characteristics, it is obvious why genuine fellowship is so rare. It means giving up our self-centeredness and independence in order to become interdependent." Page 151

- Explain what this statement means.

Unless otherwise noted, all Page References are to Rick Warren's book, "What On Earth Am I Here For?"