

# “LIVE OUT...the Community of God”

## Missional Series Small Group Curriculum, Week 4

### RAISE the Question

If you're a regular listener to sports talk radio, at some point you've undoubtedly endured the debate about which football team was the greatest of all time. Or, maybe you grew up in a family like mine—with four boys—where this banter became a regular weekly occurrence during football season. Our “spirited discussions” often ended in a brotherly brawl because we were so passionate about our teams—even to the point of believing we were part of the team!

In my family, these debates weren't over mere ordinary teams. No, these hotly contested arguments focused on the super teams of the 70's—the Cowboys, the Dolphins (the only undefeated team in the history of the league), and yes—dare I admit—the other dominant team of the 70's, the Steelers.

When I reflect on what possessed me to become so fanatical about “my team,” I've come to believe it was their success as a team. Who could blame me? Who hasn't wanted to be part of a winning team? A team that sought out the highest prize and did whatever it took to reach excellence.

**Describe a time when you were part of a successful team. How did you feel?**

### SEEK the Answer

“It's hard to imagine a sports team surviving long if it forgets its primary mission to compete and win each game and eventually to win the grand final contest in its league. Winning the prized cup, medal, or award keeps the team focused and integrated. Its mission is its organizing principle; comradeship takes place along the way. The team experiences *communitas* as it engages in its core task—when it faces physical challenge and risks failure in order to succeed.” Alan Hirsch

In his book *The Forgotten Ways*, Alan Hirsch defines *communitas* as “the journey of a group of people that find each other only in a common pursuit of a vision and of a mission that lies beyond itself. Its energies are primarily directed outward and forward.” In other words, **biblical community**, *communitas*, happens when **the image bearing people of God** become so **obsessed with the glory of God** that they passionately **pursue the mission of God**; to seek and to save what was lost.

**Have a member of the group read John 17:17-24 aloud. The group should simply listen to the words of the passage.**

**17** Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. **18** Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. **19** And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.

**20** "I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. **21** I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.

**22** "I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. **23** I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me. **24** Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began! (New Living Translation)

**Have another member of the group read John 17:17-24 aloud from the same translation. This time, each person should look for one word (only one!) that stands out in the reading of the passage.**

**Have yet another member of the group read John 17:17-24 aloud from the same translation. This time, each person should look for an entire phrase that stands out in the reading of the passage. Share with the group why your attention gravitated toward your particular word and phrase.**

**Have one final member of the group read John 17:17-24 aloud from the same translation. This time, the reader should pause after every paragraph and leave enough time for one or more in the group to pray through the concept present in the verses.**

## **LIVE OUT the Truth**

1. If you are in an "open group", share your latest experience about someone within the group inviting an "outsider" to the group.
  - What impact did it have on the group?
  - What impact did it have on you personally?
2. If you are in a "closed group", discuss how this study has challenged your perspective.

This week, spend some time reading through some biblical narratives that reveal the *communitas* of God: when **the image bearing people of God** become so **obsessed with the glory of God** that they passionately **pursue the mission of God**; to seek and to save what was lost.

- The Exodus – Exodus 12-14
- The Exile – Ezra 7-10