

May 27/28, 2023

Seeking Community in the Breaks

Luke 9:1-17; 10:38-42

Pastor Matt Meyer

Well, He is the one who makes a way. Amen? He's constantly working. He's always working even when we don't see it, when we can't feel it. So as we start out today, I just want to mention how encouraged I've been at how He's been working as I've heard stories about the prayer walk that we challenged our Life Groups to do. We also encouraged them to do a feast as they kind of rounded out this session for Life Groups, and I've heard several stories.

I heard one story from a group that said that although they've been together for nine months now as a Life Group, there were still some people that had never prayed aloud in the group. They just weren't comfortable with that. And this leader told me that on that night, as they sat and they prayed, as they walked around, and they stopped at different places and they prayed, that every single person in their group prayed aloud. It's a beautiful thing when God works in hearts and lives.

I also heard of another person who was a part of a Life Group that was going to do this walk. She was a little bit nervous as they were getting ready to go out and kind of walk in public and all that. And she's like, "Do I have to pray?" and the leader's like, "No, no pressure. Just, pray along with us." And by the end of the night, she was so excited to go home and do this on her own, as she went for walks in her neighborhood. It was a beautiful, beautiful thing.

And then this week, I got an email from a Life Group that had their feast. We encouraged them to spend some time reflecting on how the Holy Spirit has worked in their lives and in their hearts. And so this group spent nearly three and a half hours sitting around the table. They didn't realize it had gone that long, just reflecting on how God had worked in their lives, and as a group that they've journeyed together now for, actually, this group has been together for several years. And it's just a beautiful thing! They said, "We definitely feel like God has put each person in this group for a reason." It's a beautiful thing when we seek Jesus, when we seek community together.

But now this session is coming to an end, and summer is upon us. The season of lazy days, right? Of vacation, of no school, right? Kids, "You excited about that? No school?" Yeah, maybe mom and dad aren't quite as excited about that. My kids are old enough that it's not a difference for me. I just don't have to get up and take them to school so early. Summer is about family vacation, about family reunions for some people, weddings, right? And for a lot of people, summer is a time of different schedules, very different schedules than during the rest of the year. And if you're like me, you start somewhere with a lot of expectations. I have a lot of expectations for the trips I'm going to take, for the projects that I'm going to do in my backyard. You know that there are longer days in the summer, and so I tend to think: Well, we have so much more time to get so many things done, much more time to spend with Jesus. But sometimes it just doesn't always work out that way. I'm not sure whether it's the lack of order that's in my life because of the change in schedules, but sometimes it really messes with my pursuit of Jesus. So, before we get too far into this season,

I want to encourage us today to think about seeking Jesus and seeking community during the breaks.

You know, throughout the Scriptures, the people of God are encouraged to gather together, to meet together for the purposes of worship and encouragement and prayer and to study the Scriptures together. We have the example of the early church in the book of Acts, right? In Acts chapter two, we're told that they were meeting daily in the temple, and that they were taking their food together from house to house. They were eating together. There's another key passage in Hebrews chapter 10, if you want to turn there. It's not where we're going to spend all of our time today, but it's where we're going to start. It's kind of a jumping-off point. This is a passage that's key about this idea of community. It's Hebrews chapter 10, verses 23 through 25. Here's what it says:

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised [for Jesus who promised] is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (*NASB, Hebrews 10:23-25)

So, the writer of Hebrews says: Don't forsake assembling together; don't forsake meeting together," because it's where you can figure out how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds. It's where encouragement comes from. And this phrase **not forsaking our own assembling**, that's in verse 25, different translations render it a bit differently. There's also a translation that says ***not avoiding worshipping together***. There's another one that says ***not giving up meeting together***. So, I think the phrase probably refers to a lot of different types of meetings. It could be informal, could be a regular gathering. It could be the phrase ***not avoiding worshipping together*** that makes me think about here. It makes me think about this gathering. And I would encourage you that, whatever the craziness of your summer schedule, you can be sure that every Saturday night, and every Sunday morning, we will be here, worshipping together. And I would just encourage you that in the crazy schedule of vacation and going to the lake and all of this different stuff, that if you're in town, I would encourage you to make it a priority to gather with the people of God, to praise Him, to sing praises, to encourage one another in the midst of that, and to study the Word together. It's one of the ways that we can seek Jesus and seek community during the breaks.

Now, another way, particularly in our church, that we encourage people to seek community is in a Life Group. But I just told you that our Life Group session is ending, and so we kind of, as a lot of you know, encourage our Life Groups to take a break during the summer from regular meetings, because of the craziness of schedule of people being in and out of town. So, it might sound a little bit strange for me to say to you today, "Seek community during this break with your Life Group." You might be saying, "Well, how does that work, because they're not meeting regularly?" I know of a number of groups that already have plans to meet periodically, maybe once a month, maybe every other week, just socially. My group is going to meet three Wednesdays out of the month, and then take the fourth Wednesday off. And we're going to go do some fun things. We're going to go out to Tanner's Bar and Grill because they have burger night on Wednesdays which is really great, cheap burgers. We're going to go down to the Mill, I think on a Wednesday night, because there's live music going on Wednesday nights at the Mill. So, there's a number of things that you could

do. But here's the thing about these social gatherings. They can be just as transformational as when we study the Word, as when we discussed the sermons during the year. Here's why. Because the Holy Spirit is present. We don't always think about it that way. We don't think that just gathering socially, that that's anything that's going to be transformative in my life. But it's interesting to notice that many of the teachings, the transformative times when Jesus was on earth, in the Gospels, they were not scheduled times to study the Scriptures. Now, there were some times where that was happening. That would be when they're in the synagogue, and Jesus is teaching and interacting with people in the synagogue. But in Luke's Gospel, a majority of the teaching and the life-changing encounters happen in association with a meal of some form. There are eight specific meals where Jesus is eating with others, as He teaches. There are several others where a meal is referenced. There are entire books written by theologians about the significance of the table gatherings in Luke's Gospel. Let me give you just a couple of examples of what they're talking about.

At Levi, or Matthew's table, as Jesus discusses, He kind of puts forth His theology of mission: why He came, who He's seeking to reach. At Simon the Pharisee's table, He teaches about forgiveness, and love, and how they're connected. At yet at another meal with scribes and Pharisees, He teaches about holiness. And then yet another meal with lawyers and religious leaders, He discusses the nature of the kingdom of God. So, we don't always think about eating together as a spiritual practice, as something spiritual where God might show up. And yet clearly, Jesus, I think, sees it that way. Just read through the book of Luke at some point and just notice how often He is having discussions. He's teaching, and there's transformation happening at a meal. And this still applies to us today because, as Bryan outlined for us last week, as followers of Jesus, there isn't a single moment of our lives that we live without the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit certainly wants to transform, certainly wants to meet us, certainly wants to do His work in our lives, in whichever ways we gather.

So I'm going to do something a little bit different this morning, as we spend time in the Scriptures together. We're going to look at two encounters in the Gospel of Luke with Jesus that are connected with a meal. The first one is in Luke 9, if you want to go ahead and turn there. But here's how we're going to approach this. There's going to be some specific application, I think. I'm going to provide some reflection questions for each of these encounters, for us to take with us later and think about and ask the Holy Spirit to speak into our lives. But I also want us to recognize that these are places where people gathered together, and community was going on and transformation happened. I want us to think about that in terms of motivation for us to seek community during the break. So, Luke chapter 9. We're going to start in verse 1:

And He (Jesus) called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing. (Luke 9:1-2)

So Jesus is sending out the twelve, the twelve apostles, to go proclaim the message, proclaim the gospel of the kingdom, and heal people.

And He said to them, "Take nothing for *your* journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not *even* have two tunics apiece. [Just take one.] Whatever

house you enter, stay there until you leave that city. And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them. Departing, they *began* going throughout the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. (Vs. 3-6)

Amazing things begin to happen. Verse 7:

Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was happening; and he was greatly perplexed, because it was said by some that John [meaning John the Baptist] had risen from the dead, and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen again. Herod said, “I myself had John beheaded; but who is this man about whom I hear such things?” And he kept trying to see Him. (Vs. 7-9)

In some ways, even Herod is seeking Jesus.

When the apostles returned, they gave an account to Him of all that they had done. Taking them with Him, He withdrew [Jesus withdrew] by Himself to a city called Bethsaida. But the crowds were aware of this and followed Him; and welcoming them, He *began* speaking to them about the kingdom of God and curing those who had need of healing. (Vs. 10-11)

So now Jesus is doing exactly what He sent the twelve out to do. Verse 12:

Now the day was ending, and the twelve came and said to Him, “Send the crowd away, that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside and find lodging and get something to eat; for here we are in a desolate place.” But He said to them, “You give them *something* to eat!” And they said, “We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless perhaps we go buy food for all of these people.” (For there were about five thousand men.) And He said to His disciples, “Have them sit down *to eat* in groups of about fifty each.” They did so, and had them all sit down. Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them, and He broke *them*, and kept giving *them* to the disciples to set before the people. And they all ate and were satisfied; and the broken pieces which they had left over were picked up, twelve baskets *full*. (Vs. 12-17)

So here we have our meal, the feeding of the five thousand. It's one of the most well-known miracles of Jesus. It's in all four of the Gospel accounts. It's a great story. And I think one of the reasons it's such a great story is because of all the imagery that's kind of included, and Luke is trying to clue us in to some stuff here. A lot of us miss it, because either we don't know our Jewish history, or we're not Jewish at all so we don't know the Jewish history. But I have a feeling that the people that first read Luke's account, they didn't miss it. And if they were talking to others, and telling them about this story, they would have immediately begun discussing several themes that this story communicates about Jesus, not just the story of the feeding, but all the stuff leading up to it. And that's where this part comes in.

First, this feast of Jesus and the feeding of the five thousand. It's set in contrast to Herod's feast—mentioned in verses 7 through 9—that he's perplexed at all the amazing things that are going on. He thinks perhaps, or somebody has said, that maybe John the Baptist has risen, which is a problem for Herod because Herod was the one who tells us he had John killed. So he started to go, "Hmm, I'm wondering, what's happening here?" And that's where his feast comes into play. It's not in our passage, but if you were to look at Mark chapter 6, you would have a very similar account to what I just read, except in that text, the beheading of John the Baptist is told in detail. And it happens at a feast that Herod is throwing. So, Luke and Mark and these others are trying to contrast Herod's feast with Jesus' feast. Herod's feast was for the leading men of the day; it was for captains of the guard, for high officials. And it may have served up food but, ultimately, it served up death because John the Baptist's head was actually served up on a platter at that feast.

Jesus' feast, in contrast, is not just for high officials, or captains, or leading men. They can come, but it's for everyone. It's for the people who are seeking Him. It's for the people that are following. It's for the rabble of Galilee, those who are overlooked. Mark says it's for those who are like sheep without a shepherd, and Jesus' feast serves up life. It serves up satisfaction, and there is an abundance of leftovers. Herod's followers, or servants, bind and behead others. Jesus' followers feed and serve and heal others. So, this is this contrast that Luke is trying to help us see as we move towards this story.

Now, secondly, the fact that the feeding happens in a desolate place would have brought many images and memories to a Jewish person's mind. They would have perhaps thought about how God fed the people during Moses' time, leading them in the wilderness. He fed them with teaching and manna and quail. Jesus has the people sit down to help with organization. This probably would have recalled to a Jewish person's mind how the tribes of Israel were separated into tribes as they journeyed in the wilderness. The bread and the fish parallel the manna and the quail. However, Jesus is able to provide for the people what Moses could not during his time. During Moses' time, the people were disgruntled. They were on the edge of starvation most of the time. They were never allowed to gather more than a day's worth of manna. But the people gathered around Jesus are not disgruntled. Everyone is satisfied, and there is an abundance of leftovers. To a Jewish person, this would have communicated one thing: One greater than Moses is here.

Now they also might have had a second picture come into their minds. It would have been from the time of Elijah and Elisha. You see that earlier in the text. Some people are saying maybe this is Elijah. They think Jesus might be Elijah. Elijah was one of the most famous prophets from Israel's history. Jesus speaks with authority. He performs wonders, just like Elijah did. Like Elijah and Elisha, Jesus works in northern Israel. He speaks rather than writes. He gathers disciples. Elijah, during his time, provides food miraculously for the widow at Zarephath and her son. And then he actually raises her son from the dead. During Elisha's time, he fed one hundred prophets with twenty barley loaves over the objections of his servant. But Jesus now, and just prior to our story in Luke 9, in Luke 8, he has just healed Jairus' daughter, and now He's going to feed five thousand men with five loaves over the objections of His servants. So, again, to a Jewish person, this would have communicated one greater than Elijah and Elisha was here. And these are the themes that are revolving around this as we move towards this story.

Now, interestingly, we're not told whether the people who are actually eating all of this miraculous food even know that a miracle has occurred. I think we can assume that the disciples know about the miracle, right? They're the ones that knew that, "Hey, we started out with five loaves and two fish. Where did all this food come from?" And I think that tells us we should focus our thoughts in and our reflection in on the twelve disciples in this moment.

So, I'm going to invite you to try to put yourself in the place of one of the twelve. It's been an amazing few days! Jesus has just sent you out to preach. At times you heal people. Amazing things are happening. Now you're back with Jesus, and there's this huge crowd. Jesus is now preaching the gospel of the kingdom. He's now healing people and amazing things are happening. Five thousand people have gathered, but it's getting late. People were probably getting hungry, and it's going to get dark soon. Maybe, as a follower, you're hungry too. So you, along with your friends, go and encourage Jesus to send the crowd away so they can go find food and lodging, since it's a very desolate place that we're in. And Jesus looks at you and He says, "**You give them something to eat.**" So, stop and think for a moment. How do you feel? I mean, you're just trying to look out for the welfare of the people, and Jesus wants you now to do basically the impossible, to somehow feed five thousand people when all you have is five loaves and two fish.

I just wonder: Have you ever found yourself in a place like this? And I don't mean specifically feeding people. I mean have you ever found yourself in a place where you felt like Jesus was asking you to do something that you did not have the resources to do? How did that feel? Impossible? Feel like you were inadequate? Feel like there's no way this is ever going to happen? I might as well just not even try, because there's just no way. See, I think Jesus purposely sets up this situation for the twelve...for His closest followers.

Now keep in mind, they've just gotten back from being sent out to preach the gospel, to heal people. Amazing things happen! They come back. Now Jesus is doing that same thing, preaching the gospel, healing people. All these people have gathered, and it's just curious to me that, for some reason, the twelve think that this situation is different, like they can't handle it. Maybe they're just tired. Maybe it's just been a long few days, and the disciples respond this way. They say, "**We have no more than five loaves and two fish unless, perhaps we go buy more.**" Translation: "We don't have enough...don't have enough. So Jesus tells the disciples to have the people sit down. They do. He blesses the food. He breaks it, and He gives it to the disciples, and the disciples go and give it to the people. Then they come back to Him and He gives them some more food, and they go and give it to some more people. Then they come back to Him again. And He gives them more food, and they go and give some more to some more people. Then they come back to Him again, and He gives them more food. It says Jesus kept giving it to the disciples, and more and more and more, until they were all satisfied, and there were twelve baskets full of leftovers.

Again, I'm not sure. I just don't think the people, unless the disciples are chatting with each other as they're going, "Where did this food go?" "I don't know. We started with, you know..." Unless they're saying that as they go to hand it out to people, I don't think the people understood what was going on. But the disciples certainly knew. See, I think Jesus wants His closest followers to learn exactly what Bryan talked about last week—that when Jesus is with you, everything is going to be okay. But more specifically in this text, here it is: When you feel like you don't have enough

to do what Jesus is asking you to do, bring what you have to Jesus. What you consider it to be not enough, trust Him to make it more than enough. I'm going to say that for you one more time. When you feel like you don't have enough to do what Jesus is asking you to do, bring what you have, bring what you consider to be not enough to Jesus, and trust Him to make it more than enough.

In this passage, Jesus reveals God as our provider. He receives the disciples **not enough** and transforms it into **more than enough**. That's His role. Our role, the disciples' role, was to bring what they had to Jesus, then take what He gives them, and give it to others. It's a pretty good job description for a disciple. Bring what you have to Jesus, take what He gives you, and offer it to others. But sometimes we tend to relegate the miracles of the Bible to ancient history. We don't expect that God might still be in the business of taking our *not enough* and making it *more than enough*.

I'm going to invite you to think with me for a moment. As a parent, as a Life Group leader, or one who might consider becoming a Life Group leader, as a spouse, as a friend, where you work in your job, with your neighbors—in any of those areas—do you trust that if you offer God what you have, even when it seems like not enough, that He can feed and provide for you and for others, and use you in their lives? Do you trust that, as a parent, as a spouse, as a friend, as a leader, as a person in your job, with your neighbors, where you're serving, do you trust that if you offer God what you have, even if it seems like not enough to you, that He can feed and provide for you and for others and use you in their lives? Because that's the principle I think He's trying to teach the disciples in this moment.

Now, as would-be disciples, as people who desire to be followers of Jesus, I have some reflection questions for us over this text. They're going to put some questions up on the screen, so that you can write them down if you want to. And I want to just invite you later today, tomorrow—most of you probably have the day off tomorrow—or later this week, sit down, look at this text again, and think about these questions. First question:

- **What are some areas of your life where you feel like not enough, meaning either you don't feel like you are enough or you don't have enough?**

And I'm going to encourage you again, think specifically about your career, about what you consider to be your calling, about your marriage or your singleness, about your parenting, about your friendships, about where you're serving. Where do you feel like you're not enough? And then move to the next question.

- **What do you need?**
- **What do you not have enough of, actually, to obey God?**

To do whatever it is He's asking you to do. And then finally, this one:

- **Can you bring what you have in those areas to God, and trust Him to work in ways you can't see right now?** Because He's always working, even when we can't see it.

Rosie shared her story yesterday about what she's going to do with VBS this year. I heard that for the first time last night. I had no idea, and I just sat there listening, going, "That's this passage!" God said, "Hey, you're going to be a coach to kindergarteners." And she's like, "No, no, no, God." But she said, "Okay, I'll trust You," and her faith is going to grow because of it. See, that's what Jesus and His Father and the Holy Spirit are in the business of doing. Taking our *not enough* and making it *more than enough* and then allowing us to give to others. That's one of the things that happens when we seek Jesus. See, these people were seeking Jesus. They gathered around Him; a community began to form. They didn't know it, but they were seeking community. They desired to be together.

We've got one more story to look at this morning, though. You can flip your pages over to Luke chapter 10. We're going to start in verse 38. This is a very familiar story also. If you've grown up in church, you're going to recognize this story. So, I just want to encourage you, as I read the story to you, to think from each person's perspective in this story. Luke Chapter 10, verse 38:

Now as they were traveling along, Jesus entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who was seated at the Lord's feet, listening to His words [listening to His teaching]. But Martha was distracted with all her preparations... (Luke 10: 38-40a)

Now stop. Put yourself in Martha's place. You've been there. You're hosting something at your house, trying to get everything ready. How does she feel?

Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to *Him* and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me." (Vs. 40)

She'd already assumed she knew what the answer is going to be. How's she feeling right now?

But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but *only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.*" (Vs. 41-42)

So we have another story that's connected to a meal, right? They're not eating yet, but Martha is getting ready. This story is unique to Luke's Gospel. He's the only one who writes about it, and much has been said over the years, comparing the different roles that Martha and Mary play in this story—some of it, I think, not always correctly. Most of the time this text is taught to signify that the most important thing when following Jesus is sitting at His feet, listening to Him as a disciple, i.e. what Mary is doing. I don't disagree with that; I think that's very important. But then to go on: Don't get caught up in all the other things like serving and cooking and cleaning, i.e. Martha. The thing that I struggle with is: in the real world, if we're going to have a meal, someone has to do the cooking and the cleaning and the serving. So, where does that leave us as disciples, because I think this is a key discipleship text for us.

A disciple is one who is learning to be with Jesus, learning to be like Him, right? A disciple is one who is living their lives with Jesus, learning to be like Him. And I think the discipleship concept

here is not in the comparison between what Mary is doing and what Martha is doing. I think it has to be found in their attitudes. Martha's attitude is one of being too worried about a lot of stuff, but also about what others are doing or not doing. She has wrongly judged Mary's inaction. You can hear it in her question, right? She assumes Jesus' answer, and basically gives it to Him. She says, **"Tell her to help me,"** because that's what should be happening here. She seems consumed with assessing others as she performs what she's called to do. The issue in her life, at this point, is one of comparison. And in Jesus' answer, He doesn't criticize her for what she's doing. He doesn't specifically say she shouldn't be doing the work that she's doing. Rather, in His loving rebuke, I think when he says, **"Martha, Martha,"** He's not upset; He cares for her. He says, **"You're worried and distracted by so many things,"** namely others' activities. Mary, on the other hand, is commended for her attitude, her choice to sit at the feet of Jesus as a disciple. And what Mary is doing would have been considered scandalous in that culture. To sit at the feet of someone meant that you simply wanted to be their student. To sit at the feet of a rabbi meant that you wanted to become a rabbi yourself. And in that culture, the lines between men and women were clearly demarcated, and women did not sit at the feet of a rabbi. In fact, women were discouraged, often deemed unworthy of receiving instruction. But Mary has quietly taken her place as a would-be teacher and proclaimer of the kingdom of God, as a disciple, and Jesus affirms her right to do so. It's beautiful!

So when it comes to discipleship principles in this text, I think it's a balanced combination of two things: service *and* reflection, serving *and* receiving. Everyone needs both, and probably in different amounts at different times, based on what's going on in your life, your stage of life. And I've sat and reflected on this myself. I realized I've wrestled with this balance for a long time in my life, in my journey. Serving probably comes easier for me. I like to be busy. I like to accomplish things. I always have more things on my list than I can get done in one day, and it doesn't bother me at all. I just move them over to the next day and keep going. And for a long time in my walk with Jesus, I was like Martha. I served a lot and neglected reflection. I neglected sitting at Jesus' feet to receive from Him. Oh, I received while I was serving, you know, like in the previous story. I received it, and mostly I passed that along to others. But when most of my walk with Jesus is about serving Him and serving others, it can leave me on dangerous ground. And I'll just tell you, it did. It left me on very dangerous ground, because I started to find my value in what I was doing for Jesus. I began to think Jesus loves me because of how much I'm serving Him. It's a very subtle thing that kind of comes in, in a very subtle thought. And I've found, in recent years, that it's been incredibly important for me to slow down, to just be with Him, to listen to Jesus tell me that He loves me because He created me and redeemed me and I'm His son, not because of anything that I've done, or could do.

Maybe that's the message you need to hear this morning—that Jesus loves you simply because He created you. He redeemed you...that you're His daughter...that you're His son, and He loves you for that reason alone. And that's something that we receive, not something we earn. And I can only truly hear that, I've found, if I slow down and I reflect and I listen the way Mary is doing in this text. Both serving Jesus and receiving from Jesus are important. We need them both.

The other discipleship idea in this text is the danger of comparison. Martha is struggling with comparison. And I think Jesus would tell us this morning, "Don't compare yourself to others." Not in the nature of the way your journey is going, not in what God has gifted you to do, not in maybe

what He's called you to do, that He's not calling others to do. He's not gifted others in the same way. You wish you had what somebody else had? Don't compare yourself. See, the danger of comparison is it takes my eyes off of Jesus, and off of what God has called me to do and who He has called me to be. So don't get caught in that trap. Don't do it!

So again, as would-be disciples, I have some reflection questions. I encourage you again, tomorrow, next day, later this week, sit with this passage, and with these questions.

- **Which aspect of discipleship is easier for you, serving or receiving? Why?**

And maybe ask the Holy Spirit if any adjustments need to be made there?

- **In what area of life is comparison a struggle for you? In what areas? Maybe it's more than one area. And how might Jesus want to enter into that struggle with you?**

And then lastly,

- **How have you taken on the role of a disciple in your life? What does that look like for you? In what ways are you learning to be like Jesus?**

See, these are just two examples—these stories of what happens when people gather together and Jesus is present. There's always something to learn over and over again throughout the Scriptures. When the people of God, when the followers of Jesus, seek Him and seek community with one another, spiritual growth happens because we become more like Jesus, because the Holy Spirit is present and desires to change us and grow us. I know a number of your groups probably, maybe already, have something planned for this summer. But if your group doesn't have something planned, make a plan. You don't even have to wait for the leader to do it. Just call some people up; send into your group text and say, "Let's get together and spend some time and see what God might do."

I'm going to give you two specific examples, easy examples. First one is related to **VBS**. These are opportunities for you. You heard earlier today that they still need people to serve. I'm going to suggest to you that VBS Fam Jam is a great place to serve with your Life Group. It doesn't require you to take off work. It's on Friday night. It's this huge kind of carnival, with a bounce house, all kinds of fun, and a meal. The kids get to kind of come and show their parents all the fun that they had during the week at VBS. They just need people who can monitor bounce houses and help keep the food line prepped, and all that kind of stuff. And if you go to the website, and you sign up specifically for Fam Jam, and you write in the comments box who your Life Group leader is, the people organizing that will make sure that you serve with other people from your Life Group. Your Life Group leader doesn't even have to be there. Maybe they can't be there, but it's a great opportunity.

Secondly, I saw a slide maybe before the service, that said: **Life Groups Night at the Saltdogs**. This is going to be a great event on Friday night, July 28. There's going to be fireworks after the game. We've got almost two full sections reserved, so you'll be able to sit with people from your Life Group and connect with others along the way. It's like a special deal, where they're going to

throw out Saltdogs T-shirts after every single inning. So that game would be a great place to come and find some community. And here's the deal: Who knows what the Spirit might do in our own lives during those opportunities, because He's working. An email is going to go out with links to both of those opportunities this next week. And also, if you're not currently in a Life Group, come anyway. We'd love to have you serve. We'd love to have you come to the ballgame. Maybe you'll meet some people, and you'll get connected into a Life Group, just because you were there. Let's pray together and ask Jesus to meet us this summer as we seek Him.

Heavenly Father, we're so grateful for Your Word, grateful for You sending Jesus, His willingness to die for us, but also His willingness to come and show us how to live, what it means to follow You, to be a disciple. I'm so grateful You have provided resources, Lord. You've provided community, people, Your Word, and, most importantly, the Holy Spirit, who desires to meet us this summer as we seek Jesus. I pray for people as they would seek opportunities, as they would try to connect with others. I pray for us this week as we maybe reflect on these passages and these questions again, that You, Holy Spirit, would come and reveal to us the areas where You're wanting to transform us. Maybe it's an area of comparison. Maybe it's an area of trust, because I do feel like I don't have enough in this area. Maybe it's that I need more reflection in my life. Maybe it's more serving. But, Holy Spirit, we trust that You know. And would You make us open to responding to what You're wanting to do this summer? We pray these things in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

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