



# Cultivate

A Christ-Centered Way of Life

*... as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted, and built up in him and established in the faith... Colossians 2:6-7*

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## YOU WERE MADE FOR COMMUNITY – DO NOT GO IT ALONE

By Marius Gradwell

God's Word tells us that we simply cannot function without each other.

We need each other and we need community.

- God is a community in himself.
- Existing for all of eternity past, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit have enjoyed the fellowship of their perfect triune community.
- In creating mankind, God desired for us to participate in that community.
- God did not create man to be in community with him alone. After he created the world and Adam, God said, *"It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him"* (Genesis 2:18).
- God created man and woman to be in community together, to create families and live together, bearing the image of and reflecting the three-in-one God.
- Scripture is all about community and family.
- God chose the Israelites to be his people. *"And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people"* (Leviticus 26:12).
- They lived and worshipped him together in community.
- Following the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, God instituted the church, the Body of Christ as a community of believers. *"Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."* (1 Corinthians 12:27).

### **Today's Focus: Let us deal with Individualism.**

- Individualism and doing life on our own are not part of God's design.
- In our modern world, individualism is like a pair of glasses.

- We are so used to “seeing through” it that we do not even realise it!
- We need help to recognise how our self-centeredness manifests itself.
- Here are some indicators of individualism - some ways it may express itself.
- Do you identify with any of the statements below?

#### 1. SELF-RELIANCE

- I am proud of my ability to deal with my own problems and challenges without help from others.
- I enjoy being asked for help, but I rarely ask others for help.
- It is difficult for me to be vulnerable about what is really going on in my soul because “it is my issues to deal with.”
- I do not need people to grow spiritually; personal spiritual disciplines are sufficient (Bible study, prayer, theological reading).
- It is hard for me to receive gifts or help from people without wanting to pay them back somehow.

#### 2. SELF-SUFFICIENCY

- I may be thought of as a “good Christian” by others, but few people know me as I really am.
- I am outgoing and extroverted, but my relationships stay on the surface.
- Very few people have full access to my life. I may disclose things to people, but only what I want them to know. I do not want them to dig deeper.
- When relationships get hard, I tend to withdraw rather than deal with the issues.
- I tend to measure spiritual growth by how much I know.

#### 3. SELF-PROTECTION

- I tend to keep others at arm’s length to guard against being hurt or rejected.
- I measure spiritual growth or maturity by what others say or think.
- I fear at times that if people knew “the real me,” they would keep their distance.
- I avoid conflict. If people offend me or hurt my feelings, I prefer to say nothing rather than risk anger or rejection.
- I might be dependent on approval. My sense of value rises and falls on what other people say (or do not say) about me.

#### 4. SELF-IMPORTANCE

- I have a higher concern for respect from others (attention) than I have a sense of responsibility for others (I tend to be addicted to busyness; it is the way I fill the void of deep relationships in my life.)
- I am more concerned about what others think of my accomplishments (importance) than what they think of my relational influence in their lives (significance).
- I tend to measure spiritual growth by what I have accomplished.

## 5. SELF-WILL

- I regularly choose work and hobbies over people.
- My schedule and priorities always take precedence; I do not reshuffle my agenda to help or serve others.
- I like having people around, but I do not tend to take their advice or welcome their correction.
- When it comes to church, I tend to ask consumer-oriented questions like, "What do I like/not like? How does this make me feel? What do I get out of this?" My wants and goals are functionally prioritised over the needs of the community and the mission of the church.

Notice that the headings over all these bullet points have to do with "self."

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What is the difference between the personality type of being an introvert and individualism and self-centredness?
2. Going through the list of "SELF'S", how much of an individualist or self-centred are you?
  - I show an extraordinarily strong tendency towards individualism.
  - I have a moderate tendency towards individualism.
  - I have hardly any tendency towards individualism.
3. What do you think keeps people from engaging in real community? How can we overcome the problem?
4. If your self-centredness was transformed into a joyful God-centeredness, what would the results be for yourself and for the community around you?