



**New Community Group
Launch Material - Part 6: Rootedness**

Welcome:

Greet one another.

Opening Prayer:

Read the following prayer based on John 15:1-17 to open your time:

“Jesus, you are the real vine and Father, you are the farmer. You cut off every branch that doesn’t bear grapes. And every branch that is grape-bearing you prune back so it will bear even more. Your message, Jesus, that you have spoken to us already has pruned us.

You ask us to root ourselves in you. To make our home in you as you have made your home in us. Just like a branch can’t bear grapes by itself without being rooted into the vine, we can’t bear fruit unless we are rooted in you.

You are the vine, we are the branches. When we are rooted in you, and you in us, and our relation is intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated from you, Jesus, we can’t produce a thing. If we would ever separate from you, we would be like deadwood, gathered up and thrown in the bonfire. But if we root ourselves in you, and your words are rooted in us, we can be sure that whatever we ask will be listened to and acted upon. This is how the Father shows us who he is: when we produce grapes, when we mature as your disciples, Jesus.

You have loved us the way your Father has loved you. We want to make ourselves at home in your love. If we keep your commands, we will remain intimately at home in your love. That’s what you have modeled for us: you kept your Father’s commands and made yourself at home in his love.

You have told us these things for a purpose: that your joy might be our joy, and our joy wholly mature. This is your command: To love one another the way you have loved us. This is the very best way to love. Putting our lives on the line for our friends. We are your friends when we do the things you have commanded us to do. You no longer call us servants, because servants don’t understand what their master is thinking and planning. No, you have named us friends, because you’ve let us in on everything you have heard from your Father.

We remember that we didn’t choose you, but that you chose us and that you put us into the world to bear fruit, fruit that won’t spoil. As fruit bearers, whatever we ask the Father when we are rooted in you, he gives.

We remember the root command, to love one another.”

Amen.

Read:

Value - Rootedness

For the past three weeks, we have focused on faith, humility, and hospitality. This week, we will be pondering our final value of rootedness. Of all our values, rootedness is most difficult to practice in a singular CG space. Whereas faith, humility, and hospitality all are postures that have practicable actions attached to them, rootedness, upon first glance, does not. For example, one can practice hospitality in a CG by giving a person your full attention, or practice humility by speaking more or less depending on your natural proclivities. But how is one to practice rootedness? And what do we mean by rootedness?

Consider the description in Acts of the earliest group of Christ followers: *“All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer.”* This, in tandem with John 15 which we just prayed through, are the core Scriptures in our understanding of rootedness. Rootedness, as we define it, means: 1) We are rooted in Jesus the good vine, and 2) We are practicing devotion to a community *in a place*.

Rootedness begins with us being rooted in Jesus — literally devoting our lives to the life-giving vine of Jesus (John 15), His life, teachings, commands, death, and resurrection. To use The Message translation of John 15, it means *“making our home in Jesus as he makes his home in us.”* This of course is no small task, and itself takes a lifetime of practice, which is why we say CGs at Reality are places to *practice* the way of Jesus together. We need spaces where we as individuals can practice the way of Jesus in community with others. But rootedness moves beyond personal devotion to Jesus and moves toward devotion to others. It is a long-term commitment to a group of people, in this case, a community following Jesus.

Rootedness seeks to build in us the mental, emotional, and spiritual capacities for long-term commitment to a community in a place. This is incredibly counter-cultural, even offensive, to the ways we have been conditioned to view church. It means viewing your church community as a community of obligation — not something you can opt in or out of depending on how you feel in a given week. It is consistently practicing, interacting with, and living in your community as if it were your family — one you will be part of for the rest of your life. For most of history, most humans were stuck with the family, community, and place that they were born into. Unless you were part of a nomadic people or very wealthy, you were likely to grow up, get married, have a family, and die in or near the same place and same community where you were born. But this has changed in the last two centuries. Author David Janzen writes, *“The twentieth century will be remembered as an age of wondrous creativity, when Americans voluntarily shattered their lives into distant and dissonant fragments. America’s industries learned how to assemble atomic bombs, airplanes, iPads and the genetic codes of life itself in the same era that American society disassembled the ancient overlap of family, food, faith and the field of work. Americans reached for the stars as they withered their roots, inhabited space but lost any sense of place.”*

In light of this, it is key to our understanding of rootedness to recapture a sense of what it means to be a *member* of a community and to have a sense of *place*. In our digital world, the fundamental definitions of commitment and participation have been changed to the point that we often consider ourselves to be “part” of a community (church/CG/club/etc.) even if we rarely have face-to-face interactions with it. Instead of showing up in mind, soul, and *body* to participate in tangible relationships, we like an Instagram post, follow something on Twitter, or

periodically receive newsletter emails from it. In other words, the perceived conditions of commitment no longer entail consistent physical presence but rather an inconsistent touchpoint (digital or in person, doesn't really matter) and vague adherence to the group identity (beliefs/interests/values). For example, I am "part" of a church because I commit to listening to its podcasts, generally agree with the teachings, and participate by liking its social media posts and showing up in person a couple times a year (if that). Rootedness directly challenges this understanding of commitment and participation.

Rootedness in CG is formed when we practice committing to and participating in a CG as if we will be there for the rest of our lives. This may not be true — we might move in a year or two or three — but for any amount of time we are members of a CG, we practice the value of rootedness by committing and participating in the group as if we will be there until we die. The hope is that this would form in us the capacity for rootedness so we are able to devote ourselves, in full commitment and participation, to whatever community Jesus eventually leads us to spend the majority of our lives in.

Group Exercise Humility: Creating Ground Rules Together

This week, we will be engaging in a large group prayer exercise surrounding our value of rootedness.

This exercise is meant to help us pray through, imagine, share, and discuss what you would want to be true if you were going to spend the rest of your life with your CG family and what ground rules would need to be in place if this were to be true.

1. **Opening Prayer Reflection (10 minutes):** *Open your time in prayer by sitting in silence and asking the Holy Spirit to invigorate your imagination as you respond to the following questions. Then read the following questions, giving 3 minutes for people to write down their responses.*
 - a. Ask God: What produces Faith, Humility, Hospitality, and Rootedness in a person and community? Listen for any answer, which may come in the form of a memory, an experience, or a gut-level impression.
 - b. Ask God: What was it like to create the structures that the world is built upon (matter, energy, physical laws, wisdom, spiritual unity, relationship, etc.)? Ask the Lord if you can participate in His divine creativity by creating ground rules for a flourishing community devoted to Him.
 - c. Ask God: What are one or two things that seem especially important to me when I imagine being a part of a long-term community?
2. **Sharing (15 minutes):**

Using mutual invitation, have everyone share their answer to the question, "What are one or two things you wrote down that seem especially important to you personally when you imagine being a part of a long-term community?" (One minute per person, timed.)
3. **Creating Community Ground Rules Together Exercise (50 minutes):**
 - a. First, designate a note-taker who can write down the groups thoughts and ideas. Based on common themes that were shared, use the following template to come up with 1-3 Community Group Ground Rules.: ***"We believe that God is ____ so***

we commit to practicing faith/humility/hospitality through (practice) together.

Some examples:

- We believe that God is worthy of our undivided attention, so we commit to practicing hospitality by not looking at distractions on our phones during group time.
 - We believe that God is loving and kind, so we commit to practicing faith by expressing lovingkindness to one another in the forms of encouragement.
 - We believe that God is united Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, so we commit to practicing humility by making amends with one another as soon as conflict arises in the event of relational discord.
 - We believe that God is welcoming, so we commit to practicing humility by being slow to speak and quick to listen in group discussions.
- b. If people do not agree with a ground rule, then feel free to discuss, reword, and come to a consensus as a group.
- c. Make sure that all ground rules feel a) rooted in the character of God, b) helpful in practicing Faith/Humility/Hospitality, and c) practical for your group.
- d. When a ground rule is completed, have the note-taker read it aloud. All who promise to uphold this rule and compel one another to hold it should stand or raise a hand in agreement with it. If anyone does not agree, handle the disagreement through rewording/consensus building in order to be in unity. When everyone agrees, move on to the next ground rule and repeat.

4. Reflect and Discuss (if time allows):

What would it look like to gently and firmly, truthfully and gracefully, hold one another accountable to these ground rules?

Pray:

Close your time by thanking God for your community and asking Him to grow your rootedness together.

Homework:

In order to help you and your group become more rooted to the church leadership, have your CG Leader provide feedback to your neighborhood minister via e-mail.

- *How was this initial launch season?*
- *What ground rules were created?*
- *Is there any support you need?*