



We **GROW**  
Best In Community

**PORTICO**  
LEARNING HUB



ESSENTIALS - MODULE 5



"Most people in Canada have a very individualized understanding of faith. Jesus died for ME. I choose to believe it or not. MY faith expression and worship needs to work for ME. And there is an element of truth to each of these statements, but if our understanding of faith stays that individualized, we will be lacking something. Because it's just as true to say that Jesus died for the world, we are drawn by His Spirit to His Church, and our expression of faith and worship is corporate not individual.

Both are true, and both are important. In this module, I'm going to challenge you to understand your faith at a deeper level than just personal, as we look at faith expressed in community.

At PORTICO, our second core value is called GROW – that we grow together in becoming like Christ. In this module you'll learn that we do this best in community."

*Rick Carroll*

# Key Takeaways



**01**

**FAITH IN GOD IS A SHARED EXPERIENCE**

**02**

**A SHARED EXPERIENCE ENHANCES MY  
INDIVIDUAL GROWTH**



**03**

**ACCOUNTABILITY IS A SPIRITUAL  
DISCIPLINE BEST LEARNED IN  
COMMUNITY.**







*We are carefully joined together in him,  
becoming a holy temple for the Lord.*

EPHESIANS 2:21 (NLT)

# 01

## *Faith In God Is A Shared Experience*

Let's go back to the beginning of our faith with Father Abraham - the Father of Judaism, and eventually Christianity. The covenant God made with Abraham was that he would be a Father to all generations, and that He and his family would be a light to all nations. The covenant of God is made for a community, not just an individual.

As Paul journeyed across Eastern Europe and Western Asia, he preached the Good News of Jesus and converted many new followers. His teaching also led them to join a community.

When Paul wrote to the Ephesian Church, the group of believers in what is modern day Turkey, Paul reminded them that together they were a "holy temple."

Then when Paul was writing to the church of Rome, which eventually would become the centre of the entire Christian world after the destruction of Jerusalem, Paul used the analogy of the body, with many parts.



**Your faith is not actually just about you.**



*And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshipped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity.*

**ACTS 2:44-46 (NLT)**



You can't get away from the teaching in the New Testament that faith is to be lived out and expressed in a group, not as an individual. My belief might be personal, but my expression is communal.

The individualized understanding of faith in Jesus has developed more because of how individualistic we are as North Americans.

Many times, our own success comes at the expense of someone else's success. Sadly, this has carried over to our faith expression, where we focus on making sure we as individuals are doing alright, and ignore the journey of others. This is not the picture we see in the Bible of the early Church.

Could you even fathom selling your home, or something of value that you own, and then be reliant on just the Church and your fellow believers for shelter, food, and providing all your needs?

And I'm not suggesting that this is the kind of community we should all be living in. We have to contextualize it for our world. The 1st century Jerusalem is very different from the 21st century Mississauga, so we're not going to sell homes and live together. But we are going to take the principle that the journey of faith is not just about me, it's about us.



**If we're living just as individuals,  
we're missing a big part of how Jesus established His church.**



## Reflection #1

In what ways have you been making faith only about yourself and your own personal journey?

How do you live out your faith?



# Notes



*And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul's message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth.*

**ACTS 17:11 (NLT)**

## 02

# *A Shared Experience Enhances My Individual Growth*

So if you can acknowledge that your faith is not just about you, you're in a good starting place. But a shared faith experience has a lot of personal benefits as well.

In Module 4, we learn how and why we should read the Bible. But many Christians say that when they read the Bible, they struggle to understand exactly what they are reading. It's only when we get together, study it together, and let the Holy Spirit speak to a group of us that we gain better understanding of what we just read.

It's recorded in Acts 17:11 that the believers in the Berean Church modelled this behaviour for us, and they grew in their faith because of it.

In this passage of Scripture we read learn about the two groups of believers. The group in **Thessalonica** were just going to the Synagogue, hearing someone teach, and left it at that. But Luke (who wrote Acts) elevates the practice of the **Bereans**, saying that they questioned what they heard, and went and studied the scriptures to make sure it was true.

Sadly, there are all kinds of speakers who say something so passionately that you are convinced they must be teaching truth. But when you go back and read about it in the Bible, it's not always in alignment with how Jesus taught.

**When we study together, we gain a better understanding of the Bible.**

We have seen many teachings that faith will make you rich. But Jesus said that it's harder for the rich to enter heaven.

We have seen people teach that if we give more in the offering, God will bless us more. But Jesus highlighted the tiny offering that the widow gave over the large offerings of the richer people.

We've heard teaching about being able to speak whatever we want in Jesus' name and receive it so that our lives are made better. But the context of this teaching is off base, and every disciple of Jesus would lose their life for the sake of gospel, in the example that Jesus gave them.

Sometimes, these poor understandings of Scripture happen unintentionally, as we get too focused on certain verses and forget the context of the whole Bible. Sometimes, they happen maliciously. But either way, protection from misunderstanding comes from reading the Bible for ourselves, and by seeking the wisdom of others around us to help us interpret the Scriptures together.



**Seek the wisdom of others to interpret the Bible.**





*Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.*

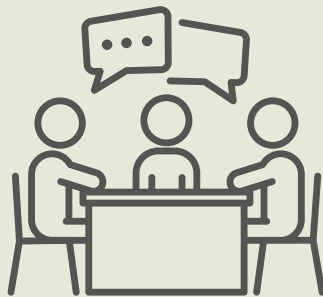
**PHILIPPIANS 4:9 (NLT)**

Solomon, who was granted wisdom from God, instructed us that **"...there is safety in having many advisers."** Proverbs 11:14

With all of the New Testament teachings about faith in community, we should never be surprised if we feel like we get into a rut with our growth in faith as individuals. We were not designed to figure it out all by ourselves. In fact, there is almost nothing that we can ever truly advance in without doing so in community.

We learn from teachers, we work collaboratively as teams, we avoid failure from the mistakes of others, and we see examples from their successes. This is the pattern of growth in every facet of our lives, and it is especially crucial when it comes to our faith.

One of Paul's final instructions to the Philippian Church was to follow the example he set for them.



**There is safety in having many advisers.**



## Reflection #2

How can you grow in community, not just as an individual?

Is there someone who thinks differently from you that you are discussing your faith with?

# Notes



*As iron sharpens iron,  
so a friend sharpens a friend.*

**PROVERBS 27:17 (NLT)**



## 03

### *Accountability Is A Spiritual Discipline Best Learned In Community.*

It's not just knowledge that we gain from being involved in a communal faith experience, there's also accountability.

When we're accountable to a group of believers, inevitably we'll become more generous, giving of ourselves at our own expense. We'll be kinder to people even when they are upset with us. We'll start speaking with love, and represent Jesus to world in which that is very counter-cultural.

None of these things are easy. However, being around other believers, helps us hear and see how other people are doing in some of the areas where we might be struggling. And, in turn, we might be a great example in some areas for others to follow.

Iron is of course one of the strongest metals. So even though you might be a strong believer, positioning your life next to another strong believer can only make you stronger, just like iron striking other iron is a tool for sharpening.

Accountability is not something we typically look for or want. To be accountable means that there will be times when you have to admit a failure, or even feel like a failure. When there's accountability, our shortcomings get highlighted to ourselves and to others.

**PORTICO's core value of GROW**  
**is all about growing together to become more like Christ.**





*Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself.*

**GALATIANS 6:1-2 (NLT)**

It begs the question – what is the ultimate goal of our faith?

If it's to appear spiritual, then accountability is a bad thing, because it reveals our failure. If it's to become more like Christ, then accountability is a great thing, because it keeps us moving forward. It's a painful but necessary process for every follower of Christ.

In our world, when a person experiences failure, they often feel like they need to leave a community. Failure can be a very shameful thing. But God didn't design our community to be this way. He designed it so that we would be able to confess our failures to Him, and to each other, as part of the process of becoming more like Him.

We've messed this up in Church culture. We make it so hard for people to admit a flaw. Instead of reaching out for help from the very people who can help them, people hide their flaws, hoping that their secret failures are never uncovered. Accountability is helping one another overcome struggles. It's not about control, it's about training and mentoring to help you succeed.

In the same way you have a coach at a gym to keep you moving forward, or a teacher in your class to push you deeper to the next level of learning, accountability in our Christian relationships is what can make the difference between stagnating at one level of faith, or moving it forward.

**A follower of Jesus should submit themselves to accountability.**





## Reflection #3

What are some areas in your life that you need to be held accountable for?

Who do you would trust to keep you accountable?

# Notes



## Join a Growth Group

At PORTICO, the way we engage in accountability is through Growth Groups. Growth Groups can be 3 or 4 people, or they can be 20-25 people. Some groups meet weekly, some monthly. The point is that we intentionally align our lives with the lives of other believers, for the purpose of growing together.

Every week at PORTICO we provide discussion material that follows what is taught at church on Sundays. It's not about relearn everything that was taught on Sundays from the best teachers, it's about gathering together with friends so that we can support each other's growth and refinement to become disciples of Jesus.

[PORTICO.CC/GROW](https://portico.cc/grow)



*So it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.*

**ROMANS 12:5 (NLT)**

*...there is safety in having many advisers.*

**PROVERBS 11:14 (NLT)**

*Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ.*

**GALATIANS 6:2 (NLT)**

*Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts.*

**COLOSSIANS 3:16 (NLT)**

*Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.*

**HEBREWS 10:24-25 (NLT)**