What’s most important in life? We might say our family. We might say our faith. We might say our job. It’s interesting to me, though, that what the Bible talks about most, isn’t any of those things. Sure, faith in terms of our relationship with God is primary in our lives overall, but it almost seems like that relationship with God is secondary, or at least it’s complementary, to something else.
What I mean relates to an interesting conversation I had recently. A group of guys, two of whom have first-hand knowledge of the prison system, were discussing our American prison situation. And for someone like me who has little experience with those things, it was fascinating how the inside of the prison worked. One aspect especially is that some prisoners prefer the life inside the prison to life outside of it. One of the guys actually said that if the gates were opened for the prisoners to get out, about half of them would stay rather than escape to their ‘freedom’. And there are various reasons for that, but one of them was the community they had within the prison walls.
And though it shows up in various forms, being a part of a group or community, even within the prison system, is essential to people. In fact, prisoners join religious groups within the prison just to feel a part of a community. And that is what is really important in the Bible, too. In fact, it seems like that’s mostly what the Bible talks about.
Which brings me back to what is most important. All the ‘love one another’ language we see in the New Testament is really just a reflection of the relationship that we have with God. It is only when we truly are in good community that we truly have a good relationship with God. Did you read that closely? To truly love God, we must love others. We must be committed to others. When Jesus says the two most important things in this world are to love God and love others, he’s really saying that to love God we must love others. 1 John 4 makes this very clear.
And though it’s become ever so popular to say we love God but we aren’t involved in a community (especially a church), that was never how Jesus intended it to be. In fact, *our relationship with God reflects how much relationship we have in our community*. If we don’t connect with people regularly, and love them continually, I don’t know how close to God we can be.
And I write this selfishly. When you, yes you, aren’t involved in a community as a Christian, I suffer. I miss out on the community being more whole, more complete. So, I pray, please join me and other followers of Jesus for our benefit and yours. God bless.