Introduction:

Why do so many good and sincere Christians get “spiritually stuck?” They love God, they want to grow, they have seen some measure of spiritual transformation, but they “stall,” they hit a spiritual ceiling. Some habits or attitudes seem to never change. Trying hard and making “re-commitments” last only for a short time. What do you do when you’re spiritually stuck?

Axiom: The greatest seed, in the greatest soil, cannot grow in the wrong environment.

- The ________________ of Jesus requires a very specific spiritual ecosystem.  
  John 13:34-35

- The ________________ of Jesus’ ministry to develop His disciples demands a specific ecosystem.  
  Mark 3:13-14

- The ________________ of the early church and its impact argue for a specific ecosystem.  
  Acts 2:42-47

- The ________________ of the Church, past and present, confirms a specific ecosystem for spiritual growth and transformation.
The Spiritual Ecosystem: ____________________________  ____________________________.

The form this system takes is: ______________   ______________  ______________.

A critical distinction: ____________________________  ≠  ____________________________.

**The principle:** We must be engaged in the spiritual ecosystem of authentic community for spiritual maturity to occur.

**Two big questions:**

1. What is authentic community?

2. How do you get it?

**Authentic community occurs when...**

The *real* you...

...*meets real needs...*  

...*for the right reasons...*  

...*in the right way.*

Romans 12:9-13

verse 9

verse 10

verse 11

verses 12-13
The real you – Not a ________________ of yourself. Romans 12:9

- Authenticity – “Let love be sincere.”
- Purity – “Hate what is evil. Cling to what is good.”

Meets real needs – Not ________________ ones. Romans 12:10

- Devotion – “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.”
- Humility – “Giving preference to one another in honor.”

For the right reason – Not to ________________ people. Romans 12:11

- Motive – “Not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.”
- Method – “Genuine service to God is characterized by:
  
  o Diligence – excellence
  
  o Enthusiasm – passion
**True Spirituality**
Becoming a Romans 12 Christian
Part 5 – Serving in Love

**How to Experience Authentic Community**
Romans 12:9-13

In the right way – Not in our own ________________________. Romans 12:12-13

- **Upward Focus** – “Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer.”

- **Outward Focus** – “Contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing (pursuing) hospitality.”

**Why is authentic community so important to Jesus?**

> John 17:20-21 (NIV)

**Application/Discussion Questions:**

1. Share a time when you’ve experienced authentic community in a significant way with brothers and sisters in Christ. (What made it so special to you?)

2. Describe a time when the hypocrisy of a Christian was a stumbling block for you.

3. Why do you think authenticity is so important in relationships? In having a positive impact on others?

4. What’s the difference between “real needs” and superficial ones? How does motive play into meeting “real” needs?

5. What specific step of faith/obedience do you need to take to build authentic community for you or someone else in order to be an answer to Jesus’ prayer in John 17?

**Resources from Living on the Edge to Help You Apply Romans 12:9-13**

- *Love One Another* - (CD series) – Chip Ingram
- *Five Lies That Ruin Relationships* – (CD/DVD series) – Chip Ingram
- *Small Group Bible Studies* – Available online at LivingontheEdge.org