

Why Community?

Imperative #4: Our Objective of Unity and Love.

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

John 13:34-35 (NASB as throughout)

If we pull gently on the term "community" we imagine we can see "**communing in unity**." That's what we seek to do, to become fully devoted to Jesus Christ together, and to share His heart together. Christ is the unifying, defining reality that holds our church together as a supernatural body. ". . . so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." **Romans 12:5-6**

Why Is Community So Important?

Our church belongs to Jesus Christ, her head. The church is a supernatural family, a spiritual temple indwelt by His Spirit, an expression of His kingdom for displaying His glory, and advancing His gospel. The way we display His life is by sharing His love to one another. This is key to the church's effectiveness. He said, "*By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*" **John 13:35**

No less than ten passages directly command us to love one another – Romans 13:8; Galatians 5:13; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11; 23; 4:7; 1-12; and 2 John 5. Love for one another is the key to a healthy, attractive, effective church. Love for one another is our goal. Consider these key instructions:

4 Ephesians 4:15-16. ". . . but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."

4 Colossians 3:12-15. "So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity."

4 1 Peter 4:8 "Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins."

What Characterizes a Christian Community? The Bible has much to say about how Christians relate to one another. How we show our love in Christian community is explained at great length. Here are ten Biblical features of love that we desire to pursue in our church family relationships:

- 1. Be Devoted to One Another:** Paul stresses that commitment to one another is essential. We show this commitment in the way we give preference to others. "*Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor.*" **Romans 12:10**
- 2. Be of the Same Mind with One Another:** "*Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" **Romans 15:5-6**
- 3. Accept One Another:** "*Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.*" **Romans 15:7-8**

- 4. Admonish One Another:** *"And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another."* Romans 15:14-15
- 5. Greet One Another:** *"Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you."* Romans 16:16
"Be hospitable to one another without complaint." 1 Peter 4:9-10
- 6. Serve One Another:** *"For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."* Galatians 5:13-14
- 7. Bear One Another's Burdens:** *Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ."* Galatians 6:2-3
- 8. Bear with One Another:** *"Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for ("bearing with" NIV) one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."* Ephesians 4:1-3
- 9. Submit to One Another:** *"... and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ."* Ephesians 5:21
- 10. Encourage One Another:** *"Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing."* 1 Thessalonians 5:11

How Can You Become Involved in Community in Our Church?

We've identified a principle of spiritual growth: Maturing in Christ-likeness comes about as truth is applied to life within the context of relationships. There are four relational contexts in which you can join with others in community to advance in loving and serving Jesus with one another (See chart, *Focus*, Section One, "Balancing Our Church Ministry"). Your commitment to these core ministries allows full benefit of community to all of us.

- 1. Proclamation** – General assembly for sharing worship, communion, biblical instruction and evangelism.
Our worship services are designed to allow all of us to experience together the unifying presence of God. Most people visit our Sunday services first, and are welcomed and encouraged to explore other ministries.
- 2. Participation** – Intermediate size classes for Biblical instruction, assimilation by building caring relationships.
Our adult electives, youth ministry, and children's Sunday School offer intermediate size Christian education groups for building friendships while learning God's truths in a systematic way.
- 3. Partnership** – Small group focused on how Scripture applies to life, often in context of shared ministry.
Our small-group ministry concept is growing. New groups are forming. In addition, please explore joining a ministry team, such as choir, ensemble, praise teams, drama, hospitality and Outreach Center volunteer.
- 4. Purposeful Friendship** – One-to-one discipleship to focus on Christ-like character & growing devotion to Jesus.
Our desire is that discipleship and mentoring relationships abound in our church, initiated by all leaders, but not limited to them. We encourage you to ask the Lord to identify a faith-friend to share life-issues.

***The central arena for living out our Christian faith is our relationships.
The world is watching! They long to see spiritual reality in us.
Will they know that we are His disciples by our love?***