

The Way of Jesus, Pt. 4: Community with God's People

Victory Life Church, Central — Sunday, March 30, 2025

Introduction

God has always been looking for a people to partner with for the cultivation and blessing of the world. God wants a people, he wants a family.

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Romans 8:29 (NLT) For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the **firstborn among many brothers and sisters**.

Transformation happens in a relationship with Jesus and His family.

Church is not an event you go to; it is a family to belong to.

Interestingly, from birth, you also want a family. From very early on, your brain is searching for the answer, “who are my people?” So much of your life is shaped by the pursuit of the answer to this specific question.

“The brain functions that determine our character are most profoundly shaped by who we love...In the human brain, identity and character are formed by who we love.”¹ ~ Jim Wilder

“Our identity is defined in community.”² ~ Carmen Joy Imes

Belonging

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT) This means that anyone who **belongs to Christ** has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

In Christ, you belong before you believe; and you belong before you behave.

Ephesians 2:10–11, 13, 18–19 (NLT) 10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has **created us anew** in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

11 Don't forget that you Gentiles **used to be outsiders**. You were called “uncircumcised heathens” by the Jews, who were proud of their circumcision, even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts... 13 But **now you have been united with Christ Jesus**. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been **brought near to him** through the blood of Christ... 18 Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of **what Christ has done for us**. 19 So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. **You are members of God's family**.

¹ Jim Wilder and Dallas Willard, *The Complete Guide to Living with Men* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2011), p. 37.

² Carmen Joy Imes. *Being God's Image: Why Creation Still Matters* (p. 47)

Transformation happens in a relationship with Jesus and His Body.

Mark 3:13–15 (ESV) 13 And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. 14 And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so **that they might be with him** and he might send them out to preach 15 and have authority to cast out demons.

In Christ, you belong before you believe; and you belong before you behave.

Romans 12:4-5 (NLT) Just as our bodies have many parts and **each part** has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of **one body**, and **we all belong to each other**.

"Our brains draw life from our strongest relational attachments to grow our character and develop our identity. Who we love shapes who we are."³ ~ Michel Hendricks

"Our brains were designed to respond to group identity in order to help us act like 'our people.' Our right brain contains the control center that interprets our group identity and uses it to shape our inner character. The orbital prefrontal cortex (on the right side of our brain behind the eye) is dominant for integrating my current situation in life with who I am—in real time. Every one-sixth of a second our right brain tries to answer the questions, 'Who am I? How do my people act now?'"⁴ ~ Michel Hendricks

One Another

In the New Testament, the phrase "one another" is frequently used to instruct the people of God (the church) on what it means to "belong" in community, then to those who belong, how to "behave" in community. If "who we love shapes who we are," and if Jesus' family is "our people," how should our identity and behavior be shaped by this belonging?

Here are a few examples of "one another" texts:

- John 13:34–35: "A new commandment I give to you, that you **love one another**: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have **love for one another**."
- Romans 12:10: "**Love one another** with brotherly affection. Outdo **one another in showing honor**."
- Galatians 5:13: "For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love **serve one another**."
- Ephesians 4:2: "With all humility and gentleness, with patience, **bearing with one another** in love."
- Ephesians 4:32: "**Be kind to one another**, tenderhearted, **forgiving one another**, as God in Christ forgave you."

³ Michel Hendricks and Jim Wilder, *The Other Half of the Church: Christian Community, Brain Science, and Overcoming Spiritual Stagnation* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2020), 79

⁴ Michel Hendricks and Jim Wilder, *The Other Half of the Church: Christian Community, Brain Science, and Overcoming Spiritual Stagnation* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2020), 114

- Colossians 3:13: "**Bearing with one another** and, if one has a complaint against another, **forgiving each other**; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."
- 1 Thessalonians 5:11: "Therefore **encourage one another** and **build one another up**, just as you are doing."
- Hebrews 10:24: "And let us consider how to **stir up one another** to love and good works."
- 1 Peter 4:9: "Show **hospitality to one another** without grumbling."
- 1 John 4:11: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to **love one another**."

These are just a sample size of how the New Testament instructs God's people how to act toward each other. They emphasize love, humility, service, forgiveness, encouragement, and hospitality among believers, highlighting the importance of mutual care and community within the church.

Honor and Hospitality

Two items from this list that we need to focus on are honor and hospitality. These two act as primary anchors in cultivating a community for others to belong to.

Romans 12:10 (ESV) Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing **honor**.

To honor someone is to be fully present with them. Honor is the ministry of presence.

Romans 12:13 (NLT) When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.

"Practice" — the word practice is *diokontes*. One lexicon⁵ defines it as "to do something with an intense effort and with a definite purpose or goal."

Romans 12:13b (ESV) ...seek to show hospitality.

1 Peter 4:7–10 (ESV) 7 The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. 8 Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. 9 Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

The context within which love and hospitality are placed is the end of the world. When faced with the end of the world, the Apostle Peter encourages the people of God to show love and hospitality. He qualifies love by stating that it must be genuine; it cannot be pretentious, superficial, or forced.

The kind of hospitality Peter advocates is connected to genuine, Christ-centered love. Hospitality is a calling for us to practice it in order to create a space for God's love to be shown to one another.

⁵ Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains; Greek (NT); TDNT Volume 2, Page 229
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“Hospitality means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people but to offer them space where change can take place.”⁶ ~ Henri Nouwen

In Christ, you belong before you believe; and you belong before you behave.

Conclusion

Acts 2:46-47 (NLT) 46 They **worshiped together at the Temple each day**, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and **shared their meals** with great joy and generosity—47 all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day **the Lord added to their fellowship** those who were being saved.

⁶ Henri Nouwen on Hospitality — <https://henrinouwen.org/meditations/hospitality-2/>

“One Another”

In the English Standard Version (ESV) of the New Testament, the phrase "one another" is frequently used to instruct believers on how to live in community. Below is an exhaustive list of these directives, categorized by their overarching themes:

Love and Unity

- Love one another: John 13:34–35, John 15:12, John 15:17, Romans 13:8, 1 Thessalonians 4:9, 1 Peter 1:22, 1 John 3:11, 1 John 3:23, 1 John 4:7, 1 John 4:11–12, 2 John 5
- Be at peace with one another: Mark 9:50
- Live in harmony with one another: Romans 12:16, 1 Peter 3:8
- Welcome one another: Romans 15:7
- Greet one another with a “holy kiss”: Romans 16:16, 1 Corinthians 16:20, 2 Corinthians 13:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:26
- Wait for one another when eating: 1 Corinthians 11:33
- Do not grumble against one another: James 5:9

Humility and Service

- Outdo one another in showing honor: Romans 12:10
- Serve one another: Galatians 5:13
- Bear one another's burdens: Galatians 6:2
- Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another: Ephesians 4:32
- Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ: Ephesians 5:21
- Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another: 1 Peter 5:5

Encouragement and Edification

- Instruct one another: Romans 15:14
- Encourage one another and build one another up: 1 Thessalonians 5:11
- Stir up one another to love and good works: Hebrews 10:24
- Exhort one another every day: Hebrews 3:13
- Comfort one another concerning the resurrection: 1 Thessalonians 4:18

Truthfulness and Accountability

- Speak truth to one another: Ephesians 4:25
- Do not lie to one another: Colossians 3:9
- Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another: James 5:16

Patience and Forgiveness

- Bear with one another: Colossians 3:13
- Forgive each other: Colossians 3:13
- Show hospitality to one another without grumbling: 1 Peter 4:9

These passages collectively emphasize the importance of love, humility, service, encouragement, truthfulness, patience, forgiveness, and hospitality within the Christian community. They serve as foundational guidelines for fostering a supportive and unified body of believers.