

Finding Community in Christ

Discussion Question:

1. What have been some expectations you have had for a Christian community?
2. What are the differences between a Christian community and a secular organization?

Psalm 133

¹ Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! ² It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes! ³ It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life forevermore. (Psalm 133 ESV)

The blessing of Christian community means more than associating with other Christians.

God desires us to be in a community that reflects the relationship we have with Him. God wants us to enjoy the blessings of community and challenged to share this with others. The blessing of community should never be taken for granted because it is by God's grace that we can have community.

1. The Christian community is within not only the safety and comfort of the Christian people we know. A Christian is to go out into society and share the gospel of Christ to others. Christ left his heavenly community with God and the Holy Spirit to be physically with us.

[³²] Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. (John 16:32 ESV)

“The Kingdom is to be in the midst of your enemies. And he who will not suffer this does not want to be of the Kingdom of Christ; he wants to be among friends, to sit among roses and lilies, not with the bad people but the devout people. O you blasphemers and betrayers of Christ! If Christ has done what you are doing who would ever have been spared?” ~ Martin Luther (Life Together, p. 18)

2. Community with other Christians is a blessing given by God's grace. The degree of community we experience is also a blessing given out by God. We cannot take for granted the freedom to have community.

“So between the last death of Christ and the Last Day it is only by a gracious anticipation of the last things that Christians are privileged to live in visible fellowship with other Christians. It is by the grace of God that a congregation is permitted to gather visibly in this world to share God's Word and sacrament.” (Life Together, p. 18)

3. There is joy and blessing being in community. God created us for relationships and we should actively seek out and develop relationships that God presents to us. We are to treasure and not waste any moment with others knowing that every action will glorify God and enrich each other lives.

“The believer therefore lauds the Creator, the Redeemer, God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for the bodily presence of a brother. The prisoner, the sick person, the Christian in exile sees in the companionship of a fellow Christian a physical sign of the gracious presence of the triune God.” (Life Together, p. 20)

4. The old saying that “You don't know what you've got till you've lost it.” is true for many Christians who are in community. We do not know what will happen in the future which may separate us from Christian community.

“It is true, of course, that what is an unspeakable gift of God for the lonely individual is easily disregarded and trodden under foot by those who have the gift every day. It is easily forgotten that the fellowship of Christian brethren is a gift of grace, a gift of the Kingdom of God that any day may be taken from us, that the time that still separates us from utter loneliness may be brief indeed.” (Life Together, p. 20)

“Therefore, let him who until now has had the privilege of living a common Christian life with other Christians praise God's grace from the bottom of his heart. Let him thank God on his knees and declare: It is grace, nothing but grace that we are allowed to live in community with Christian Brethren.” (Life Together, p. 20)

“Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ.” (Life Together, p. 21)

The foundation of our Christian community is through the redemptive work on the cross by Jesus Christ. Our personal relationship we have with God produces an outward expression of community we have with others. This outward expression of this relationship should be evident in our relationships with our friends and family, bible study groups, and churches.

1. A Christian’s need for others comes directly from the need for Christ’s grace and salvation. A Christian understands that his salvation is not on his own abilities but on God’s work through Jesus Christ. A Christian’s focus moves from a selfish inward living to an outward living based on God’s word in the Bible.

“The Reformers expressed it this way: Our righteousness is an “alien righteousness,” a righteousness that comes for outside of us (*extra nos*). They were saying that the Christian is dependent on the Word of God spoken to him. He is pointed outward, to the Word that comes to him. The Christian lives wholly by the truth of God’s Word in Jesus Christ.” (Life Together, p. 22)

2. God uses people to communicate His Words to us. We need another Christian to speak God’s Word to rebuke, encourage, edify and to speak wise council. The most important thing of all is that we can speak the message of salvation to others.

“When one person is struck by the Word, he speaks it to others. God has willed that we should seek and find His living Word in the witness of a brother, in the mouth of man. Therefore, the Christian needs another Christian who speaks God’s word to him.

3. We have community with each other through Jesus Christ. The restoration of our relationship corresponds to our restoration of our relationships with others because we can live with each other unified by God’s Love and Truth. This is the reason Christians are called “the Body of Christ”.

“We belong to him because we are in him. That is why the Scriptures call us the Body of Christ. But if, before we could know and wish it, we have been chosen and accepted with the While Church in Jesus Christ, then we also belong to him in eternity with one another.” (Life Together, p.24)

The single thing that defines our community with each other is what Jesus Christ did for us. It doesn’t matter if a Christian is younger, more mature, more spiritual, or less knowledgeable because the most important bond we have with each other is that we are part of God’s community.

“This fact that we are brethren only through Jesus Christ is of immeasurable significance. Not only the other person who is earnest and devout, who comes to me seeking brotherhood must I deal with in fellowship. My brother is rather than that other person who has been redeemed by Christ, delivered from his sin, and called to faith and eternal life. Not what a man is in himself as a Christian, his spirituality and piety, constitutes the basis of our community. What determines our brotherhood is what that man is because of Christ. Our community with one another consists solely in what Christ has done to both of us.” (Life Together, p. 25)

Conclusion

⁹ Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, ¹⁰ for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, (1 Thessalonians 4:9-10 ESV)