

SERIES: **The Pillars**- the load-bearing values that support TWC

Emperor Penguins live in some of the harshest conditions on earth. [Show picture](#)

During an arctic storm temperatures can drop to -70 degrees Fahrenheit!

When the blizzards come, they huddle together by the thousands, rotating from the edge to the inside

They survive because they are together

TITLE: **A Life Together**

CULTIVATE COMMUNITY- Living in proximity with other disciples as we move towards maturity together.

Vance Pitman- *“Without community I cannot faithfully follow Jesus”*

Acts 1 Jesus *ascends*; Acts 2 the Holy Spirit *descends*

Two things happen afterwards-

1. The mandate for the Gospel to be preached to all people

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

All barriers torn down- that's important for the 2nd thing that followed

2. The Church was born

Acts 2:44 Now all the believers were together and held all things in common.

The remainder of the book is the spread of the gospel
& the cultivating of Christian Community

Two Common Objections:

1. I'm not needed

I'm too new; I don't know enough; I don't have the talents that so-and-so has, etc.

1 Corinthians 12:14-20 Indeed, the body is not one part but many. ¹⁵If the foot should say, "Because I'm not a hand, I don't belong to the body," it is not for that reason any less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear should say, "Because I'm not an eye, I don't belong to the body," it is not for that reason any less a part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But as it is, God has arranged each one of the parts in the body just as he wanted. ¹⁹And if they were all the same part, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

The Church is incomplete when the gift God placed in you remains unused

2. I don't need you

Me and God have our own thing; the church is full of hypocrites anyway

1 Corinthians 12:21-23 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" Or again, the head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you!" ²²On the contrary, those parts of the body that are weaker are indispensable. ²³And those parts of the body that we consider less honorable, we clothe these with greater honor, and our unrespectable parts are treated with greater respect

You are incomplete when the gift God placed in the church remains unreceived

In the New Testament, church community was not optional but essential

- The idea of **individualistic Christianity** doesn't exist;
- The idea of **relationally superficial** Christians doesn't exist

So we're not just talking about getting together;

we're talking about living deeply connected lives in Christ with one another, as we grow together

Sundays are *essential*, but they are not the *end*; they are the push, the catalyst

I have gotten to know many of you in this room;

But I have grown deeper in friendship with many of you outside of this room

Some of the best coffee I've had is in your living rooms and porches

W. Lyndsey- *"Although we can gain the power to love others by our times alone with the Lord, that love is never expressed or stimulated except by being with other people."*

That's the argument the writer of Hebrews is making-

Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching.

"Consider one another"- the Greek word carries the idea of examining someone up and down

"Provoke..."- that's not just staring at the back of someone's head one day a week

It's correction; encouragement; and it only happens in true fellowship

V25- why is this verse so important???

Because the journey is long and difficult, but the finish line is sure

Did you know there are approximately 59 "One another" commands in the NT?

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| • Love one another (Jn 13:34-35; Jn 15:12, 17; Romans 13:8) | • Forgive one another (Eph 4:32) |
| • Be devoted to one another (Rom 12:10) | • Submit to one another (Eph 5:21) |
| • Honor one another (Rom 12:10) | • Do not lie to one another (Col 3:9) |
| • Live in harmony with one another (Rom 12:16) | • Bear with one another (Col 3:13) |
| • Stop passing judgment on one another (Rom 14:13) | • Teach...[one another] (Col 3:16) |
| • Accept one another (Rom 15:7) | • Admonish one another (Col 3:16) |
| • Instruct one another (Rom 15:4) | • Make your love increase and overflow for one another (I Thess 3:12) |
| • Greet one another (Rom 16:16; I Cor 16:20, 2Cor 13:12; I Thess 5:26) | • Encourage one another (I Thes 4:18, 5:11; Heb 10:25) |
| • Wait for one another (I Cor 11:33) | • Build up one another (I Thes 5:11) |
| • Have concern for one another (I Cor 12:25) | • Provoke one another toward love and good deeds (Heb 10:24) |
| • Serve one another (2 Cor 13:12) | • Do not slander one another (Js 4:11) |
| • Carry one another's burdens (Gal 6:2) | • Don't grumble against one another (Js 5:9) |
| • Be patient, bearing with one another (Eph 4:2) | • Confess your sins to one another (Js 5:16) |
| • Be kind and compassionate to one another (Eph 4:32) | • Pray for one another (Js 5:16) |
| | • Live in harmony with one another (I Pet 3:8) |

Yes, Christian community can be challenging. It's this way by design.

Why? Here's some insight to think about: **Church is for sinners.....and you're one of them**

You are someone's difficult "one another"

Thankfully, Jesus set an example of community for us to follow-

It's what some have called: **The fellowship of Differents**

Think about it; of the 12 disciples,

-Matthew was a tax collector (**Matt. 9:9**)- hated by their own people for being Rome's collectors

-Simon the Zealot (**Acts 1:13**)- the biggest opposition group to Rome and its enforcement agents

Jesus brought both together

Travis Ogle- *"In the early church, it was their relationship with God that brought them into relationship with each other, and it was their relationship with each other that was deepening their relationship with God."*

The community between Christians deepens their communion with God

Colossians 3:12-15 Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, ¹³bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive. ¹⁴Above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. ¹⁵And let the peace of Christ, to which you were also called in one body, rule your hearts. And be thankful.

William Barclay- *"It is most significant to note that every one of the virtues and graces listed has to do with personal relationships between man and man. There is no mention of virtues like efficiency, cleverness, even diligence and industry- not that these things are not important. But the great basic Christian virtues are the virtues which govern and set the tone of human relationships. Christianity is community. Christianity has on its divine side the amazing gift of peace with God, and on its human side the triumphant solution of the problem of living together."*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book '*Life Together*' reflects on Christian community based on his experience leading an underground seminary during Nazi Germany

One of the key insights: **Christians are united not directly to each other but through Christ.**

It's what others have referred to as the diff. between *Bounded community* vs *Centered community*

In a Bounded community, what unites is similarity to each other

In a Centered community, what unites is similarity to the center

Why is that important?

If all that binds you to other Christians is your similarities to them, those bonds will eventually break; But if what binds you to other Christians is Christ, those bonds hold, and in a time of need, will hold you up

Bonhoeffer says, *"Idealized visions of perfect fellowship damage real communities."*

There are no perfect churches this side of eternity-

there are only imperfect churches, that are perfect, to give and to receive grace in

So where do we go from here?

- Sign up for New Members Class

Christian community is not sustained by grand acts of gesture; (although those are helpful);

Christian community is sustained by continual small acts of grace

- Ask someone you've hurt to forgive you
- Tell someone who's hurt you that you forgive them
- Invite someone to your house for dinner this week
- Let someone know you're praying for them
- Help someone pay a bill, fill up their tank, buy them some groceries
- Ask for help
- Give help
- Tell someone you appreciate them and you're proud of them
- Look around, find a need, meet a need

Ephesians 6 (the armor of God passage)- Paul wraps up this section with v18

Ephesians 6:18 Pray at all times in the Spirit with every prayer and request, and stay alert with all perseverance **and intercession for all the saints.**

Everyone here is fighting a battle; Someone near me needs my support

Show picture again

CALL UP WORSHIP TEAM

Another commentator wrote- *“Paul was aware of the imperfections of the Christian community and therefore of the need for the Spirit of Christ. We do not need the grace of God to love the lovely. Any pagan can do that. Grace is for those people and times when it is difficult to live the life of love.”*

Bounded community vs centered community

Bounded- what unites is similarity to each other

Centered- what unites is similarity to the center

If all that binds us together is each other's likeness or likeability, those cords will eventually break.

If what holds us together is the center, those cords will endure- despite differences, trials & pain

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Life Together* reflects on Christian community based on his experience leading an underground seminary in Finkenwalde during Nazi Germany

“Christian community means community through and in Jesus Christ.” (p. 23–24)

- **Christians are united not directly to each other but through Christ.**
- Christ mediates every relationship within the church.

Community becomes distorted when believers expect fulfillment directly from others rather than from Christ.

“He who loves his dream of a community more than the Christian community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter.” (p. 27)

- **Idealized visions of perfect fellowship damage real communities.**
- Disappointment with imperfect people often reveals that we loved our dream more than the actual church.

Gratitude for what God has given (the church) sustains Christian Fellowship

Christians should not complain about weaknesses in the church.

Instead, they should recognize that fellow believers are a gift of grace.

Community is sustained by small acts of grace, not grand gestures.

Listening to hear; bearing one another's burdens; meekness; helpfulness;

Confession breaks the power of sin

Sin thrives in isolation but weakens in honest, Christ-centered confession.

James 5:16

Summary: true Christian community is a gift of grace grounded in Christ, sustained by the Word, strengthened by humility and service, and protected by confession and gratitude.