

In Christ there are to be



No Lone Rangers



in

His Church

All believers are joined together in Christ at the head, through our hearts, and by the hip. So that we are living out His life as His chosen instruments the Church. No one can have a private relationship in Christ without also being united completely with His people in love.

If we are one body in Christ as God's word declares, why are we so disconnected as a whole?

Loving one another cannot be restricted to just a few of our choice if we are sincerely saved.

Therefore, how can we honestly claim to be Bible believing Christians when we don't know what's happening with the lives of so many in our local congregation?

No Christian lives alone

Jesus said go into the world and make disciples, teaching them to obey all I have commanded you. Jesus was about building His Church, His special spiritual filled community where everyone served each other as they reached out into the world taking His call to repent and live for the honour of God.

The New Testament Church was all about the love for one another in community where each one shared the struggles of life with one another. Real Christian fellowship is based on divinely prepared holy relationships.

The fellowship of God requires relationships that are based on loving God and loving others. Since love is about sacrificially putting others first, self-centeredness is not compatible with fellowship.

As one Pastor put it, “we spend years going to church to get our needs met – the service was for us, the sermon was for us, the music was for us, the pastor was for us, the fellowship was for us. We are looking for fellowship, and the motivation revolves around getting our needs met... And so, we really haven’t changed at all. We’re still consumed, absorbed, obsessed, and infatuated with what we need and frustrated by what we don’t have.”

The evidence is that we still live for self and not for Christ.

The biggest problem we face is our spiritual immaturity and our inability to understand what healthy Christian relationships should look like. Real spiritual fellowship is based on working on loving sacrificial relationships with others. A relationship is not about what we can take from the relationship, but what we can give to the relationship.

In Christ the Holy Spirit ensures we have the life of Christ and a spiritual ability to use as we contribute to the life of His body, the Church. When we surrender to the governance of the Spirit, His heart of fellowship will live in us and we will seek to love others as Christ loves us.

Jesus died that we could be raised up into newness of His life together in Him. In Him we have fellowship together with the Father, Son and Spirit. Our absolute surrender and obedience means we would do as He requires; which means we would live in obedience to God and offer ourselves as living sacrifices for the good of all men in doing the Father's will that none shall be lost. But God's way is not what we often find when we are looking for Christ in the Church.

The local church ought to be the place where we can find genuine fellowship in Christ. *"I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me."* John 17:23

Another Pastor suggested that some churches were more like a movie theatre than a place of spiritual fellowship. Going to the movies means individuals quietly find their seat, watch a movie together with many strangers, get up and leave, often without speaking a word to another patron.

The New Testament clearly presents the church as God's chosen people who no longer live for the world. It is a living body knit together by their common union with the love of Christ as they fulfil their ministry by using their gift from the Holy Spirit for the good of all.

So shared communion is not about talking about our life in the world as we enjoy a cuppa, it's about keeping our focus on Christ and what He is doing in us and others as we seek His will for the church in the world. Fellowship is about all of us participating in each other's lives for the glory of God.

It's surprisingly easy to get people to talk about what things are of interests them, like their holiday, their work, politics, sport, hobbies, and the antics of their children. But question them about how their theology works out in their lives, and the conversation slows to a stop.

In the New Testament *Koinonía* refers to communion as fellowship, joint participation, the share which one has in anything, a gift jointly contributed, a collection, and a contribution. *Koinonía* is a noun but its brothers and sisters are verbs that have to be acted on.

This fellowship of communion refers to our common union. This communion we have is fellowship with God and those in Christ that fulfils the work of Christ in order for us to know and experience God now and forever.

True fellowship is the fellowship of the Spirit, it is spiritual truth applied to the mundane self centred things of the flesh so that we can more completely put on Christ.

The importance of true Christian fellowship is that it helps us focus on Christ and His desires and goals for us as His body. True Christian fellowship sharpens one another's faith. It stirs us to exercise that faith in love and good works, all to God's glory. True fellowship is about our shared spiritual life in Christ. It's about living for Him as we live together through Him.

So fellowship not about talking about our life in the world, but about keeping our focus on Christ and what He is doing in us as we seek His will for the church in the world. Fellowship is about all of us who are in Christ participating in each other's lives for the glory of God.

"What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

1 John 1:3

'Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honour; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.'

Rom 12:9-13

Our first desire as believers is to be true in fellowship, and sharing intimate spiritual communion with each other by God the Father, Son and Spirit. This common spiritual union with each other in Christ means we share fervent devoted love for one another as a cherished possession of Christ our Lord.

As He has loved us with all He is, we love one another with all He has given us of Himself before thinking about ourselves.

Common devotion means that we are not only committed to something we love, but we work at that love and frequently invest much time, money, and effort into the commitment to love as Christ loves us.

Spiritual fellowship has a strong attachment of affection; it is determined to maintain earnest zeal; it is especially pertinent concerning our feelings toward God expressed by acts of worship; which includes devotedness in affectionate attachment to His people. We are the means of His love impacting His family.

How many people in the church are open to having a loving spiritual relationship with someone they don't know personally? How many people are uncomfortable when we begin to address personal spiritual issues or problems concerning the absence of intimate fellowship?

If we cannot see devoted love for others in the church, how can we say we love God? How will unbelievers know God cares when they don't see the love we are supposed to have for one another?

The sacrificial love of God working in the believer for the spiritual wellbeing of the brethren is the evidence that we know Him; and this love from God means we love all those who are in Christ, strangers included. Without God's love expressed in the believer, the church is irrelevant, for unbelievers will conclude that God is not in the church.

John Owen wrote: "Believers have a duty of affectionate, sincere, genuine love in all things towards one another; a love compared to that of Christ for the Church." ... "At present it is a grace that, shamefully, has been lost amongst those who call themselves Christians, to the dishonour of Christ and His Gospel." John Owen 1616-1683

Fellowship is affectionate devotion

Christian fellowship is for devotees of Christ who are also devoted to one another. Surely Christian fellowship means combined love in action to the glory of God. *'Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.'* 1 John 4:7-8

This communion of fellowship is based on the love of God. *"I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the*

love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” (John 17:26) This is the beginning of fellowship. A polite Hello and “how are you” is not what it’s all about. Fellowship is about knowing God and sharing the love of God with His chosen children. How many people in the church know who you are as God's child?

Devotion begins with the Holy Spirit

Conversion is the work of the Spirit when we have come to the end of ourselves. (John 16:8) Then the Holy Spirit convicts us of our self indulgent nature in rebellion to God. He brings us to repentance so that we willingly deny ourselves and take up our cross to follow Christ. He then cleansed us by immersing us in the blood of Christ, and raises us up in newness of His life in Him. Rom 6:4-6

The Spirit is given to each one who repents. (Acts 2:38) All who are chosen of God are no longer to live in the world as before, but are joined to Christ by the Spirit of God to live with God and be the light of God in the world.

The Holy Spirit pours out the love of God into our hearts. This love injected into us is not for ourselves but to share with all those that Jesus brings us into contact with, especially His Church. Rom 5:5

This is the meaning of true fellowship. By the work of the Spirit we no longer live, but Christ lives in us. We are not our own to please ourselves. Christ is our life and we live for Him. 2 Cor 5:14-15

The Holy Spirit unites us with Christ. *‘These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.’*

Eph 1:18-23

The Spirit unites us as the dwelling place of God. *“In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the*

Lord. And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit” Eph 2:21–22

The Spirit unifies all true believers in the one life of Christ. *“Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slaves or free—and we were all given one Spirit to drink”* 1 Cor 12:12–13

The Spirit joins us together in fellowship with God. *“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all”* 2 Cor 13:14

The Spirit unites believers in peace. *“Being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism”* Eph 4:3–5

The Spirit will live in the believer. *‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’* John 7:38-39

The Spirit will teach us what we need to know of the kingdom of God. John 14:26

The Spirit will govern our lives. Gal 5:25

The Spirit will lead us into all righteousness. John 16:13

The Spirit will empower us to witness to Christ. Acts 1:8

The Spirit will give us power over sin and the flesh. Gal 5:16-17

The Spirit will give us the qualities of His life so we can grow in Christ. Gal 5:22-23

The Spirit will give us the joy of life. Acts 13:52

The Spirit equips us for ministry and enables us to live for God. 1 Cor 12:4-11

The Spirit unites the Church in Mission and Service. Acts 2:4–11, 16–21

The Spirit unites the Church in Faith and Doctrine. Eph 4:5-6

The Spirit unites the Church through the Word of God. John 6:63

Spiritual gifts are given to each believer according to the Spirit's privilege. The sure way to know what gift He has given is to always be attentive to His leading, so that the talent finds its natural expression by living His life in Christ. The Spirit's passion for the will of God living in

us will ignite His gift of service into action. If we are still too interested in our own ideas we will not be able to be led by the Spirit, for our interest is fleshly and deaf to the word of God.

Anyone truly born of the Spirit will have His heart of devoted fellowship for Christ and His people beating in their chest, even if they don't yet understand all fellowship means in the mind of Christ.

If there is no real heart for the fellowship of God amongst His people, then the Spirit of God is not in residence. We cannot have fellowship with Jesus Christ and be strangers to one another.

Fellowship is about devotion for God's word

'They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.' Acts 2:42

Devotion to the apostles' teaching requires Pastors and Teachers as is recorded in the book of Ephesians chapter four. *'He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelist, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.'*
Eph 4:11-12

The church was devoted to the apostles teaching. Fellowship is about shared devotion in learning from God's teachers. Since the Church began, this responsibility of teaching has been given by the Spirit to those He has chosen and equipped.

In many cases good teaching is not received with devotion. Sound words seem to pass straight over the heads of the congregation. The assumption being that they have already decided what God means us to understand. God's gift of teachers means we often don't understand His word.

God might be providing the teaching required, but the congregation often remains unaffected, happy to go their merry way, stunted in their spiritual growth and usefulness.

Consequently there is a stark lack of real spiritual discernment concerning the word of God in the lives of many who claim Christ.

The teachers chosen by God are there to help overcome the flesh in our thinking, simply because we think we have already arrived at the place of knowing. If we were seriously devoted to the teaching, every church member would be eager to carry out every imperative command given to each of us in the scriptures.

Fellowship is about being devoted to what God's teachers work hard to make clear to those in their charge who think they can see all things simply by their own understanding.

Many people equate spiritual maturity as equal to been saved, and as a result become a burden on the body of Christ. As is the case with the unrepentant, everyone does what's right in their own eyes.

Devotion to true Biblical teaching requires humility and humility is a work of the Spirit in the heart of the repentant believer.

True fellowship means that the teaching of God is always open to evaluation and application by God's people together, so that any blind spots can be brought into the light. The individual is not naturally so open to the scrutiny of others according to the written word of God. The one hour church service we have been accustomed to that's supposed to be the be all and end all of our fellowship, makes it easy for those who are misinformed to escape scrutiny.

If the Spirit of God is resident in each of us, conviction will provoke questions, and the fellowship of Christians should be given time to see the truth. We do that together, because iron is for sharpening iron.

As for being devoted to the breaking of bread daily in mutual devotion house to house, we have arrived at the place where we never invite people into our homes to share a meal and talk about what God is working in us to His glory. Again we isolate ourselves from the scrutiny of those who we claim we are one family in Christ with nothing to hide because we share in His love.

Naturally our devotion to prayer also suffers; so meaningful, personally relevant timely prayer with one another is out of the question, we are too preoccupied with the world.

The bread and the prayer are the two parts of the fellowship meal, like two slices of bread; as one author put it: God's will is the filling.

From the scripture we find that love for God and each other is the glue that holds us together. Fellowship is primarily about loving one another. It should not be surprising that the most repeated command we have from God in the verses about one another, is to love one another. It is repeated sixteen times.

Fellowship is Love for one another

Love one another is central. John 13:34; John 13:35; John 15:12; John 15:17; Rom 13:8; 1 Thess 3:12; 1 Thess 4:9 2; Thess 1:3 1; Peter 1:22; 1 Pet 4:8; 1 John 3:11; 1 John 3:23; 1 John 4:7; 1 John 4:11; 1 John 4:12; 2 John 1:5

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Do not judging one another. | Rom 14:13 |
| Be devoted to one another. | Rom 12:10 |
| Be of the same mind. | Rom 12:16; Rom 15:5 |
| Build up one another. | Rom 14:19 |
| Accept one another. | Rom 15:7 |
| Abel to admonish one another. | Rom 15:14; Col 3:16 |
| Greet one another with a holy kiss. | Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12 |
| Have the same care for one another. | 1 Cor 12:25 |
| Serve one another. | Gal 5:13 |
| Showing tolerance for one another in love. | Eph 4:2 |
| SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE...for we are members of one another. | Eph 4:25 |
| Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other | Eph 4:32 |
| Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. | Eph 5:19 |
| Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. | Eph 5:21 |
| With humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; | Phil 2:3 |
| Bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, | Col 3:13 |
| With all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another | Col 3:16 |
| Abound in love for one another, | 1 Thess 3:12 |
| Comfort one another. | 1 Thess 4:18 |
| Encourage one another. | 1 Thess 5:11 Heb 10:25 |
| Build up one another. | 1 Thess 5:11 |
| Live in peace with one another. | 1 Thess 5:13 |

Always seek after that which is good for one another.	1 Thess 5:15
Encourage one another day after day,	Heb 3:13
Stimulate one another to love and good deeds.	Heb 10:24
Encouraging one another;	Heb 10:25
Do not speak against one another,	James 4:11
Do not complain, brethren, against one another,	James 5:9
Therefore, confess your sins to one another,	James 5:16
Pray for one another.	James 5:16
Be hospitable to one another.	1 Peter 4:9
As each one has received a <i>special</i> gift, employ it in serving one another.	1 Peter 4:10
Keep fervent in your love for one another.	1 Peter 4:8
Have fellowship with one another.	1 John 1:7

We belong to one another: *'And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.'*
Acts 4:32

The one another life means constant devotion to Christ in each other

"He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf."
2 Cor 5:15

Anything that distracts us from that devotion is fleshly desire for the world. The fellowship believers have with God is the same kind of fellowship His children have with one another.

If there is no effective devoted fellowship with God then there will be none with His people. If there is none with His people there is none with God. There is no life with Christ without one another.

The standard for God's fellowship is the holiness He makes possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore nothing is hidden or excused for those who have fellowship with God and His people. Those who come to the light shall not walk in the darkness. *"But if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with*

one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin."

1 John 1:7

However we avoid intimacy as if it threatens our life

We cannot be devoted to Christ and strangers to each other. When we hold others at a safe distance God is also at a safe distance because we are afraid of real spiritual intimacy, and we forget our hearts are an open book to His piercing gaze. In the same way we avoid real depth of intimacy with one another because we want to remain as we are; we fear we won't be liked if what we accept in ourselves is known in the Church.

In order to maintain our inner privacy we need to have built up barriers to keep others from intruding into our private space. One hour of Church on Sunday is a perfect shield to limit exposure. Wherever this is the case, not only are we preventing others from getting close to us, but we are excluding ourselves from real intimate involvement with others in communion.

God's heart of love in the fellowship of the Church provides for our daily restoration through conviction that leads to repentance and forgiveness.

The heart of love is a heart secured by the grace and mercy of God so we can love as Christ has commanded us to follow His example; "*just as I have loved you.*"

When we open our hearts to others by first denying ourselves, and we are completely honest, we can experience the fullness of a loving relationship made possible by living life with Christ Jesus. Eph 3:16-19

The love of God cannot be shown fully if we remain private and secretive. True love requires we are vulnerable and transparent as we deny ourselves and look to the spiritual needs of others as our Father in heaven does. A failure to deny self will mean our words of love will be strictly superficial and worthwhile communion will be impossible.

There are to be no lone strangers in the body of Christ. The Church is saved to share Communion with God in order to live in intimate fellowship with God as the people of God.

To claim to be a Christian without binding oneself to a local Church and getting personally involved in the lives of the members is inconsistent with what God teaches us about the unity of God's communing people.

Having a relationship with God is not just about us as individuals, we are one body of another who we love, Jesus Christ our Lord. We gathered together with the Lord to love others as He loves us.

To separate oneself in some sort of private religious endeavour is to be cut off from the significant others and the intimacy of life in Christ.

Privacy is about me, my and mine. This can only be seen as setting a different agenda to the Lord that He has commanded, which results in excluding others from His loving presence which is to be working in us for His good pleasure. God calls us to daily communion with each other as we live in His presence to do all things as unto Jesus our Lord.

If there is to be any chance of real fellowship, it will only come when we can be encouraged to trust God enough to lower the barricades because we have seen that the significant others in our lives are there because He has chosen them for our good. God is the first significant One with His Son, and His children are included in His significant family.

If we are still holding back, resisting the need to be vulnerable and transparent with the members of the Church, we are resisting the work of the Spirit of God and we quench the Spirit, we douse His fire in us so we grow cold towards His chosen people.

Walking by the Spirit is to live the communion life together in the presence of God. The children of God are eternally bound together by divine love with chords that can never be broken, even when we are out of sight of each other.

We are not called to live as if we are independent and isolated from the only body that gives life to the world. We are called to know the fullness of joy in intimacy with God and one another, because we are hid together in God through Christ.

We are saved for devotion to Christ and His chosen people

The fact that we are commanded to love one another in all the ways listed tells us that loving sacrificially is not going to happen automatically just because we are Christians. And it reminds us that there is no perfect Church.

We are called to have the mind of Christ so there is a lot of renewing our minds to still happen since we are to grow into Christ even though He lives in us. Fellowship perfection remains a process we are committed to, not that we are already perfect.

Our loving devotion to God in all things is the measure of the potential for fellowship with others that the Spirit will pursue in us if we are determined to follow Him in all things. To the degree He is Lord of us will determine the quality of our fellowship wherever He rules.

Fellowship begins with fervent devotion to God which gives us the opportunity for devoted fellowship with one another. Fellowship is not about worldly things; fellowship is about the life of the Spirit.

Fellowship is having our minds set on spiritual things, and sharing and building up the spiritual life in others and ourselves. God is at work in us so that we can become like Christ, together.

Sanctification is the work of the Spirit, especially in the church. Therefore we are to encourage one another to be holy for this we have been called.

Fellowship requires diligence, since all of us have bought some aspects of the fleshy isolation into the church. We help one another put to death that which is of the flesh in us so we can be made complete in Christ.

Fellowship is about seeing others as more worthy than ourselves and not giving up on seeking their holiness even if they do, for we are joined at the heart, and whatever affects their spiritual growth also affects us, all of us. Love never fails.

We often miss the spiritual reality of fellowship because we don't realise how much of the culture of the world we bring to our faith. To see what we cannot see we need one another. When we spur one

another on, the spurs have to be effective in moving us in the right direction.

The church grows by that which everyone supplies. Now here's our chance to see if we agree or not, if we do our due diligence with this teaching in the word of God, and if we find it to be correct, surely we are to just do it.

Love doesn't quit. *'And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.'* Heb 10:24

Are you a Lone Ranger Christian?

Justin Deeter FEBRUARY 27, 2012 IN CHURCH

As Christians we need real community. So often we think of ourselves as the lone ranger of the Christian faith, out riding on the horizon and staying completely self sufficient. In fact, we live in a world that prides itself on self-sufficiency.

Unfortunately, many Christians have brought this dangerous attitude into the church. We show up on Sunday morning and maybe are even involved in the ministries of the church. All the while, we are living isolated and self sufficient from the body of Christ. Do you not think this is you? Here are a few signs to see if you live as a self-sufficient Christian:

1. You see, talk to, and hang out with other church members only when you are at church.
2. You refuse to get involved in discipleship such as a Sunday School class or a small group.
3. In those classes you remain closed off and private with what's happening in your life.
4. If a church member loves you enough to call you out in your sin, you angrily get rid of that friend and move on from that church.

Here is the dangerous thing I see, particularly in my context, the Bible belt. We have so many who think of church as an activity rather than a

community. The body of Christ is a living, breathing community made up of those who have been saved by Jesus Christ.

So many live their lives as self sufficient Christians ignoring their need for biblical community. As Christians, we desperately need to surround ourselves with other believers who can encourage us, disciple us, and yes, even call us out in our sin. We need to develop deep friendships and relationships like this in our church. Instead, we show up at 11 AM, say hello to the people in the pew behind us, and sneak out before we actually have an opportunity to engage in community.

We forget that church is a gift, given to us by Jesus for our own maturity. This is why Paul tells us that each Christian has been given gifts and abilities to be used in the church for the building up of the church. Paul writes in Ephesians 4:11-16: *‘And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.’*

Does your church look like this? The church is to be the unified community of God's people living life together to encourage and spur each other on towards Christian maturity. God sanctifies His saints not in isolation but in community with other saints.

We need each other as we seek to live for Jesus. We need friends to teach us the Word. We need friends who can pray for us in our struggles. We need friends who can hold us accountable. We need friends who can speak the truth to us when we need to hear it. We need friends that can call us out in our sin and beg for our repentance.

As Christians we absolutely need this kind of community. There is no such thing as a lone ranger Christian. We need the body of Christ.

Therefore, we need to find a church and invest ourselves there. We shouldn't just show up on Sunday mornings or just go throughout the motions, but really give ourselves to the community of the church. We need to be vulnerable. We need to be honest about our shortcomings. And open ourselves to friendships and community. Then we can watch how God matures us and grows us together as we are connected to authentic Godly community.

And what about us

“Jesus calls us to be a community of people like Him, infected with His love, not a loose gathering of Lone Rangers. There is nothing of being separate in any way for those who are joined together in the Church. The Humility of Christ in us means: since Jesus Christ lives in us we are always open for inspection and questions, because we have nothing to hide and everything to share.

The Church is made up of all the called out chosen children of God who live for Him and each other. Only the flesh hides because it can't stand scrutiny.

“In Paul's mind, living in unity with one another, accepting and loving each other, is valuable finally because it makes God look good. It is from God and through God and to God. Horizontal relationships matter finally, because the glory of God matters supremely.

Our aim in every relationship is ultimately to awaken and strengthen and deepen a joyful, fruitful passion for God through Jesus Christ. 1 John 3:10, *“By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.”*

In other words, loving each other is the living evidence that we are born of God. That we are His children. That we share His nature.”

John Piper

'If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.'

1 Cor 13:2

The church archipelago

An archipelago contains a visible chain or group of islands scattered, but not actually together. It has a corporate name but they are not literally connected as one living identity dependent on each other for effective life. Instead they are individuals independent of one another.

They have contact only from a distance although they speak the same language and share similar intellectual ideas. In the end it is a loose scattering or collection of separated individuals claiming to belong to one corporation but they are actually divorced from one another because they lack physical and emotional intimacy.

The church of the archipelago is the imitation church of the world born out of the desires of the flesh.

The church of Christ is different

The real church is putting the flesh to death so it is invisible to the archipelago because it is one body in the Spirit of Christ, and one mind in the life of Christ who is its head. Individualism is surrendered for co-dependence in working for the greatest good of the body, answering only to the head. It has one agreed purpose and works together to present the life and desire of its creator.

As one life together they see the need for the body to grow spiritually, so they are disciplined to work together synergistically under the leadership and authority of the Holy Spirit to build up the body in love and mutual accountability so that the desires of the head are made a reality.

Christ the head of the church isn't changing the world, but He is preparing His chosen people for life with Him in His new heaven and

earth. Everything that is done now is to find its fulfilment in the future He has prepared before hand for those He loves enough to die for.

So for a time there is suffering in the midst of the archipelago, but exultation, and feelings of triumphant elation, jubilation and rejoicing when Christ comes again.

"To view him by faith, as living, dying, rising, reigning, interceding, and governing for us, will furnish us with such views, prospects, motives, and encouragements, as will enable us to endure any cross, to overcome all opposition, to withstand temptation, and to run in the way of his commandments with an enlarged heart." John Newton

Living Water Resources

Come to the River

There is no such thing as a purely private Christian life. There is only the body of Jesus Christ made evident by all who are in Him and in the world that lives His life amongst all His people.

Jesus Christ is only our Lord and God when we lovingly live only for Him. This means that whatever He desires for His church becomes our one passion and desire, so that He can lovingly live through us. The Holy Spirit works this purpose out in the heart possessed by Christ for His glory.

Contents compiled by

Robert C May

Copyright © 2021

cometotheriver@optusnet.com.au

www.cometothestream.com