

True faith is one life in Christ

Being a Christian requires a particular Knowledge of God, true knowledge. *His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.* (2 Pet 1:3) which knowledge results in Love and fellowship, which in turn results in good works in Christ. This knowledge ensures love for God and neighbour.

Knowing God is eternal life. (John 17:3) Our combined fellowship life is with the Father and the Son. (1 John 1:3) The depth of fellowship we have with the divine should be moving us towards the same quality of life we have with one another. Knowledge, Love and fellowship are needed to Glorify God in Christ. No knowledge = No love = no fellowship = no service to God and each other. Without God's help there is no: "*Love one another as I have loved you.*"

Christ's love is full of knowledge about the Father and ourselves as we share in fellowship and service. Christ love has power to change the world, as it changes us. This is not the same love of Christ that we can claim to have without knowledge and fellowship and service. The devil is in the business of distorting knowledge so that we hold back from true fellowship. He would say you can do your own thing, independent and self-contained. However, true faith is not private faith.

Our mission in Christ also comes to be our passion as a result of knowing God's love in Christ, with whom we have ongoing loving fellowship, and who we serve with all our heart. The family of God is to transcend our earthly family. Our knowledge of God must impact the knowledge we have of one another. Our knowledge of one another is to be greater than being known in the world.

How then can we love God and His people whom we don't know? To know and to be known as a child of God is a treasure that transcends all things. This is personal knowledge which is like the knowing a wife has for her husband, it should be all knowing with nothing hidden. For the church to function as the life of Christ as His bride in the world, we need

to make ourselves known in the church while needing to know the brethren.

How can we love our brothers and sisters in Christ effectively if we don't know who they are and what they need in order to be more like Christ? We need to make ourselves known and encourage others to make themselves known. Who in the congregation knows who you really are in your inner being so they can help you grow? Who then will know what you need that they can help you with for you to become more like Christ?

Is our spiritual family and its health and function in Christ the centre of our lives? Our family relationship in Christ should be greater than anything we may have in the world. No one can say they have an earthly family that equals the heavenly. If our relationship is as it needs to be, we will have a desire to build up one another in love for Christ. As a result, we are all required to make and teach disciples to make and teach disciples to live for Him by the power of His love. Doing religious work without a devoted relationship with the Church and His people is not true fellowship.

Jesus gives us a warning.

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’ Matt 7:21-23

Service without a meaningful relationship with Christ and each other is worthless to the kingdom of God. And knowledge of each other is only as fruitful as God intended when it reflects the knowledge of our relationship with Jesus Christ.

However, the Christian is now in Christ, but not yet like Christ; so, we are to be real, willing not to hide our warts by pretending to be something we're not. And we are to be willing to share the testimony of the good work that God has worked in us so we can encourage others to resist being private.

The Christian community is Fellowship - Greek 'koinonia'

Fellowship is communion, and communion is a function of the informed heart. Communion requires true knowledge of Christ to make the right connection with the heart and each other. But the filling of the head without making a loving connection makes the gaining of doctrine an end in itself. *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and you shall love your neighbour as yourself."*

Our loving connection with God is to be replicated in our love for man made in His image and likeness; especially with those He has given to serve Christ. This is the work of God.

"Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances."

Ezekiel 36:26-27

Knowledge without a sensitive heart to obey is learning without doing. Knowing and loving is true fellowship. Loving knowledge impacts the inner being with service to Christ and His Church. True faith is open to incomprehensible love.

that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

Eph 3:16-19

What love we freely receive from God we freely give to His people. We are to be a living loving sacrifice. (Romans 12:1) Giving the things God has given us in service to others is how we actually find life. God is the giver of all good things, (James 1:17) and He gives us everything we need to fulfil His will. (2 Pet 1:3-4) Therefore, *"Freely you have received; freely give."*

Matt 10:8

True faith is real fellowship in community

From 'True Community' by Jerry Bridges

“In recent years, many Christian leaders and pastors have begun to emphasise the importance of community among believers. This is a much-needed corrective to our tendency toward an individualistic approach to the Christian life, but it does raise the question What is biblical community? And is there a biblical basis for using the word community in our Christian context?

Again:

To answer that question, we need to explore the meaning of the Greek word *koinonia* and its most common English translation, the word fellowship. *Koinonia*, in its different grammatical forms, is actually translated several ways in the New Testament: for example, participation, partnership, sharing, and of course fellowship. In our Christian circles, the word fellowship has come to mean little more than Christian social activity. It may mean the exchange of pleasantries over coffee and cookies at church, or the social functions of our high school or campus ministry groups. This is not the meaning of fellowship in the New Testament.

Again:

In both Acts 2:42 and 1 John 1:3, the New English Bible translates *koinonia* as "sharing a common life." This is the most basic meaning of *koinonia*, or fellowship. It is sharing a common life with other believers, a life that, as John says, we share with God the Father and God the Son. It is a relationship, not an activity.”

The community of God is where He cherishes His children

Koinonia requires real love, agape love. What does Agape love really mean in the Bible? When the word “agape” is used, it refers to a pure, sacrificial love that intentionally desires another’s highest good.

“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.”

John 15:13

This is the love of God. Being loved by God is to be immensely cherished by God as His Son is cherished. Cherishing is first of all love, but we can love without cherishing. This is the love that is willing to die for the beloved.

We can love things, and we can love people at a distance. We can love our football team and in the same way we can love our church. But this idea of love means having a private faith, which is loving at a distance. But the cherishing that comes from God is love, it is the highest, noblest, strongest feeling one person can have for another. Cherishing is not only a willing bonding of the outer life, but also of the mind, and it also impacts the spiritual and emotional aspects of life which we share in common union with the other.

Effectual saving faith is also affectionate faith for God and others. When we receive Jesus Christ, we receive a person whose love knows no corruption. True faith is effective faith to be intimately joined with God and each other in love. "*As I have loved you, love one another.*" However, living with someone who has 'private faith' is like being unequally yoked, you may be married, you may live in the same house, and your spouse may say they love you, but deep down you live alone. The banner for private faith is: '*Private property, keep out!*' At such times it is important to remember that you are cherished by God. '*The banner over me is love.*' Song of Solomon 2:4

John Piper wrote in his book 'What is saving faith'

"Saving faith, as it receives Christ, trusting and treasuring all that God is for us in Him, is the way God unites us to Christ. In this union, God is 100 percent for us forever. He will never cast us out (John 6:37; 10:28-29). We are justified permanently (Rom. 8:30). And the very same instrument by which God unites us to Christ, namely, saving faith also severs the root of sin. The root of sin is the treasuring of other things above God. Saving faith is the God-given treasuring of Christ above all. Therefore, saving faith severs the root of sin. It does so by a positive force, the preference for Christ and all His ways. By the miraculous new birth, Christ becomes our joy. And this joy overflows in

righteousness and love (Luke 14:14; 2 Cor. 8:2; Heb. 10:34; 12:2).

Therefore, saving faith is designed by God, not only as an inward, invisible act of treasuring Christ, but also as an act that bears visible, God-glorifying fruit in bodily behaviour. It is precisely the nature of saving faith as a treasuring trust that gives it the power that severs the root of sin and bears the God-glorifying fruit of visible righteousness and love. This is the beautification of Christ's bride. She will treasure Him above all, and everything she does will reflect His worth. This will be the beauty of her holiness. She will be most satisfied in Him, and thus He will be most glorified in her."

Community is where God calls us to know Him intimately

This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. John 17:3

D.A. Carson 'The Gospel according to John'

Eternal life turns on nothing more and nothing less than knowledge of the true God. Eternal life is not so much everlasting life as personal knowledge of the Everlasting One.

Again

it is clear that knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ entails fellowship, trust, personal relationship, faith.

To claim to be a Christian without affectual love acting on the feelings and emotions that bind us to a local Church is inconsistent with what God teaches us about the unity of God's communing people.

The devil knows more about Jesus than all of us, but he doesn't know Him as his Lord and saviour to love and obey. He doesn't know Him as His priestly King who sacrificed Himself for his justification. He doesn't know Him as his greatest treasure who is more valued than all the world. He doesn't know Him as his firstborn brother leading the way in holiness into the presence of the Father. He doesn't know Him as his image and likeness that will transform his life from the inside out. He doesn't know Him as the one who lives in his heart so that through loving devotion he will be charged into His heavenly image before the Father. He doesn't

know Him as the true vine who shares His life and work with everyone who is joined with His body. The devil promotes private faith that lives for the externals and denies the heart. *They honour Me with their lips but their hearts are far from Me.* Matt 15:8

True faith lives in the faith giver and is dependent on His life to live. *"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."* John 15:4-5

The unfruitful branch hasn't died with Him to self-interest so that Christ now lives in him as his life. Knowing the Father and the Son is to have knowledge of the kind of personal intimate love that cannot be known in the natural world. *"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

Community is Fellowship with Christ

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

And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. 1 John 5:20

We are in Christ together, this means we have one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one life, one truth, one hope, one love, one purpose, one body, we are one bride, one community. This truth is what draws us together in Christ, even if the majority of us cannot yet perceive it to be true. Unrealised oneness is because the imperative to deny self and take up our cross has also not yet fully been accepted by us all to be necessary for our one Life in Christ Jesus to be a reality. Jesus has said that no can follow Him without taking up their cross. The cross is the door to fellowship. Without our cross putting to death the flesh in us in order to follow Christ through the narrow gate, the way to the life we want is our private faith. Without our cross we want our personal interpretation of

the word of God. Without our cross we live for ourselves. Without our cross we want the blessings of God without the sacrifice which costs us everything in the world. Without our cross we want our rights. Without our cross we don't want those in Christ to bother us with knowledge of our self-interest. Without our cross we won't put others first. Without our cross we want Church on our own terms. Without our cross we idolise ourselves. Without our cross the oneness love of God in the Church is dead to us. True fellowship is together in Christ.

John Calvin. Ephesians 4:1-2

You see then, in effect, that what we have to consider here is that since God has not called first one man alone and then another, as though He meant to part us asunder, but directs His voice to all, and will have it serve for a holy bond to all, we must respond not only with our mouth, but also with our whole life, and there must be true unity among us. P315

Ephesians 4:11-12

It follows then that Jesus Christ intends to dispense His gifts to us in a certain manner. And from this we have to conclude that he who presumes in himself and surmises that he has all that is necessary, grossly deceives himself, and that in two ways. For there is no man who has received such perfection that he does not need to profit still from his brethren.

On the other hand, the lowlier and ignorant must not envy them that excel them in learning and wisdom, because it is God's will to have it so, and so it must be, seeing He will have His church governed by the means of men. P361-362

True fellowship means we live for one another so that we can present everyone mature in Christ. (Col 1:28) How can we provide wise counsel to our brethren to assist their growth in holiness when we don't really know who they are and how their lives are progressing?

We are all fallible creatures of a fallen world. We tend to measure others by ourselves. And our reactions to what we don't understand are often consistent with the nature of our personal brokenness from our life in the flesh.

True fellowship means God's love has no limits on transparency and therefore has no barriers to intimacy. Transparency is the door frame to closeness, and intimacy is the door to heaven. Transparency enables intimacy and fellowship with the Father and the Son by the Spirit who invites the people of God to be intimate with God.

John Piper. So when I talk about Christian fellowship as a means of perseverance, the fellowship I have in mind is the mutual bond (and I think mutual would be the adjective form of *koinonia* in English) that Christians have with Christ that unites us in a profound and eternal relationship of love that should express itself in joyful and affectionate service for each other's good.

Community is life together in communion

Our word fellowship, also translated communion come from the Greek, '*koinonia*' which is one another love in Christ. It should not be surprising that the most repeated command we have from God is to love one another.

God calls us into community in order for us to commune with Him and us with each other. To commune God's way means to focus on God with deep intimate communication, sharing our heart and mind with God and with each other who share in our commune with God.

The community of God is so closely knit it is described as a spiritual body with Jesus Christ as the head of the body. In His community He is the centre of life for the commune we call the Church. As His body, we are His tongue, we speak for Him, as His hands we work for Him, and as His feet we go into the world for Him. As His heart we love for Him. We are His means of working together for the administration of His kingdom as we remain in commune with Him for the glory of God; we call this communing abiding in Him. *"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

To be of one heart and soul means we are essentially of one mind, venerable together and transparent before God and one another. This means nothing will be hidden that could damage our love for God and

each other. We would be the same to each other as we are to God. The commune is plural, we can't commune alone. The commune of Christ lives in communion together as an ordinary, common place, every day community under God. The members who live in this communion are part of the community of Christ who love one another as He has loved us.

“We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him.”

1 John 3:16-19

Community life of faith is a corporate life

This faith life in Christ cannot be for a singular individual, but is only possible through a committed spiritual congregation working together cooperatively. *The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God.*

Rom 8:16

True faith that comes from God, and the Holy Spirit produces the qualities of His nature in those born again by the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit list in Galatians is only a general indication that those in Christ will have available the life qualities of their God. *'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.'*

Gal 5:22-23

The full fruit of the Spirit is seen in the life of Christ who is our life. The whole outcome of salvation is that we are made holy as family and begin to live in the presence of God together. We are to understand that the church is the presence of the body of Christ that Christians share as believers in Christ. So, faith is living in the promised presence of God.

Instead of isolating ourselves we should be eagerly seeking the gifts of service the Spirit has provided in each member, according to His

determination, for our benefit so that we can all be built up by one another in Christ. This is the corporate life of faith.

Private faith is from the world and separates us from unity in Christ. True faith in Christ unifies all who are in Christ by the working of the Spirit of God. *'For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.'* 1 Cor 12:13

'So then you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.' Eph 2:19-22

The only way God's children can reflect God's life is by daily walking truly according to the new life we have in God by the powerful working of His Spirit. There is no doubt that whoever has died with Christ to sinful flesh now lives together with Christ. *'Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection.'* Rom 6:4-5

Since we have been raised up with Him, it is very important we keep ourselves holy and blameless, because we who are washed in the blood of the Lamb are the temple of God where God lives. *'Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?'* 1 Cor 3:16

For our faith to be effective in living and loving with Christ, the indwelling Lord needs to be more real to us than all the pleasures and comforts of the world. He needs to be more real to us than all the trials and disagreeable discomforts of the world. We need to abide together in Christ in community and Christ must live in us. *'Christ in you, the hope of glory.'* Col 1: 27

Community is loving one another in all things

This love of God for one another is the love that seeks the highest good for all, just as God in Christ seeks to transform us into the image of Christ. The ‘one another’ verses of the Bible that relate to our shared lives in Christ indicate what His fellowship is supposed to look like as we love one another.

Love one another is mentioned 17 times.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. John 13:34

By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:35

“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. John 15:12

This I command you, that you love one another. John 15:17

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honour; Rom 12:10

Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; Rom 13:8

Abound in love for one another, 1 Thess 3:12

you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; 1 Thess 4:9

the love of each one of you toward one another grows *ever* greater; 2 Thess 1:3

a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, 1 Pet 1:22

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

we should love one another; 1 John 3:11

and love one another, just as He commanded us. 1 John 3:23

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 1 John 4:7

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 1 John 4:11

if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us. 1 John 4:12

Now I ask you, lady, not as though *I were* writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another. 2 John 1:5

Be of the same mind. Rom 12:16; Rom 15:5

let us not judge one another anymore, Rom 14:13

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

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
But encourage one another day after day,	Heb 3:13
stimulate one another to love and good deeds.	Heb 10:24
encouraging <i>one another</i>	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 Pet 4:10
keep fervent in your love for one another.	1 Pet 4:8
have fellowship with one another.	1 John 1:7

The Community of faith serves the Church with Christ

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

Eph 2:10

“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gifts....for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”

Eph 4:7, 12-13

John MacArthur wrote: “God’s truth is not fragmented and divided against itself, and when His people are fragmented and divided it simply means they are to that degree apart from His truth, apart from the faith of right knowledge and understanding.

Only a biblically equipped, faithfully serving, and spiritually maturing church can attain to the unity the faith. Any other unity will be on a purely human level and not only will be apart from but in constant conflict with the unity of the faith. There can never be unity in the church apart from doctrinal integrity.”

The Church is Christ working through us according to His word. When the truth of the redeemed people of God is found in the members, they are living as the flesh of His flesh, the bone of His bone, with one life in the Spirit. When this reality of God becomes no more than a figment of our imagination, then the spiritual unity of our one life in Christ disappears like a mist in the hot sun.

As with all the instructions of God, we can see that the opposite to what He commands is evident in a lack of holy motivation and obedience. Therefore, if we are not loving and living for Christ, *building up of the body of Christ*, we are still living for ourselves. He died for all that we would be one life in Him, living His life by the power of the Spirit as the children of obedience.

"For just as the body is one and yet has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one part, but many....so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same care for one another. And if one part of the body suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if a part is honoured, all the parts rejoice with it. Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it."

1 Cor 12:12-14, 25-27

If we live day by day as being anything less than actuality joined together with Christ in our hearts, and being renewed in our minds, to be of the same mind in Christ, then the claims of the church to be unified in Christ as His life on earth for the effective work of God no longer has the authentication needed to be seen to be true in practice.

Sinclair Ferguson 'Maturity'

“In addition, the Corinthians valued the personal reception of spiritual gifts by themselves more than the employment of them for others. In this way they placed a premium on abilities rather than on loving. In fact, Paul says that they were zealots when it came to spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 14:12), but in the process they were employing a false set of values. As a result, they had become puffed up instead of being built up.”

Summons to service

“The ability to serve others is a gift of grace. When Paul discusses the different forms of service exercised in the church, he describes them as gifts. This is clear in Rom 12:3-13, 1 Cor 12-14, and, perhaps supremely, in Eph 4:1-17. In this last passage he sees the ministry of the word (given by Christ through apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers) nurturing the whole body of Christ as members mutually upbuild one another in love through the use of their particular gifts (Eph. 4:7-11). Such ministry is rooted in our personal consecration to the Lord (Rom 12:1-2 leads to Rom. 12:3-13).

Alongside this lies a further emphasis: true service involves self-denying love for the church (Eph. 4:15; 1 Cor. 13). The same principle that guides a husband in his marriage, guides the Christian in relation to the bride of Christ. The 'Jesus Principle' is also the church's principle: we are to be willing to lay down our life for the sheep (John 10:11, 15). This makes our service Jesus-like.”

Are we true to our calling?

Salvation is about God calling us to intimate continual communion with Himself through the work of His Son. The work of the Son is the Church created in His image because all are born again in the image of Christ, one life, one Spirit. All those in the Church should be growing in unbroken intimacy in their communion with God and each other. The spiritual growth of the Church in the likeness of Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of all who are in Christ because they have been

born again by the same Spirit of intimate love to live in communion with God.

All the children of God who have been washed by the blood of Christ are cleansed to remove the contamination of the world of sin so they can share the intimacy of the Father and the Son by the powerful working of the Spirit. 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 in our affections for one another and Christ.

The church is to display the transparent beauty of holiness found in the wonderful intimacy to be experienced with God our heavenly Father and His beloved only Son. *Therefore confessing our sins to one another*, (James 5:16) and *bearings each other's burdens*. (Gal 6:2) And this should never be found to be as scarce as hen's teeth, because we are called to this life and equipped for community by our rebirth through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

Church is not a building; the Church is created by the binding together of many humble and broken hearts for the purpose of intimate communion shared with God in Christ. This is a Godly intimacy only made possible through the sacrifice of the Son of God who now lives in the redeemed community by the Spirit of God as the Church.

What the Church lacks most today is this transparent unending intimacy of communion with God and each other. The communion of the children is to have no discernible difference between what is experienced between the Father and Son. But we often find every obstacle is erected to prevent sacrificial intimacy by whatever religious or worldly means that can be utilised for the express purpose of denying the establishment of unfettered devotion and service in the communion of the saints in the Kingdom of God. The enemy of God has had some success in taking away our power to serve God by denying godly communion.

At the behest of the prince of the flesh we hide from each other and God, even in our Church services, and then we continue to hide from each other if we bother to stay for a cuppa, for even then we talk of everything other than what God has been talking to us about, which should concern all who are in Christ and not be taken as some private affair that's nobody else's business. We might even ask "how the week has been" but we

don't really want to hear what is going on in your life. "How are you" is supposed to get the response "fine thank you." Most of the time we only asked "how you are" for the sake of protocol, with no actual interest in your thoughts and feelings, or the struggle you have privately endured, and for which help is needed from the people of True Faith.

The fellowship of the saints is to be a mutual hungering and thirsting after God together as a deer pants for water so our souls long for communion with God and each other with no divisions or barriers to divide and destroy divinely created intimacy. There is one body of Christ; and One Spirit of God revealing the truth of God to the world through the intimate love each one of us has with one another, so the world may know we are disciples of Jesus Christ. This means we are of one mind with God. The apostle Paul: *'Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.'*

Phil 2:2

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 hidden together in God through Christ.

Col 3:3

Only when we are committed to communion with God and each other in the same way Jesus Christ was committed to communion with the Father, will we see God's will manifest in the lives of all who claim Christ as Lord and Saviour. Then all of us will humble ourselves before God and each other in the likeness of Christ for the work of the Gospel in the world.

Part of the Lord's Prayer for our intimacy says: *"that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one."*

John 17:21

Where does the rubber hit the road?

For Christian fellowship to have the right effect so that we can know and be known, there must be transparent intimacy otherwise we cannot bare one another's burdens and build up one another in love. We make much of doing the work of Christ, but we do less about putting on Christ who produces the fruit that will have eternal significance.

Many people think life for everyone else is the same as they conceive it to be according to their own understanding. But we only have relational relevance that can change things to the extent that our concept of reality matches the lives of others according to the word of God. Christians are to build their reality on Jesus Christ who is their rock. The one another imperatives in God's word are the cement that glues us to the Rock and each other.

The Spirit Himself compels the believer with (*agapaó*) love, to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice for the good of others, which is our acceptable sacrifice of worship. John 15:13; Rom 12:1-21

Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament- "Agapao speaks of a love which is awakened by a sense of value in an object which causes one to prize it. It springs from an apprehension of the preciousness of an object. It is a love of esteem and approbation. The quality of this love is determined by the character of the one who loves, and that of the object loved."

To be part of the true community of Christ requires our death to self. The reason we have received 51 imperative commands designed is to encourage our *agapaó* so that we can learn to put off the flesh of self and put on the sacrificial love of Christ. The more we implement the 51, the more we reveal the *agapaó* love of Christ so that the world might see our good deeds and give glory to God.

Unfortunately, we are more comfortable with doing the external works we agree with and find acceptable rather than surrender to the internal transformation that we avoid, a transformation that shows we are actually one life in Christ to the glory of God. We are too easily given over to the external representation of the church that can be seen, rather than undergoing the inner workings of the Spirit in building up the body of Christ that is unseen. The visible church is not always the church built by the invisible Spirit of God in the heart of true faith.

The most effective way to please the Lord is for us to begin with the internal transformation that can and will effectively carry out the will of

God that can be seen externally by the world. Having a body without a heart made in the image of Christ is only a caricature of what actually achieves the work of salvation in the world.

The more we die with Christ in order to put on His life, the less we will hide from each other so that we are all built up in Him. There are no Lone Rangers in the kingdom of God. But it is easy to live as a lone Ranger doing great things by ourselves with no need to be upheld by others.

No one can live as an island. God has determined that all His children are co-dependent on one another. No one can say "I don't need another," any other for that matter. The body of Christ means no one is left out of sharing in the transformation of our lives. Everyone is equipped to provide an essential component of the working of God for the good of all. No one knows it all without all the others.

But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills. For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. If they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the body which we deem less honourable, on these we bestow more abundant honour, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honour to that

member which lacked, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.

1 Cor 12:11-27

We often approach discipleship by focusing on the visible work of faith, and spend little time being involved with the heart of the person we are discipling. The heart requires the massage of our presence in the daily activity of the life of the one we are building up. Jesus walked every day with His disciples. He slept with them, He ate with them, He was hungry with them, He got wet with them, He saw everything that was on their mind and all they did. He suffered the loss of a friend with them. His teaching was in the context of their daily lives. In the same way the one another imperatives He commands are the engine room that makes our corporate service acceptable to God.

The new converts in Acts 2ff shared their lives, maybe not as intimately as with Jesus in the flesh, but still intimately. The issue was that they were all transparently vulnerable to one another, so that they could build up one another because they were aware of the weakness of each other. None of us knows it all, we don't even know enough to survive as an overcomer alone. The emphasis is on US. WE, TOGETHER.

There are many trials we may have to endure under the hand of God that no one knows about. We may be unequally yoked. We may have rebellious children. We may have endured an extremely tortuous and painful life. We may have been rejected by the church for Christ's name's sake. We may be constantly misunderstood. We may be unjustly accused. We may be blindly required to take responsibility for things that are not ours. We may be living alone in the Church.

If someone has endured suffering and abuse from an early age, they will be much more sensitised to seeing and experiencing abuse in all things. And after the pressure to suppress its memory in their deepest mind has been relieved by the love of Christ setting them free; and even then, as a result of the past life that God had providentially provided for them, their interests in spiritual things will be in accord with their suffering in the

world; so their passion will be to correct the same errors they see in the Church.

After that there is the matter of our personal hidden sin no one knows about. The fact is, we don't even begin to know most people in the Church. Mostly we just don't know others, and we don't know ourselves. *"Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall."*

1 Cor 15:57

We profess to live in the body of Christ, but we often live a separated life by choice. Our words of unity in Christ don't always match our actions. By implementing the 51 imperative commands we demonstrate to the saints that they are valued and included in our sphere of influence.

Home Churches will not be the solution for the need of practical spiritual community, if the contact doesn't include loving fellowship according to the implementation of the divine imperatives that puts sacrificial love into actions. Loving the saints has to go deeper than the structure. Programs and our processes can never replace the need for the need to be cherished by the family of God, and cherishing requires knowing and being known for who we really are as individuals.

Jesus said *"Love one another as I have loved you"* He didn't just mean without regard to the person's physical needs and desires. For His love is to be experienced in the innermost part of our being. In order: *"that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God."*

Eph 3:16-19

If the practice of our faith doesn't include knowing and being known in relation to the inner man, then we have religion without a heart, and we have sidestepped the purpose of love to transform the fabric of the soul.

As the ministers of the love of Christ, each member of the body is in effect a physician administering the correct medicine needed to build up

the saints according to their particular needs at a particular time. If we don't know what needs to be healed, we will administer incorrectly.

There are two kinds of Faith

Private faith is not true fellowship.

Private faith is fleshly and doesn't need constant input from anyone else in Christ.

Private faith is like having a number of eggs packed in a carton, all separate and independent. No constant meaningful spiritual interaction is desired with the others.

True faith is one life in Christ.

True faith is divine communion.

True faith needs and desires spiritual interaction with everyone who is in Christ.

True faith is like God's Omelette. All the eggs broken and mixed together over the heat of God's perfecting fire.

Our Omelette is as cooked as our sanctification allows. No Omelette is fully cooked on earth.

True faith lives for Christ having begun to die daily to independent self.

Luke9:23

Knowing each other is very important if we are to be able to minister to one another effectively. And even if someone opens themselves for us, our perception may will be a distortion gained through our own habitual fleshly filters. As a result, our tendency to misunderstand needs to be taken into consideration.

D.A. Carson. 'A call to spiritual reformation ' On Paul's prayer for the Thessalonians he wrote.

"Nevertheless he here prays that the Christians' love will increase and overflow "for each other" (that is, for fellow believers in the church) "and for everyone else" (that is, for those outside the fellowship). Similarly he writes a little later in the letter, "Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else" (5:15).

This is a hard, brutal world. There are many protestations of affection, many forms of pseudo-love, whether in ancient Greco-Roman civilization or in our own. But Christian love, mature, deep, and unqualified, is a rare commodity. When it is displayed, it speaks volumes to a society that gorges itself in self-interest, lust, mutual- admiration pacts, even while it knows very little of love."

and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you; so that He may establish your hearts without blame in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.

1 Thess 3:12-13

The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty; The LORD has clothed and girded Himself with strength; Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved. Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting.

Psalm 93

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 one another in love.

Eph 4:1-2

Living water resources

Come to the River

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