



Means of God's Grace: Christian Community

- ◆ When Jesus faced Satan's temptations in the wilderness, what spiritual weapon did he use (Mt 4:1-11)?
- ◆ When Jesus faced temptation in the Garden of Gethsemane, what spiritual weapon did he use (Mt 26:36-46)?
- ◆ While in the Garden, what other spiritual weapon did he want to use, but it was denied him?

Henry & Mel Blackaby in their workbook, *Your Church Experiencing God Together*, write, "Just as God designed for a baby to be born into a family to receive love and care, so He designed for those who are born again to enter a spiritual family that will love and care for them. Without a thorough understanding of our place in the family of God, our Christian life will not be the abundant life Jesus offered." In effect, **God has no orphans.**

What are some of the ways your church family or other believers have helped you in your walk with Christ?

Besides the practical benefits of being fully engaged in biblical community, the Bible teaches that this fellowship is part of our new identity in Christ. To be in fellowship with Christ means to be in fellowship with his body. **We are one *in* Christ since we are one *with* Christ.**

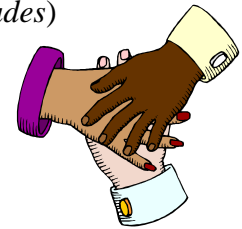
Our oneness as the body of Christ:

- **is initiated through baptism**—"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ...for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:26-28).
- **is commemorated through communion** (1Cor 11:17-34).
- **is a spiritual union**—"For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body" (1Cor 12:13).
- **is patterned after the Trinity** (John 17:20-23).
- **must be guarded**—"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit..." (Eph 4:2-4). This is a primary function of church leadership and discipline.
- **must be continually expressed through active love by all members**—"live a life worthy of the calling you have received" (Eph 4:1). This is done through the reciprocal ministry of "one-anothering."

What God commands the church to do and be to one another

Commands of Attitude / Demeanor:

- **Love** one another (Jn 13:34,35; 15:12,17; Rom 13:8; 1Th 3:12; 4:9; 2Th 1:3; 1Pet 1:22; 1Jn 3:11,23; 4:7,11,12; 2Jn 5) (*this one sums up all the rest*)
- **Be devoted** to one another in brotherly love (Rom 12:10)
- **Belong** to one another (Rom 12:5; Eph 4:25)
- **Think alike** together (Rom 12:16; 15:5) (*share the same values and attitudes*)
- **Have equal concern** for one another (1Cor 12:25)
- **Be at peace** with one another (Mk 9:50; 1Th 5:13)
- **Have fellowship** with one another (1Jn 1:7)
- **Clothe yourselves with humility** toward one another (1Pet 5:5)
- **Regard** one another as **more valuable than yourselves** (Php 2:3)



Commands of Specific Actions:

- **Greet** one another with a holy kiss (Rom 16:16; 1Cor 16:20; 2Cor 13:12; 1Pet 5:14)
- **Comfort/encourage** one another (1Th 4:18; 1Th 5:11; Heb 3:13)
- **Serve** one another in love (Jn 13:14; Gal 5:13)
- **Bear** one another's **burdens** (Gal 6:2)
- **Use your spiritual gifts** for each other's benefit (1Pet 4:10)
- **Do things that edify** one another (Rom 14:19)
- **Pursue doing good** to one another and to everyone (1Th 5:15)
- **Think about how to stir up** one another toward love and good deeds (Heb 10:24)
- **Receive** one another as Christ received us (Rom 15:7) (*accept each other*)
- **Submit yourselves** to one another (Eph 5:21)
- **Honor** one another above yourselves (Rom 12:10)
- **Be kind** to one another (Eph 4:32)
- **Wait** for one another, when you gather to eat (1 Cor 11:33)
- **Offer hospitality** toward one another without complaining (1Pet 4:9)
- **Confess your sins** to one another and (James 5:16)
- **Pray** for one another that you may be healed (James 5:16)
- **Forgive** each other (Eph 4:32; Col 3:13)
- **Bear with** one another in love (Eph 4:2; Col 3:13) (*means to endure, be patient with*)
- **Teach** each other (Col 3:16)
- **Admonish** one another (Rom 15:14; Col 3:16) (*means teach in order to warn or caution*)
- **Not lie** to one another (Col 3:9)
- **Not judge** one another (Rom 14:13)
- **Not bite, devour or destroy** one another (Gal 5:15)
- **Not provoke or envy** one another (Gal 5:26)
- **Not sue** each other (1Cor 6:7)
- **Not speak evil** of one another (James 4:11)
- **Not grumble/complain** against one another (James 5:9)
- **Not hate** one another (Titus 3:3)



How would you describe this kind of mutual relationship?

Relationships with other Christians, particularly within your local church, constitute degrees of depth in mutual trust, vulnerability and intimacy.

Brotherhood

As a member of God's family, this relationship defines all true believers and affects the way we treat each other in the church. *"Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble"* (1Pet 3:8). We belong to one another in like faith and like hope.

Friendship

Friendships must be cultivated as they involve personal trust and commitment. God highly values friendship. *"Do not forsake your friend and the friend of your father, and do not go to your brother's house when disaster strikes you—better a neighbor nearby than a brother far away"* (Pr 27:10). Remember, you first have to be a friend before you have a friend.

Accountability

Biblical brotherhood and friendship include accountability, admonishment, encouragement, prayer and exhortation. But within friendships comes a deeper level of vulnerability where struggles, pains and dreams are shared, discussed and prayed over. Permission is established to share frankly even if the words may hurt at first, like a surgeon's scalpel. *"Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses"* (Pr 27:6).

Mentor

Where accountability partners are peers, a mentor is someone to whom you entrust yourself for godly example, instruction and counsel. Paul was a mentor: *"Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me--put it into practice"* (Php 4:9).

In the Christian life, we have personal responsibility for our faith to grow and be lived out. But we also have responsibility to help each other along the way. *"Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart"* (2Tim 2:22). We need each other. The church is Heaven's embassy on earth. We show the world the love and hope that God alone can offer when we treat one another as He has commanded.

Week 8 Homework

† Practice your memory verse: **Ephesians 5:1-2**

† Read Schwarz, pp. 286-291

† Read John 17:20-26

What is Jesus' prayer for his followers?

What is Christian unity patterned after?

What effect does Christian unity have on the world?

† Right now, ask God to show you a “one another” command that he wants to cultivate in you. Reread through that list. Which one are you going to intentionally put into practice this week?

Who are you going to do this to/with?

What specifically did you do?

What were the known results?

† Do you have a friend, accountability partner or mentor with whom you can share the results of your spiritual health assessment? If not, find someone in this class or a small group to share your results and ask for prayer.

† Ask God to search your heart. Is there anyone you have wronged or offended, intentionally or unintentionally, that you need to go to and ask forgiveness?

† (optional) If you haven't done so already, pick up a copy of our church's Prevention-Discipline-Restoration policy and read it over. How do you see the principles of biblical community applied there?