

# A Call For True Christian Community

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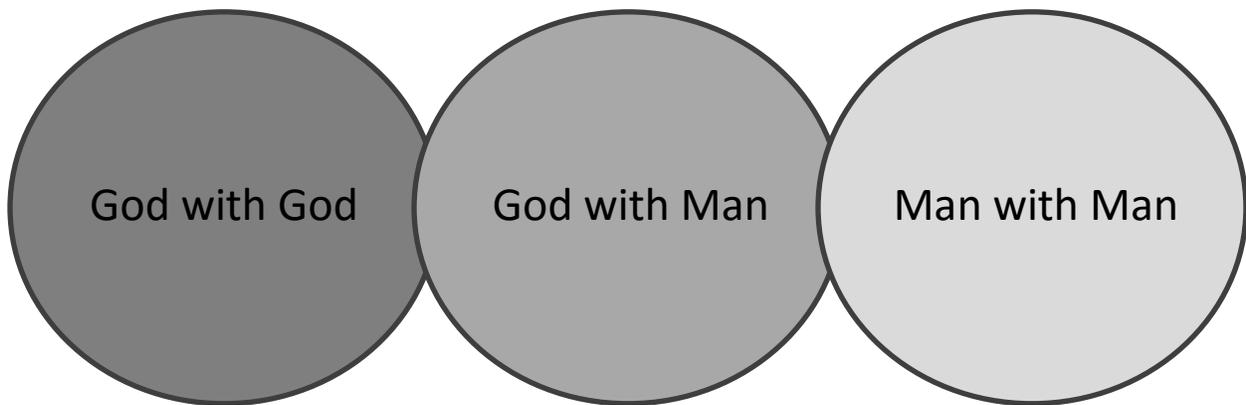
Calvary Community Church

## I. What Is Christian Community?

The starting point of true Christian community is God Himself. From eternity past, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit enjoyed perfect, unbroken communion. You might even say that God was the first small group.

Out of the overflow of His perfect desire, God created man. God and man enjoyed the delight of communion as they walked together in the garden – free to be themselves, free to love, fully known, accepted, and enjoyed.

God then, through Adam’s own body, created woman so that humanity might live in and express community-love with one another.



Genesis 2:24 gives is a beautiful description of the union between man and woman.

**(Gen. 2:24)**, *Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*

Although this is a specific description of marriage, I believe it also speaks to us in a broader sense of community between people.

The phrase “be joined to” in Hebrew literally means, “*to cling to; to never stop chasing after.*” In other words, our relationships were meant to be lived in such a way that we do not easily let go of one another. We also see that **the goal of connection should be a perpetual, proactive pursuit in our relationships.**

There’s another interesting word in the Genesis 2:24 passage.

The phrase “they shall become one flesh” is a medical term that literally means, “*join; the uniting of wounds.*” In other words, God is prophesying that there will be times of wounding, tearing, and separation in our relationships. However, the expectation is that we **would live with a commitment to bind ourselves together to help bring healing to the broken places in each other.**

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As far as church community, we see in II Corinthians that it is God who places us in a community.

**(I Cor. 12:18),** *But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.*

God “sets” each of us in the body according to His good pleasure, perfect design, and creative leadership. God knows what He’s doing.

He wants us to live as a part of one another – the body, His body.

So true Christian community as expressed in our local congregation is the **Godly pursuit of connection with one another as we express authentic love, show genuine honor, and unite wholeheartedly in purpose and vision.**

**The result of living in such a way is that we will create a culture of freedom, a culture of growth, and a culture of Life.**

### **II. Expressing Authentic Love**

**The foundation of community is love and acceptance.**

Love is the first-mentioned Fruit of the Spirit. Perfect love lives in us by the Spirit of God. **We have the capacity to love more vigorously than most can imagine.**

Acceptance means that we know one another – warts and all – and still choose to receive each other.

Danny Silk says this about unconditional acceptance:

*“...Acceptance says, ‘You are not me and I am not you. You get to be you and I get to be me in this relationship.’ This does not mean that you have to unconditionally accept one another’s behaviors. Rather, it means that you do not control one another.”*

And about unconditional love he says:

*“...Love says, ‘no matter what you do, I am going to pursue the goal of connection with you.’ Anxiety naturally arises when personal differences show up in a relationship, and fear will tempt us to run away from each other. But in committing to unconditional love, we commit to keep moving toward each other even when we’re scared. We will do whatever it is we need to do to protect our connection.”*

### **Culture of Freedom**

A church committed to expressing authentic love in our relationships produces a culture of freedom.

When we lovingly accept one another, **we stop trying to control each other; we stop trying to insist that everyone change to become more like us.**

We were created for freedom. Jesus came to set us free! Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom! It is for freedom He set us free!

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**Free people are loosed from the chains of shame, performance-based Christianity, and the unrealistic expectations of others.**

We are far more affective and anointed when we walk in the truth that we are love and accepted by God and each other. **Free people are positioned, empowered, and motivated to free others.** In other words freedom is contagious.

### **III. Showing Genuine Honor**

**(Rom. 12:10)**, *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;*

**(Heb. 10:24)**, *And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,*

**(Deut. 5:16)**, *Honor your father and mother as the Lord you God has commanded.*

We see from these verses that honor is something that is to be given. Many times we think of honor a bit backwards. We often expect it FROM others, but rarely seek to give it or show it.

God is a perfect example of One who genuinely shows honor. He modeled honor for us when, while we were yet still sinners, He pursued us and elevated us from slaves to sons.

**Honor sees the best in one another and intentionally calls it out.**

In fact the word “honor” in Deuteronomy 5:16 is the Hebrew word, “kab-bed” [kaw-bad’] which means “weighty glory.” It’s the same word we see used to describe the presence of God many times in the Old Testament.

In other words, honor looks for the glory that God has deposited in others and seeks to pull it out. Honor builds up. Honor comes behind others to serve others in discovering, embracing, and walking in their identity in Christ.

Danny Silk says this about honor:

*“[Honor] can be expressed both in words of praise – ‘You are amazing!’ – and in words of correction – ‘Hey, you are way too awesome to be acting like that! Remember who you are and stop it!’”*

If we put the Hebrews 10:24 and the Romans 12:10 passages together, the Message would read like this:

*“Let us see how inventive we can be in encouraging one another...being good friends who love deeply, and practice playing second fiddle.”*

When we faithfully practice showing honor to each other – even those who are different from us – we are actively edifying, encouraging, building up, and strengthening the body of Christ.

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#### Culture of Growth

A church committed to showing genuine honor produces a culture of growth.

**An atmosphere of honor produces healthy people and healthy relationships; and healthy things grow.**

Once we are grounded in love, we overflow with God's heart for each other. We long to see each other grow, mature, discover our calling, walk in our God-given authority, and shine forth the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

This will be all the more important as the Day of the Lord draws closer.

*(Heb. 10:25), not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as in the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

#### **IV. Uniting in Purpose and Vision**

*(Prov. 29:18), Where there is no revelation [prophetic vision] the people cast off restraint [perish]...*

When we are grounded in our identity in Christ, filled with love for one another in an atmosphere of honor, then we can walk hand in hand in vision and purpose.

Unity of vision strengthens us to withstand difficulty as we seek God's purposes together.

*"One of the reasons people perish without a vision is that they cannot endure the pain and cost required to achieve any worthwhile purpose. Only vision can give a purpose to your pain, which enables you to endure it and reach your goal." –Danny Silk, Keep Your Love On*

Jesus endured the pain of the cross because He had a "joy" that was set before Him.

Unity in vision brings us "in tune" with one another.

Imagine 50 guitars that are all tuned to the same tuner. They will be in tune with one another much more than if they all tried to tune to each other – each guitar still having its own unique tone, sound, and timbre.

It is important to note that when we talk about unity, we don't mean uniformity. God is a creative God. He loves diversity. No snowflake is alike.

We must affirm areas of likeness, celebrate diversity, and create harmony. This is what unity looks like.

#### Culture of Life

**When we unify around a common vision, we create a culture of fulfilled destiny.**

The destiny of Calvary Community Church will never be fully realized by just one person. Our personal destinies will never be fully realized alone. We must do life together with others.

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**When we know WHOSE we are and WHO we are and WHERE we're going together, the gates of hell will not be able to stand against us.**

In a culture of life, the whole body celebrates the success of one part of the body. In a culture of life, the whole body weeps with one part that is weeping. Each person in the body has value; each person has worth.

In a culture of life, we work together side-by-side as we partner with God to bring His kingdom purposes to our church, city, and nation.

*"...they share the knowledge of one another's identity and calling, as well as their joint vision, and remind one another of these things on a regular basis. When seasons of difficulty, pain, or loss come up, the pillar of vision strengthens a relational connection and protects it from being thrown into survival mode." Danny Silk, Keep Your Love On*

### **V. Closing and Summary**

God has designed the church to function as a unified body, a pure and spotless bride. We cannot fulfill our calling and realize our destiny if we isolate ourselves from one another. On TOGETHER can we walk in maturity, making ourselves ready for the return of the Bridegroom (Rev 19).

True Christian community is not just about WHAT we do as we "do life together," but also HOW we do life together. Will we express **authentic love, show genuine honor, and unite wholeheartedly in purpose and vision?**

The culture of the church will shift when we walk in true Christian community.