

## **Celebrating Calvary's History P4**

### **Expressing True Christian Community: The "Why" of Community**

**Thesis:** We were meant to do life together with one another and with the Triune God.

**Text:** Ephesians 3:14-21

**Intro:**

In September 2022 at our Anniversary Weekend, we are celebrating our rich history and anticipating our promise-filled future.

In a few messages, we want to celebrate Calvary's history in God. In [Part 1](#) of these messages, we celebrated the fact that God called us to join Jesus on his mission in the earth together with others. That means that this church began because God birthed Calvary to express his nature and his will. We were created to be a congregation that embraces and expresses intimacy, community, and kingdom.

In [Part 2](#), we heard from [Angela Petry](#) about the impact of Calvary on her life and she shared with us a prophetic word from Paul Cain for this historic hour. I also shared [two personal prophetic](#) words that I received.

In [Part 3](#), we reminded ourselves that we were meant to do life together with one another and with the Triune God. We considered the outcomes of community. And, we talked about the vision God has for Greater in Houston.

Today, in *Celebrating Calvary's History P4*, we will consider the "why" of community.

**Overview of our history:**

1. **The Beginning Years, 1982 - 1985:** growing and reaching; overlap of Kingdom and Intimacy.
  - a. God birthed Calvary in September 1982.
  - b. Before and after our church started, we were going door to door in our area.
  - c. We were reaching many unreached people.
  - d. Our youth ministry took Mission Trips to the Valley of Texas each year from 1983 – 1989.
2. The whole church was engaged in reaching people for Christ.
3. In 1985 God got our attention and began to make course corrections in our lives.

**We are living into Three Stories. And, these stories express our mental model of transformation. God uses all three areas of our vision to transform us.**

1. **My story.** Intimacy. 1985 - 1988.
  - a. ***Establishing people in intimacy with God.***
    - i. Outcome: **awareness.**
  - b. God used in our lives:
    - i. *Power Evangelism* by John Wimber.
    - ii. *Ordering Your Private World* by Gordon MacDonald.
    - iii. Influence of John Wimber and the Vineyard movement (compassion and worship).
  - c. Pastor Steve started having personal times of silence in private through contemplative prayer as he sought the Lord.
  - d. Later, we as a church began to experience **corporate times of silence** (1988). Pastor Steve was the gatekeeper for us in so many experiences and encounters with God.
  - e. After the corporate times of silence, Pastor Steve went away to a conference and God said that he was “carving out times in our service to touch people.” That is where Ministry Time was birthed.
  - f. **We started praying for the sick. People came from all over to be touched by God. That is why we developed Ministry Team Training.**
2. **The Story.** Kingdom. 1988 - 1996.
  - a. ***Extending the kingdom of God in the earth.***
    - i. Outcome: **alignment and action.**
    - ii. **Missions, corporate intercession (in Calvary, in the community, in Greater Houston), prophetic, power ministry, Spiritual Awakening Conferences, Refreshing.**
  - b. **Ministry Team Training** (Ephesians 4:11-13). We are not here so that the clergy does all the work. Leaders are given to the body of Christ to equip every person to do the works of Jesus and to partner on mission with the Lord Jesus.
  - c. **Summer service of encounter.** One summer service in 1989 lasted from 8:00am – 2:00pm. Seventeen people gave their lives to Jesus with no preaching or worship. This service is an example of one corporate encounter with the Lord through our history.
  - d. God used the influence of Mike Bickle and Kansas City Fellowship/ IHOPKC (prophetic and intercession) significantly in our lives.
3. **Our story.** Community. 1997 - the present (we are still learning about community).
  - a. ***Expressing true Christian community.***
    - i. Outcome: **authenticity.**

- b. Prophetic word from Bobby Conner to Pastor Steve in the early 1990's: "You are going to make a big splash in community."
- c. God began to take us deeper into meaningful relationships.
- d. In 2010, [Faithwalking](#) took our vision to levels of intentionality that I didn't think were possible.
- e. Through the ministry of [Life Model Works](#), in 2020 we began to learn about how **we are hard wired for attachment to God and others.**

### Partnering with Jesus on his mission in the earth.

1. **Our missional identity:** we are a people who partner with Jesus on his mission, together with others, in our spheres of influence and in the earth.
  - a. Serving the poor, the marginalized, and those in need,
  - b. Working for the common good,
  - c. And seeking to restore individuals, social systems, communities, and nations to God's design.
2. **Our vision at Calvary is a mental model of transformation.** **It expresses how God transforms us.**
  - a. **Establishing people in intimacy with God.**
    - i. God is perfectly at home in Jesus. *"I and the Father are one" (John 10:30).*
    - ii. Jesus is our model, showing us how God wants to be at home in us. *For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10 and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority (Colossians 2:9-10).*
    - iii. We want God to be at home in us individually.
    - iv. The core outcome of intimacy is to grow in our capacity for **awareness** of God.
    - v. **As we spend time with the Lord, we are transformed.** *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18 ESV).*
  - b. **Expressing true Christian community.**
    - i. God wants to make his home in the body of Christ, in the corporate community of faith.
    - ii. In John 17:21-23, 26, Jesus casts a vision for our unity and oneness with God and each other.
    - iii. In Ephesians 2:21-22, God's dwelling place is no longer in a temple of stone but a community of human hearts.

- iv. In 2 Corinthians 6:16-17, we are God's temple; we are God's house. *What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." 17 "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord" (2 Corinthians 6:16-17).*
- v. We want God to be at home in us individually and corporately. There are things he does and does not want in his house; otherwise, he wouldn't feel at home, nor would he feel welcomed.
- vi. The core outcome of community is to grow in our capacity for **authenticity** (being open, honest) in safe places with others.
- vii. **As we walk in the light with God and others, we are transformed** (1 John 1:7, 9; James 5:13-16).
- c. **Extending the Kingdom of God in the earth.**
  - i. God wants to make his home among us forever, the way it was meant to be. In Revelation 21:3, the Bible says that the dwelling of God is among people.
  - ii. This theme of God making his dwelling with us is a primary theme of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God" (Revelation 21:1-3).*
  - iii. The core outcome of kingdom is to grow in our capacity for **alignment** with the way of Jesus and for getting in **action** to obey the Lord.
    - 1. Alignment with the way of Jesus (Acts 9:2, 18:25-26, 19:9, 19:23, 22:4, 24:14, 24:22).
    - 2. Action to obey Jesus (Matthew 28:20; John 14:15, 21, 23).
  - iv. **We are transformed as we radically obey the Lord, align with the way of Jesus, and join Jesus on his mission in the earth, with others, in our spheres of influence and beyond.**
- 3. **We are not here to specialize in one part of our vision. Rather, our vision is the way to stay in step with our King and to experience the transformation God desires for our lives.**

## Doing Life Together: The “Why” of Community

We were meant to do life together with one another and with the Triune God.

The idea of community is a challenge for us in Western culture. Rather than showing up as segmented silos, independent operators, and isolated individuals, we want to increase our community awareness, our community vision, and our community impact.

*For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen (Ephesians 3:14-21).*

There are dimensions of the love of the Lord that we only can experience together in community.

We are called in Christ to do life together.

### The Why of Community: Why is community a part of our vision?

1. **Community is the nature of who God is.**
  - a. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit live in eternal communion and oneness.
  - b. Our Triune God is community.
2. **We are made to connect deeply with the Lord and with others.**
  - a. **Belonging:** it is a deep, human need. We are created to do life together.
    - i. *The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him” (Genesis 2:18).*
  - b. **Interdependence:** we need each other and can do more together than we can do alone (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).
    - i. We are designed to do life together.
    - ii. *The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—*

whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. 15 If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 19 If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” 22 On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, 24 while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, 25 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

- c. **Love:** it is the defining virtue of who we are and how we are meant to live as humans (Matthew 22:37-39). Love is our motive, our means, and our vision to do life together.
3. **Jesus puts us into committed communities.**
    - a. Jesus called his disciples to follow him, and they followed him as a company of committed followers (Matthew 4:19).
    - b. Jesus sends us out to live missionally in community.
      - i. Jesus sent out his disciples in groups (Luke 9 and 10).
      - ii. Jesus said, “I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). Part of our identity and mission involves advancing together as the corporate church against the kingdom of darkness and plundering the enemy’s camp.
      - iii. Teams formed the first missional efforts in Acts (Acts 13:2, etc.).
    - c. Jesus puts us into local congregations called churches.

- i. Each local congregation is unique in its identity, gifting, and expression of the nature of the Lord in a given community and to the world.
  - ii. These local churches are committed communities that display what it is like to live according to the kingdom of God. And, they are on display for all the world to see.
4. **The Lord uses community as one of his primary ways to transform us.**
- a. **We believe that the Lord uses a holistic model to change us: intimacy, community, and kingdom.**
    - i. *Establishing people in intimacy with God:* This is the reflective life, where we learn to hear the voice of God and co-create with him. Core outcome of intimacy: awareness of God.
    - ii. *Expressing true Christian community:* This is where learn how to grow in authenticity in order to live a shared life on a shared mission. Core outcome of community: authenticity.
    - iii. *Extending the kingdom of God in the earth:* This is where we grow in radical obedience in partnering with the Lord on his mission; and we live missionally in community, not as isolated individuals. Core outcomes of kingdom: alignment and action.
  - b. **Experiencing true Christian community, where we have a shared vision and shared life together, is a primary tool of transformation which the Lord uses in our lives.**
    - i. To change us (1 John 1:7)
    - ii. To heal us (James 5:13-16)
    - iii. To develop virtue and character in us (see an example in Colossians 3:1-17)
    - iv. To realize our full potential: growing into fullness in Christ (Ephesians 3:14-19: 4:11-13)
    - v. To teach us how to stand up and fight (Psalm 110:3; 2 Timothy 2:4; Ephesians 6:10-18)
    - vi. To show us how to possess our inheritance (Joshua 1:1-11; Ephesians 1:17-23)
    - vii. Etc. (The above list is indicative, but not exhaustive, of how the Lord uses community to change us.)