

## DEFINITION AND EXPLANATION OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

When we use the term “Christian community,” we mean the following:

**Christian community is people united by a common calling from God; a common salvation in union with Jesus Christ; a common experience of the indwelling, transforming, and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit; and a common mission to advance God’s Kingdom. These people live out their lives together, mutually supporting each other in love and depending upon the Holy Spirit.**

Christian community is people connected to one another because of what the Triune God has done in their lives. It is not based on their similarities, likes or dislikes, common history, common interests, or even common geography. Christian community bypasses many elements of an ordinary “community” because it is not man-made or humanly engineered. It is something initiated and created by God.

Community is what happens as individuals who are living without God in this world believe the gospel of Jesus Christ and are saved. The Spirit of Jesus who comes to live in them makes them alive, spiritually joining them to His Person. These saved individuals are then united together into the church, Christ’s body, not by their own will, but the will of Him who called them.

Therefore, no one can determine who is ‘in’ and who is ‘out’ of Christian community; that is God’s choice. Part of the redemptive power of this community is that people are ‘forced’ to live out life with others whom they may not have otherwise chosen. This is how God teaches people to love His self-sacrificial way, which is the distinguishing “mark” of the Christian (John 13:34–35). Christian community ought to be a cross-section of the larger community, with people of all ages, races, and socio-economic status serving one another in love.

The focal point of Christian community is Jesus Christ; everything revolves around Him, His purposes, and His plans for this planet. He is the community’s source of life. He is the object of everyone’s worship. He is the “glue” that unites individuals. He is the provider, protector, leader, and master of each person in the community, as well as the community as a whole.

Jesus Christ is also the “Commander and Chief” of Christian community—He defines the mission and purpose of the community’s existence. That mission includes Kingdom priorities, such as evangelism, making disciples, teaching from and training in the Word of God, praying for the sick and demonized, and caring for the poor.

True Christian community requires real involvement in other people's lives—both intimately and practically—throughout the week, and not just on certain days and at certain times. It should be characterized by mutual support, affection, vulnerability, accountability, and love. It ought to be spontaneous and fun! To make community work, things like confession, repentance, and forgiveness need to become commonplace. Practical expressions of community should include sharing material possessions and spending time in each other's homes—eating meals together and serving one another. As real acceptance of each person—made in God's image and saved for His purposes—is expressed by a group of fellow believers, individuals may experience the unconditional love of God in their hearts for the first time, or at a deeper level than ever imagined possible.

The energy and power for successful Christian community is the Holy Spirit. Apart from dependence upon the Holy Spirit, it is impossible for mere mortals to achieve true community. It requires more than the offer of friendship, the will to “just do it,” or knowing the guidelines of Scripture—it requires the indwelling power and presence of Almighty God. As His Spirit works in each believer to conform that person to the image of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29), showing mutual concern and acting for the good of others becomes more possible.

Also, God gifts each member of His body with various workings of His Spirit so that each can contribute to the strengthening of others and the community as a whole. As each person submits to God and utilizes the Holy Spirit's gifts, the body matures and is better prepared to carry out the mission of the Kingdom of God. Individuals also learn to love, appreciate, and honor one another. And, the harmonious workings of the community attract those who are without an eternal relationship to Jesus Christ, often causing them to consider receiving such a great salvation and joining the people of God.

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