

The Quest for Community

by Dean Taylor

This sermon emphasizes the importance of genuine community in the church, rooted in a deep relationship with Jesus Christ. It highlights the need for unity, love, and a common purpose among believers, drawing inspiration from historical examples like the Moravians and Hutterites. The speaker challenges the congregation to seek a true individual relationship with God before engaging in community, emphasizing that community without a personal connection to God can lead to hypocrisy.

Scripture: John 17:20, 1 Corinthians 1:10, 1 Thessalonians 4:9

Topics: "Genuine Community", "Personal Relationship with God"

Description

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Transcript

But brotherhood has nothing to do with how you feel about the other person. It's a mutual agreement in a group that you will put the welfare of the group, you will put the safety of everyone in the group above your own. In effect, you're saying, I love these other people more than I love myself.

Last week, the church in Brighton had asked me to speak on the concept of community. And this is a very interesting topic for me. It's one that I've spent a lot with discussing and talking about and praying and going through in my life.

And so it was a very interesting message for me to get together. Sorry, I'm trying to get my, there we go. And so let me just start with the word of prayer.

And then we're going to see what the Lord has in looking at these passages. But I'm going to call this message, The Quest for Community. The name of the message will be The Quest for Community.

So let's pray. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you, Lord God, that you have come to this earth. We thank you, Lord, that you have planted your kingdom on this earth.

And you call us to live our lives together, glorifying you together and blessing you and being the church in this age, in this world, to give a glimpse to the world of what you are wanting for this entire creation. So God, I do pray that you give me strength. I pray that you would open up these scriptures and that you would allow us to hear what you want.

Let my words fall to the ground. Let your words be glorified. We ask these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Thank you very much. That'll fit in there.

Yeah, I better not try it. I'm going to start with this Psalm 133. It's your classic Psalm of brotherhood and community.

It's really beautiful. Psalm 133 goes like this. Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.

It's like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments. It's like the dew of Hermon descending upon the mountains of Zion. And pay attention to this next passage.

For there, that place where this unity is achieved, for there the Lord commanded the blessing and life forevermore. I believe that there's something special about when a church comes together and expresses unity. I think that there's something beautiful about having communities of believers and it's there that God commands a blessing.

And this is what I'm going to be talking about. And you know, this topic is so dear to me. It's so dear to me that it's like, it's a little hard sometimes to express it.

I don't know if any of y'all listen to some TED Talks or something. There's a secular guy named Simon Sinek. Anybody watch any of him? Yeah.

And he has this one about, I think it's one about start with why. He says that the deep things that you have in your life are sometimes hard to articulate. And he gives it a funny example.

Like, you know, you want to, if you want to talk about loving your wife or why is your wife so amazing? You're like, well, I just, you know, it's hard to get it out. But if there's something maybe that's not so important to you, it's a little easier to articulate it and come with a definition. With this concept of brotherhood, the concept of community, it's been something that I don't know has been a theme in my life.

If you were to follow my journey or my testimony of my quest for the church, it's been something that has been so dear to me and so a part of me that it's been hard sometimes for me to express it. Although I've spent a lot of time thinking about this and how to do this. And sometimes as I've wondered why this has been such a part of my testimony, I've even questioned myself, like, you know, is there something wrong with me? You know, and I thought, you know, I've, I came from a actually very loving home, happy home, no divorce.

It was, it was a good, a good upbringing. And I don't feel like there was something lacking. There was just something though that from a child that connected with me.

When I was a soldier in the army, before I realized that Christ had called me to a different life than, a different life of loving your enemy, the concept of being with a band of brothers like that, the idea of the

army was something that resonated with me. I enjoyed the marching in step with the soldiers and the songs that we would sing and those types of things. It, it resonated with me.

And when I gave that up to follow Jesus Christ and to be in his army, that's a little bit of what I was expecting and what I long for in the church of Jesus Christ today, is to have that sort of camaraderie, to have those, those things. In different times of my life, when I've made journeys along the way to have a closer brotherhood, a closer sense of, of, you know, of community, it's, it's some people have got it and some people have not. I think about when I went from Texas and we moved up to, to Pennsylvania and there at Charity Christian Fellowship and the different, the closeness and the brotherhood there was, was much more than I experienced in Texas.

And some people in Texas didn't get it. When I went to, when I went to live in this very progressive community in a whole community of goods in Minnesota, I remember talking to some people and some were like, Dean, you're crazy. But some appreciated it and didn't.

I remember one, one brother said, yeah, Dean, I get it, but my elevator doesn't go up that high. I thought that was a funny expression. Um, you know, as I've studied in history, the different movements of God that have, have been really on purpose and really trying to do something.

It, it inspires me at a way that's hard to express. Even like sometimes I remember once I was, I don't know if you've all have, how many of you have visited the Ephrata Cloister? There in Ephrata, there's an interesting place and they did some pretty weird stuff. They had some pretty weird theology.

I mean, they did. But I remember one time I was there with a tour guide and they were explaining the weird stuff, like the wooden pillows and, and all the crazy and weird stuff they did. But somehow in the midst of it all, I was like, I don't, I don't want the wooden pillows, but yeah, I get it.

You know, there was something about the camaraderie, the purposeful living. It's to, to borrow a phrase from Leonard Ravenhill. When I, it's like a holy dissatisfaction that church should just be a Sunday church, that church is not this, that's something that's an intimacy, that's a, that's a passionate following of Christ, sharing that with my brother and my, and the sisters and the brothers.

I have a holy dissatisfaction that is only, that it only comes together when I see this expressed in one way or another. I've, I've, along that way, I've made some mistakes and I'm going to hopefully cover some of those mistakes and some of the pitfalls of people who have this calling. I think of another one that, another group that, that really inspired me in my, in my journey is when I studied about the Moravians.

The Moravians were a group of people, again, they had some funny theologies, but the one thing you get with the Moravians is like this just total sold out group of people for Jesus Christ. And I remember when I first heard about the Moravians, I was reading Peter Hoover's books and he was talking about them. And see, I grew up in the 90, I grew up in the 80s and we had a lot of, oh, big preachers.

It was the birth of mega churches and a lot of preachers got caught lying and everything. And I have to be honest, when I started reading some of these radical histories, I thought, eh, they're lying. It's, it's no way, no way could people do this.

And when I started digging into the history and reading some of the primary sources and I was like, well, so if Christians can live like this, if you could really have everything in your life and in your church devoted to prospering the kingdom of God and giving glory to Jesus Christ, why wouldn't you do this? It inspired

me. I used to just go, I dragged the family, you know, okay, sorry, kids, we're gonna go one more time up to Bethlehem. And I just walk around going, wow, this place is awesome.

You know, in there and reading the histories and things. And so this has been, this has been something. And I've realized though along the way that I'm not alone.

I've realized along the way that a lot of people are desiring a more passionate church life, a church life that's also a holy dissatisfaction for church just in the norm and they wanting this. And I have a feeling that if you've come to a kind of a very interesting church like follows the way here today, or if you've moved to go to a very interesting school like Sattler College, that you're probably some degree in that number. And so there's something that I wanna tell you that some good things and some bad things about that journey and I wanna inspire this and talk about this quest for community.

Some of the warnings right off is guys like me, you're cult bait, you're bait for cults. And it's dangerous. I've known many sincere people seriously, who they have this passion to follow Christ and they'll get off into something weird.

And you'll see they get into a very controlling group that hurts them and it hurts their children. And it seriously broke my heart to see some people get shipwrecked. And so this craving, this calling must be satisfied in Jesus Christ alone and then express that Jesus Christ with your brothers and your sisters.

And number two, when you get, you who have this passion, when you get to your churches and I'm gonna talk about this, sometimes you're dangerous. You're dangerous to yourself, you're dangerous to your family. And that can also be some things that I'm gonna talk about in this quest for community, this quest for community.

One of my favorite books, it's one of my top 10. My teacher, Bonhoeffer, anybody read Life Together? It's an excellent book. It's a really good book, you should read it.

And in that, he didn't have a full community of goods. And he had like a little seminary of these radical preachers that were studying to be preachers and they lived together and expressed life together in this seminary for a few years. And then it was right during World War II and the Hitler and all this type of a thing.

It was a pretty intense group. And then through that expression of this radical living together in the seminary, he wrote Life Together. But he wrote some of the most profound things about community that's out there and about tight knit brotherhood that's out there.

And I suggest the reading. But here's one of the most famous quotes that come from it. And I'm gonna read the next phrase that comes right off.

He said, he who loves his dream of community more than the Christian community. This is why I say sometimes you're dangerous. You have a calling like this.

He says, he who loves his dream of a community more than the Christian community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter. Even though his personal intentions may be ever so honest and earnest and sacrificial. You know, I can think of my coming to different radical churches in my life.

And you come with these dreams and these aspirations. Sometimes you can be dangerous to yourself and even to the brotherhood there. And he goes on, and this one really convicted me when I read this.

And I think of some of the ways that I came into certain groups. He goes on right after that famous quote. And he says, God hates visionary dreaming.

It makes the dreamer proud and pretentious. The man who fashions a visionary ideal of community demands that it be realized by God, by others, and by himself. He enters the community of Christians with his demands, sets up his own law, and judges the brethren and God himself accordingly.

He stands adamant, a living reproach to all others in the circle of brethren. He acts as if he is the creator of the Christian community, as if his dream binds men together. When things do not go his way, he calls it, he calls the effort a failure.

When his ideal picture is destroyed, he sees the community going to smash. So he becomes first an accuser of the brethren, then an accuser of God, and finally, the despairing accuser of himself. Powerful thought there.

So this idea, as we discussed this quest for community inside me, inside each of you, I want to inspire you with some of these things, and I want us to have these cautions to let Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone be what draws us together, letting him to create this community and for us to really enjoy this community. It follows the way here. We don't have a community of goods like, let's say, a high quality would be or something like that, but we have a lot of discussion about community, about the idea of how we live our lives together and how we can have this.

Different churches express this, and I'm going to talk about the different degrees of community that churches have that God gives to us. And it's something that I think in each capacity that Christ gives us in the church, it's something that if done right can be very powerful in our lives. And here's the thing that I've noticed about all of mankind.

Like I said, I think many of you are experiencing this quest, but I find it to be actually something a little bit to a degree in everybody. And as I am a student of history and as I read history and I look at the movements of history, even like, you know, the way that Rome tried to establish their empire. I think of the rise of communism that was trying to care for the poor and they did their things.

The different ways American politicians and different people started. Even secular societies have some quest, something inside of us to see justice, to see fairness, to see a society be birthed. And without Jesus Christ, this ends up messed up.

It ends up a heresy like communism. It ends up a heresy without Jesus Christ. And you know what I think that that is? I think that there is something inside mankind like what I've looked up this idea of a genetic memory.

Okay, here's the thing. You ever seen a dog? You ever seen a dog that they, they're not in any grass, but you get a dog here and they circle a bunch of times before they lay down. You ever seen that? You ever asked, why do they do that? And then sometimes your dad will say or something.

Well, it's because of the old times they had to mat down the grass and then the mat down the grass that they would then lay down. And one day that hit me and I said, wait a minute. You mean you got some sort

of genetic memory? That's crazy.

And I looked it up and I saw, of course, in the scientific community, there was all kinds of debates on whether this is true or whether it's not, to what degree it means or what other, but that there's something in, but if you start thinking about it, as I watched the scientific community argue this, where you put the category of instinct, that birds just fly and different things and the different animals walk with, there's some kind of genetic memory that they're having of something they have in their past. And when you think of this, then you allow yourself to go further with that. Do we have something inside of mankind that's a genetic memory of the Garden of Eden? There's a genetic memory of wanting a sense of restoration of all of humanity again, and that you see that coming out without Christ and heretical representations of human governments and human efforts, but there's something inside man that quests for this heavenly kingdom.

In Romans chapter eight, it gives us a little backup to that possible scientific theory. In Romans 8, 18, it says this, for I consider that the suffering of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

He's getting his attention now off of just the individual or even to the human beings onto the creation itself waiting for redemption. In verse 20, he says, for the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it in hope, because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Verse 22, for we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

Not only that, but we also have the first fruit of the spirit. Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of the body. It's amazing.

There's something inside of all creation that's groaning and anticipating and waiting for the kingdom to be restored. You know, when I was getting this message ready last week, it was an interesting blog that I get sent to my email. And this one named by Brett and Kate McKay, it's called the Art of Manliness.

It's a funny one about, you know, old time values. It's not all of them are great, but some of them are excellent. And I was amazed to hear I was going to preach on this subject.

And he brings up this example that very morning of this incredible example. I'm going to read it to you. So during World War II, there was a group of paratroopers that have been written about and talked about that were literally called the Band of Brothers because they had a unity about them and they had a bravery about them.

And they were part of so many things that they partook of so many of these different activities that they, it was just an incredible stories. And there was a guy, one of the soldiers there, his name was Ed Pepping. Ed Pepping.

And he was a combat medic. The guys that if someone, you know, break and they'd run and try to heal you or something. And he was a part of the 506th Regiment, 101st Airborne Division.

And he was part of the Band of Brothers. Well, on the day of Normandy, June 6th, 1944, this was one of the biggest attacks where America came in and tried to liberate the Allied powers and came into Normandy on early hours of June 6th, 1944. And he came in too fast.

True story. And his parachute spun out and he hit a tree and it cracked his vertebra and gave him a concussion. But you know, you're landing in a tree in the middle of a really big battle.

You can't lay there and lick your wound. So he kind of gathered himself and got going and he was still able to walk. And he was, first thing he wanted to do was find his platoon.

You know, so he went there. And so he finally found it. They were called the Easy Company.

That was a nickname that they had. And he gathered them all together. And he spent the day trying to encourage them and navigated a firefight in Karatan.

And while he was there in the fight, again, after already wounded, he took a piece of shrapnel, a bomb exploded. True story. Bomb exploded and put shrapnel into his leg and he was unconscious and he wakes up in the hospital.

So this guy wakes up, Ed Peffing wakes up in the hospital, blown out leg, cracked vertebra. He says, I got to get back to the fight. Like, you're not getting back to the fight.

You're a medic. You know better. You can't do that.

He goes, no, I got to be with my men. I got to be with my brothers. No, you can't do it.

The doctors turned their eyes. He snuck out the window and made his way back to his platoon. Went absent without leave AWOL so he could return to the 506th Division.

Why? What would do that? What would cause someone, you had a perfect excuse, you're being ordered to stay still, but he wanted to be back to the fight. Any of you watch TED Talks? I like TED Talks and I know some of them are funny, but one of my, probably my favorite TED Talk is another soldier story by a guy by the name of Sebastian Younger. And Sebastian Younger has this incredible story and it's one that just hit me and it goes with this topic of what I'm talking about.

And the name of it, it's only like 12 minutes long. Why Veterans Miss War? That's the name of it. Why does someone who was in the war and now got out of it and they're back in America, they're back home, why do they miss war? And he says some profound things in that TED Talk that I really think the church needs to hear and apply it to the church.

He says this, I wrote down some of these. He says, I'm going to ask and try to answer in some way, some kind of uncomfortable questions. He says, both civilians, obviously, and soldiers suffer in war.

But I don't think any civilian has ever missed the war that they were subjected to. And I've been covering wars for almost 20 years. He was a soldier himself and also a war reporter.

And one of the remarkable things for me is how many soldiers find themselves missing it. He said, how is it that someone can go through the worst experience imaginable and come back home, back to their home, their family, their country, and miss the war? I mean, how does that work? What does it mean? He says, we have to answer that question because if we don't, I'll be impossible to bring soldiers back to the place in society where they belong. And I think it also will be impossible to stop war.

It'll be impossible to stop war if we don't understand how that mechanism works. Until we understand what's driving those soldiers, we're not going to be able to put an end to war. He says, any sane person

hates war, hates the idea of war, wouldn't want anything to do with it, doesn't want to hear about it, be near about it.

That's the sane response to war. He says, but if I was to ask any of you here in this room, who of you, even though you hate war, have paid money to go to a cinema and be entertained by a Hollywood movie, you would probably a lot of, most all of you here would raise your hand, right? He says, and that's one of the things that are complicated about war. And he says, and trust me, if a room full of peace loving people find something compelling about war, so do 20 year old soldiers who have been trained in it.

And I promise you that the thing that, that's the thing that has to be understood. Later in his talk, he talks about one of his friend named Brendan. And this guy was really, really messed up in the battle in Afghanistan, really messed up.

And he was, he couldn't get hold of a job and he couldn't, and now he's back in America and he was at a social event and one of his friends were sitting there talking to him, a lady, and seeing that he was messed up. And she said, can I just ask you? She said, Brendan, is there anything, is there anything at all that you miss about being in Afghanistan, about the war? I mean, you're messed up. Is there anything that you miss about it? And he thought about it for a long time and he finally said, finally said, ma'am, I miss almost all of it.

He's one of the most traumatized people I've seen from the war. And he's the guy that said, ma'am, I miss almost all of it. And then he asked the question, what is he talking about? He's not a psychopath.

He doesn't miss killing people. He's not crazy. He doesn't miss getting shot at or seeing his friends get killed.

What is it that he misses? We have to answer that if we're going to stop war. We have to answer the question. And then here's the punchline.

And listen to this. I think what he missed is brotherhood. He missed in some way the opposite of killing.

What he missed was the connection to other men he was with. Now, brotherhood is different from friendship, the soldier is saying. Friendship happens in society, obviously.

The more you like someone, the more you'd be willing to do something for them. But brotherhood has nothing to do with how you feel about the other person. It's a mutual agreement in a group that you will put the welfare of the group, you will put the safety of everyone in the group above your own.

In effect, you're saying, I love these people, these other people more than I love myself. And then the last thing I'm going to, he says, he says, you think about all these soldiers having an experience like that, a bond like that. In a small group where they love 20 other people in some way, more than they love themselves.

You think about how good that would feel. Imagine it. And they are blessed with that experience for a year.

And then they come back home and they're just back in society like the rest of us, not knowing who they can count on, not knowing who loves them, who they can love, not knowing exactly what anyone they know would do for them if they came down to it. That is terrifying compared to that war psychologically in some ways is easy compared to that kind of alienation. That's why they missed it.

And that's what we have to understand and in some way fix in our society. Wow. I mean, if you could take that and look at the church, interesting in Francis Chan, and if you've read his book, Letters to the Church, he also has his book, Crazy Love, and he gives these analogy, I think in both those examples.

And there was a guy that they had converted that was part of a motorcycle gang. And the guy that was in the motorcycle gang was all involved with coming to church and everything. And finally he stopped showing up and he asked one of his fellow ministers, he said, go check out this guy and see what's going on.

So they went to his house. He said, man, why aren't you coming to church anymore? He said, listen, you know, you know, I used to be in a motorcycle gang and we would do anything for each other. We did this.

We did that together. It was our life together. So I kind of thought church would be that way.

When I joined the church, I thought we would be there for each other, would do anything, would have this purpose, would have this mission together. And it's not like that. And I don't know.

I just didn't find a reason to keep going. Francis Chan challenges and he says, this is what the church should look like. That we should have this kind of camaraderie, this kind of passion, this kind of living together that's powerful like this.

So let me get to the theology of community. You know, when you get into debates on theology about community, they're really silly usually. It's funny, especially me who used to live a complete community and you try to start talking about it and people talk about it over each other's head.

Usually guys are like these overly communitarian guys think that everything in the Bible is a complete community of goods. And the guys who feel challenged by that think it's totally not allowed. And I've often considered the debate like a celibacy, like the debate about celibacy.

If someone in the Bible say that everybody should be celibate, they're wrong. It's not true. And there's been groups that did that, the shakers and such.

We don't know any of them anymore because they stopped having children and they don't exist anymore. But it's also wrong to say celibacy is not a calling. Jesus was celibate.

Many of the apostles led their life that way. And so there's these different special callings that people have. And sometimes I believe that these levels of different styles of community that we see in the scriptures are misunderstood oftentimes.

And the debates make us miss what I just read to you about the soldier. That somehow in each of these different types of community, this is a type of thing. And if I had a chart, I'd draw a continuum.

So if I can do it with your mind's eye, I've come up with different levels of community that I would see that are in the scriptures from one end to the other. On one side, I would start off with a community of interest. Next to the community of mission.

Next to the community of charity. To the community of goods. To the community of property.

And finally, to a community of production. And I see several of these in the scriptures. I don't see any of them being unscriptural, but I don't see all of them actually in the scriptures.

In 1st Timothy 5.11, I'm going to come back to those and clarify what I mean by each of those. In 1st Timothy 5.3-11, we clearly see a radical expression of community and caring for the widows, but we see something very different than we see in Acts 2 and Acts 4. In Acts 2 and Acts 4, we'd have this community of good community. In 1st Timothy 5.3-11, it's the passage there about taking care of widows and not letting them be a burden to the church and that kind of a thing.

We see interesting this talking about this order of widows. We talk about a family trying to take care of the widows and not letting it being a burden to the church. And we see these different radical expressions of living life together and even caring for each other's needs.

And so I see different expressions in the scriptures. Just recently for my schooling that I'm back in, and I was reading a famous book done in I think the 70s called The Church by Hans Kung. And he was talking about it, about the church.

And he compared the early Christians, particularly there in Acts 2 and 4. And he said, we don't need to, and I had to chuckle, slavishly followed these early Acts examples. And then of course, then he had all of the reasons of what he thinks should be the Acts 2. And a lot of his stuff is good in the book, but I just had to chuckle that there was this need for him to kind of demify the Acts 2 and the Acts 4, slavishly following that to make sure we don't get too caught up in this. And I think that that's interesting.

And in these scriptures, we do see times when in Acts 2 and Acts chapter 4 that they had this very passionate, mission-driven full community of goods. It's interesting in Jesus, we have them sharing their purse. They had a common purse with the apostles and they had this common mission, this common purpose.

And we just throw everything together and have this common purse. We even read in Luke chapter 8, one and three, that he even received donations from other people that were inspired by what Jesus and the apostles were doing. And they were living a different life, but yet donated to this life.

It's a passage we frequently miss. I'll read it to you real quick. In Luke chapter 8, verse one, now it came to pass afterwards that he went through every city and village preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God.

And the 12 were with him and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities. And he gives who they are. Mary called Magdalene out of whom had come seven demons.

And Joanna, the wife of Chusa, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for him from their substance. And so what I see in these different expressions is that what's behind it all is radical purpose, coming together, caring for each other. And then this came as expressed out in different ways.

I'm breaking down this what I have here of the continuum that I've seen. The one thing to the far left, I would say the community of interest. And okay, sometimes that's all you get.

That may be a WhatsApp group. That may be a one time, if you're in a foreign country and you've had just one time of fellowshiping with someone and now you just have this common interest. It draws us together in a community.

And I see this in some of the expressions of even what some of the churches had in the New Testament. But more than mostly in a biblical expression, I would see at the very least a community of mission. A

community of mission.

And I think that this is a very important part of genuine community. It's what draws us together. We have a common purpose, a common thing that we're accomplishing, a community of mission.

The next thing that I would see is a community of charity. This is a Harold S. Bender term, a community of charity. And this would be that as you have the community of interest, you have the community of mission and purpose.

You then have people that have needs and we share with one another and help each other's needs I would say this is what we have here in Boston. We have a community of charity that we share and express life together. I've seen this amongst the Anabaptist people.

I saw this practice in Lancaster County by many different churches and it is very special and you do not want to lose this. I believe of being a genuine New Testament church, you're gonna care for one another and express in a community of charity. The other thing that I see in the book of Acts is a community of goods.

And so here they said, oh, we're on this purpose together, we're doing everything, let's throw everything together to accomplish this. We've expressed this in different ways. I've lived in both in a mission setting where everyone's just kind of, you know, getting their funds together to try to accomplish something, just to doing more on purpose.

But this community of goods is a radical sharing. Again, not everything in the New Testament was that to that level. Even with Jesus, you had some that were donating and you had Jesus himself.

The next is a community of property. Oh, the community of goods is what I see in the book of Acts 2 and chapter 4. You had a total radical sharing of their expression. They had church house to house, but they shared their all things to common and they put it at the apostle's feet.

Community of property is a next level that I don't see in the New Testament, but I do see it as something that's allowable. I've seen it in church history, but it's not necessarily New Testament. And this is where you would have common property bought together, everyone living on and then that for the purpose.

Now, if you've got the common mission, if you've got the common interest, if you've got the community passion and you're doing that with the property, it comes out beautiful. If it's just the property without the ones, it sometimes cannot be so. And then the other one that I would say what I see in like the Hutterites and some of the more older communities would be the community of production.

Again, I don't see this in the New Testament, but it's certainly something that could be done very profoundly. And in history, the Moravians would have had those different levels of community. But here's the interesting thing.

If you can have all the way to the community of goods, the community of property, and the community of production, but if you don't have the community of mission, you're lacking something. And I can tell you there's something weird about being in a complete community of goods, community of property, community of production, and you get those guys and they say to you, I'm just so lonely. I'm just so lonely.

And I'm like, that's really weird. How can you be living in a community of goods and all this kind of things and not have that fulfillment? And sometimes that may be a sin issue or maybe just a depression or something someone's going through. And I understand that.

But with the community of mission, the purpose, that's what those soldiers were talking about. And in the original parts of the history, when you read the Moravians and you read the early Hutterites and you read the early Anabaptists and you hear about the people that are passionate, the details of this isn't so much the mission of being on purpose and radically serving the kingdom of God. That gives this zeal and this passion together and the rest of these details you work out.

But if you don't have the community of mission, that purpose, there's a longing inside of you that I don't think you're going to be able to fulfill. Historically, it's interesting as we see this community of mission and purpose and life. The early Anabaptists have lived an incredible example to that.

That's also some of the times we first have Christian churches writing. I think the Waldensians and some of the earlier groups also experienced some of this. But the Anabaptists are the first ones that we had a kind of something written that we have examples of this concept of the church.

And it's interesting the concept of the church being wrapped up in this. How many of you have read, maybe some of you students have read Little's *The Anabaptist View of the Church*. Do we read that in doctrines or something? I'm not sure if we do.

Anyway, he makes a stunning claim in that book where he says, and you look in the Reformation, in the time of the Reformation, one of the biggest changes that the radical reformers stood for was the view of the church. With all the other reformers and the Catholic churches, church was the nation. You were born, and that's why you had infant baptism.

You were born into your area, and then you tried to have a spiritual life and a devoted life, and that was good. But the church concept was still really messed up. But the radical reformers came and said, no, we're going to be a gathered group of people.

A gathered group of people that come together for this common purpose to serve God, and that's what drove them in different expressions. Interesting, here's a statement written in 1531 by Sebastian Frank against the Anabaptists, but he's cataloging what he was seeing amongst them, and he wrote some interesting things. He says, these Anabaptists soon gain a large following, drawing many sincere souls who had a zeal for God.

For they taught nothing but love, faith, and the cross. They showed themselves humble, patient under much suffering. They break bread with one another as an evidence of unity and love.

They helped each other faithfully and called each other brothers. They died as martyrs, patiently and humbly enduring all persecution. Hildesbender then, in his famous speech there, *Anabaptist Vision*, broke the whole church that started in the Reformation into three different branches, or four, counting this new radical reformers.

He called Catholicism being an institutional way to have the church. You had institutions of nations, and you would just come to it into the institution. He said the Lutheran or the Reformed was a place to receive the resource as the instrument of the proclamation of the Word of God.

The Reformers stood for, and this was good, the idea that the Word of God would be preached, and that's why we gather. We gather, the Word of God is preached. You receive the blessing and almost like a sacramental concept of being under the preaching of the Word of God, and that's why we gather.

It's a good thing. It's not a bad thing. The next were the Pietists, and the Pietists, according to Bender here, that they came together to encourage one another as a resource group for encouraging us, for piety, for passion, and that's why you gather the church together.

But he said the radical reformers joined together to be a brotherhood, for discipleship, to be a city in the kingdom of God. And so as we look at this reason why we exist, I ask you this evening, do you have that calling inside of you of wanting more, of wanting some? And many of us are going to experience this different ways. At the last week when I was preaching on this, you know, Andrew and Esther was there, and if y'all don't know him, he got converted at the bridge here, Chinese family, and they're going back to China.

And as they're going back to China, we've been praying and wondering what's church life going to be for him? You know, and he was talking about it just at the agape before the sermon, and what's church life going to be for him? And as you think of this, of what these times will mean for him, these intimate times that he's had with the body when he heads off to China, his visa's over and he's heading back. Many of you might remember a time that you're here gathered at Sattler, or something that the bond of brotherhood and fellowship that you experience, that maybe that's a temporary thing. But I hope that all of us will have the potential of actually living a life that's completely filled with this kind of joy.

It's interesting though, Bonhoeffer expresses that we all, to different degrees, live this. And here's a great quote from him on this measure of how much of this you get in your life. Bonhoeffer says, the measure with which God bestows the gift of visible community is varied.

The Christian in exile is comforted by a brief visit of a Christian brother. A prayer together and a brother's blessing. Indeed, he is strengthened by a letter written by the hand of a Christian.

Let's remember that when we have some of our brothers going back to places like China. The greeting in the letters written with Paul's own hand were doubtless tokens of such community. Others are given the gift of common worship on Sundays.

Still others have the privilege of living a Christian life in the fellowship of their families. Seminarians before their ordination receive the gift of common life with their brethren for a definite period. Among earnest Christians in the church today, there is a growing desire to meet together with other Christians in the rest period of their work for common life under the word.

Communal life is again being recognized by the Christians today as the grace that it is as the extraordinary, the roses of the lilies of the Christian life. This is the kind of deep community that we have. Oftentimes when I've asked, I've lived in very radical expressions of community.

I've asked the communitarians, why do you live in community? And so what do you think the most common answer is? Okay, that would be actually a very honest answer. He said because I was born here. But what I usually hear is because of Acts 2 and Acts 4. I'll say, okay, that's great.

But Acts 2 and Acts 4 is a testimony. It's not a command. It's a testimony of an expression of radical Christianity.

But at the heart of it, at the depth of it, there's something radical. There's something on purpose that's behind those expressions that we see in church history. It's behind the expression we see in Acts 2 and 4. It's behind what 1 Timothy is talking about of living life radically together.

And I'm going to give you some of now the theology, the scriptures for the Trinity, for the community. And one of them is the community of the Trinity. The scriptural basis, the depth, the deep parts of why we come together and why we live this life together in one part of that expression or another.

1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 10 is a very challenging passage. I want you to hear me read it to you. What we're being commanded in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 10 is extremely challenging.

Paul writing to the Corinthians says this, Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no division among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. So he just commanded them to agree on your theology and on your application of the theology. That's pretty hard.

Be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me, according you, concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, I am of Paul or I am of Apollos or I am of Cephas or I am of Christ.

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? Now let me tell you something that I learned from being a student of history. These incredible people of history are remarkably like me and you. And Corinth, if we could say, oh wow, these guys were such, you know, awesome Christians.

If we would go there, you would find that they're remarkably just like me and you. And if you think that they just naturally could just take this command and live perfectly joined together in the same thought and judgment, it took the Holy Spirit and it took work. And as I find it interesting that he even rebukes them for saying, or I am of Christ.

Even in the way we act like Christians can sometimes be contentious and factious. It takes a work to be one. It takes the unity of Jesus Christ for us to be that way.

And that's something that is important and commanded of us. He spends the rest of the book talking about it. 1 Thessalonians 4, 9 and 10 is even more powerful.

Turn to that one. This one has a touch of the supernatural involved in it and the practical, the supernatural and the practical. He says here in 1 Thessalonians 4, 9 and 10, but concerning brotherly love, you have no need that I should write to you.

For you yourselves are taught by God to love one another. Isn't that awesome? They are taught by God to love one another. For indeed, and indeed you do toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia.

But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more. So here they were together and living this life together. But he's encouraging them to love one another.

And so the heart of this, this loving one another, this sharing of this passionate life together, this being this band of brothers, he's encouraging them to express this in the church. I think that's powerful. But I think

the biggest reason that's behind all of Acts and Timothy and this passage and John and Corinth is the community of the Trinity.

And in our agape, Christian was talking about the, in the school right now, there's some, y'all been studying the Trinity and meditating on the different ways the Trinity interact and the different attributes of the Trinity. This community of the Trinity is powerful. I'm almost done.

I'm going to read you these scriptures and then we're going to bring it to a close. But I want you to catch this community of the Trinity. In John chapter 17, you know, it's right before he's taken up and to be betrayed and those things.

And he's praying. And he's praying to the father, what's called the high priestly prayer, and it's powerful. And he prays this powerful prayer of unity of how it should be like, gives him a sense of, of some of these radical expressions that we've been talking about.

It gives some sense of how Paul could challenge us with such an incredible statement as he just challenged us. It gives us an expression of why we'd have these radical expressions in Timothy and even Acts. And he says this, Jesus praying to the father, now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world and I come to you.

Holy father, keep through your name those whom you have given me that they may be one as we are. Now through these passages, I want you to ponder how one are the members of the Trinity. And I pray that they are one as we are one.

Then verse 20, he says, I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in me through their word. That's us. That not just these here locally, but those in the future who will believe.

I'm going to pray for them that they all may be one as you father are in me and I in you, that they also may be one in us. Why? He stakes his reason for coming to the earth on this. Why? That the world may believe that you sent me.

Jesus put this as such an important thing that he stakes his reason for coming to earth based upon this way that we can express ourselves in this community. That's the community of Trinity. And you remember the Zinger passage of Psalm 133? And on such, I command a blessing.

I don't know, but I see this next statement applying that passage. So he's praying for this unity and then verse 22, and the glory which you gave me, I have given them that they may be one just as we are one, I in them and you in me that they may be made perfect in one and that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them as you have loved me. This beautiful thing, our unity with Christ.

And then from that, this unity of the Trinity being with each other. Bonhoeffer again puts it this way. Great perspective.

This is where you can end up dangerous if you don't get this. Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. No Christian community is more or less than this.

Whether it be a brief single encounter or the daily fellowship of years, Christian community is only this. We belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ. And I think that's really important.

This is where if you're just dreaming about what church life should be and you're getting to church, you're getting to a community, you're getting to a radical fellowship like this, and if it's just your dreams and your impressions, it's going to come out ugly. You're going to be dissatisfied. You're going to even start judging your brothers.

You're going to not be able to get along with each other. But if your unity is with Jesus Christ, and then with Jesus Christ, you have that love for the brother and that member is taught of God with each other, and then with that common mission and purpose, that is powerful. Now Bonhoeffer, who leans towards obviously the Reformed tradition, says that this is something that God grants in different ways.

A sort of contemporary with Bonhoeffer, with A.W. Tozer. Have you all read some A.W. Tozer? Tozer is another excellent writer, a little later, but of the time period. And he makes a point about Acts 2 and a little more purposeful.

He may go too far, but he says this. In Acts chapter 2, verse 1, it says this, when the day of Pentecost had finally come, they were all with one accord in one place and then suddenly came from heaven as of a rushing wind and filled the whole house. A.W. Tozer says, note that it was they were living this way and God commands the blessing.

And you think about that Psalm 133, on such I command a blessing. You think of the glory which you have given me, I shall give to you passage of John 17. That there's something about the reward of us dying to ourself to accomplish this.

I don't think it just happened at Corinth. I don't think they just took this passage from this rebuke from Paul and said, okay, let's just be perfectly joined together now. This is a work.

This is a process. And it's going to be from love and it's going to be, but like, remember what the soldier said? Brotherhood is different than friendship. Friendship we have with each other and you'll have this relationship and you might get offended and then you're no longer friend and you're no longer going to be with someone.

Brotherhood is different. You're driven by a common purpose and a common love for each other. That's going to deal with your problems and you're going to deal with mine in a sense that's so much greater than just friendship.

And I tell you, if the soldiers of this world can understand that, then I think the church can understand that as well. I think the church can understand that as well. I'll give you one more quote and then I'm going to take it to my end story.

The warning with this then is when we come into community and have that first oneness with God, we must be people who are genuine individuals. You must personally and individually have a relationship with Jesus Christ or this won't work. You must personally and individually experience the love of God.

Do you know today that Jesus loves you? Do you know that? Do each of you know how much Jesus loves you? Until you've really experienced that love of God for you, what you're going to be having for each other is kind of a fake. You've got to experience that. There's a story in the Hutterite Chronicles, almost a funny story if it's not sad.

In the 1700s, there was this renewed movement of the Hutterites and this one guy got in jail and I guess he didn't have an individual relationship with God, but the man, it says in the Chronicles, knew the Bible like some people know the Lord's Prayer. This guy apparently could just quote anything and he knew the Bible hands down. They had kind of a weak minister, apparently, at the time.

He was sort of a mercy guy and he was weak and this guy got captured. The guy who knew all the Bible really well, he got captured and he got put into jail. Somehow, though, he was lacking this individual relationship with God and he started saying, I don't know how, you can't pray unless you pray in community.

Only community prayers count, not individual prayers. Somehow, so there were some other people in prison. He said, no, you can't pray alone.

We can't pray unless we pray together. Somehow, he talked to the ministers who came to visit him and thinking that was right and finally, he stirred up the whole church thinking, well, I don't know. I mean, this guy knows the Bible and he's quoting all these things and true story.

And then finally, the Hutterites were hearing about the Moravians, well, maybe it was before, about the same, now it's a different time period. It was about the same time period. The Moravians use of the lot or they were trying the lot and this minister with all the church saying, well, you can't pray individually.

You gotta pray in community. And finally, he said, let's throw a lot. You never do this.

With lot, I don't mind praying with a lot if you've truly sought out every possible scripture. You're walking on the word of God. You've checked your heart.

You're everything I could approve. But this pastor, he thought it would be an easy way. So he said, let's just throw the lot.

So they threw the lot and guess what happened? It went to the guy that's in jail. So now he's like, oh, no, no, I didn't mean it. And so now the whole church and the Chronicles goes for pages of what chaos this caused for communities.

Essentially the Moravians visited the Hutterites a few years later and they read this. They said, what were you thinking? So they thought it was crazy. Unless you have an individual relationship with God, community and brotherhood is gonna be a farce.

It's gonna be hypocrisy. It's gonna not be real. You must experience the love of God.

And then you'll have that love for each other. Bonhoeffer put it this way. Let him who cannot be alone, beware of community.

And let him who was not in community, beware of being alone. Each by itself has profound perils and pitfalls. One who wants fellowship without solitude plunges into the void of words and feelings.

And the one who seeks solitude without fellowship perishes in the abyss of vanity, self infatuation and despair. I think this is well said. Well said.

So as we ponder this and ponder this, I challenge you, what is that calling in your life? For me, it's when I hear these stories in history, when I experience it, it's like a key that turns the lock inside of me and it

turns. And I'm like, yeah, that's what I want. I mean, when I, it's funny, well, Tonya and I were editors for The Remnant for years.

And when I finished, when we finished the article on the Moravian Mission Machine, I said, I said to her, I said, I feel my work is done at The Remnant. There was something about bringing out this radical Christian church life that was totally sold out. And we don't care about the forums or this, but we're just going to completely sell out and be radical for Christ.

There was something inside of me that I just felt click. And it still does. I love genuine and real passionate church life.

And so I encourage you, if we want this, we have to first make sure we have a real relationship with Jesus Christ. And then to experience this, I encourage you to have church life be more than just a Sunday service, to allow it to be to common. And remember, you start with a common interest.

I think without that community of mission and purpose, we're going to feel lonely. What it's not, it's not about having a bunch of activities. I've been in situations where we just plan a whole bunch of activities.

We'll do this and we'll do that. And we'll this, we'll have a bunch of activities. Community is not just having a bunch of activities, but if you've got a community of mission, you're going to be meeting a lot.

You're going to have a lot of activities. It's, you can't just artificially do these things. But if you're truly a soldier of the Lord, if you're truly a soldier with these things, you're going to share life together.

Do you see what I mean? It cannot just be artificially kept, but if you're genuine with these purposes, these purposes can express itself in life together. So I'll close with one last Bonhoeffer quote. Again, came from this blog just Sunday, last Sunday, and it really impressed me.

So Bonhoeffer, when he was young and he came to America and he was trying to deal with his formalism of the reformed tradition that he had and Lutheranism in Germany, and he came to America and he visited Harlem and saw the gospel choirs there. The African American gospel choirs were just, he was blown away by this, blown away by different things. And he was going to seminary, did some seminary work here.

And, but then World War II was getting terrible and it was building up and we were hearing all these things about Hitler and all this and someone's, and everyone said, Bonhoeffer, stay here. Don't go back. And he said, no, I gotta go back.

I gotta go back. And in the blog, he, as you can imagine, he associated this with the soldier who climbed out of the window to get back to the paratroopers. And this is what Bonhoeffer wrote.

It is for us as it is for soldiers who come home on leave from the front lines, but who in spite of all their expectations long to be back at the front again. We cannot get away from it anymore. Not because we're necessary or because we are useful to God.

And then here it is, listen. But simply because that is where our life is. And because we leave our life behind on the front lines, destroy it if we cannot be in the midst of it again.

It's nothing pious. It's more like some vital urge. Some vital urge.

I think that there's, this is something that God writes on our hearts of the church. And as we ponder church life, as we ponder the life in Jesus Christ, I encourage all of us to grow in this kind of a passionate expression of serving God. We'll let God worry about the details or to what level of whatever it is.

The common purpose of serving Him in life together I think is a beautiful thing. It's the quest for community. I'll close with prayer and then I'll hand it back over to the moderator.

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you Lord for your grace. We thank you for the expression of the community that you share with the Father. And I ask you God to please to by your grace be manifested here among us and let us truly understand of having the common love for one another, the common purpose, a drive for serving you.

And so God, I pray that that's something that we can't do in our own strength. And Lord, I pray that if each and everyone here, if there's anyone here this evening who has not experienced the love of God for themselves, that they would experience your love for them. That this patient love that while they are yet sinners that you died for them.

And dear God, I pray that as they experience and express that this love, they can bask in that love that you've given unto each and everyone here. And then from that, we will share and enjoy this love that we have for one another. So that the world may know that you were sent and we can glorify you here on this earth.

We thank you Lord for this calling. We thank you for the purpose you've given us in life. It's your name that we want to glorify.

Nothing else. In Jesus name, amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/uTq5QoCBvZA.mp4>

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