
SOLA FIDE

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COMMUNITY

What comes to mind when you hear the word “community”? Is it a gated-neighborhood you live in? Is it the idyllic, cozy town you hear of in stories? Or, is it just a thing of the past that no longer exists in our individualistic culture? Each one of us may have an idea of what it should be, but what about the community of believers, the church?

To lay a biblical foundation, there are several elements of the community that are important for believers. First, it has been established by God himself (Matt. 16:18) and not by man’s doing. Secondly, it is made up of believers (Eph. 2:12-13) for the exaltation of God (1 Pet. 2:9), the edification of believers (Eph. 4:11-12), and the evangelization of the world (Matt 28:19-20). This means that the Christian community has been made with specific purposes to be fulfilled by its members. And thirdly, each Christian plays an integral part in building up the community with his or her spiritual giftings (1 Cor. 12:12-31). As God created human beings to be relational beings, each person needs the community to emotionally and spiritually flourish. God has designed for His people to walk Christian life together as a fully functioning body, with Jesus as the head (Col. 1:18). How are we, the believers, to take part in this design and prepare ourselves for the challenges that may come as we engage with the community of God?

Expect to Be Disappointed

Our community is made up of sinners and is far from perfect. We may initially have had high hopes in various relationships in the church, leadership, or even various church ministries, but were disappointed. However, many of our disappointments stem from our own unrealistic



expectations from church, possibly having

forgotten its imperfect nature until Christ’s return (Eph. 5:25-27). So rather than anticipating that the church to meet our expectations, we ought to reorient our perspective to think about ways we can use our energy, time, and resources to strengthen and build up the body of Christ (1 Thes. 5:11).



“When our fellowship is not simply a network of loose Christian relationships, but anchored in a particular covenant community as committed members together in a local outpost of Christ’s kingdom, we come closest to experiencing what those first Christians did, when people didn’t drift in and out of the community, but were either in or out-- and those who were in were pledged to be the church for each other through thick and thin. Covenant community is like Christian marriage in that it is within the framework of stated commitments and promised allegiances that life in relationship is guarded, nourished, and encouraged most to thrive.”

Habits of Grace by David Mathis

Expect to Be Uncomfortable

We will be placed in less than comfortable circumstances with individuals who we would not have chosen as acquaintances or as friends. We may come across people whose personalities clash with our own: the rigid folks, the sensitive types, the argumentative individuals, and the list goes on... These situations will challenge us, stretch us, and cause us to rely on Jesus as the unifying factor in our relationships (1 Cor. 1:10). On the other hand, community will also confront us with our own impatience, irritations, and lack of love towards one another. As time goes on, interactions with one another within the community will bring out the ugliness of sin within us. Taking these opportunities to repent of our shortcomings and prayerfully relying on God’s sanctifying power (Phil. 1:6) will encourage us to work together towards love and unity in Jesus.

Expect to Experience God’s Grace

There are blessings we receive when we come together to worship corporately, to praise, to hear the Word, and to fellowship, all of which are why we are encouraged to not give up meeting together (Heb 10:25). As Martin Luther once said, “At home, in my own house, there is no warmth or vigor in me, but in the church when the multitude is gathered together, a fire is kindled in my heart and it breaks its way through.” For believers, the community is a place where faith is awakened and nurtured. Demonstration of God’s love and grace is also shown through the community in times of individual needs and hardships (Acts 2:44-46). He has purposed that the believer’s spiritual and physical needs be met by members of the body. These can range from praying for one another to being present together in times of sorrow.

Christian life was designed to be lived out in the context of God’s community. As iron sharpens iron, we need the body of believers to challenge and build up one another (Prov. 27:17). Simply put, we need our community. Yes, there will be disappointments and hurts, as well as temptations to withdraw ourselves from the community, but let us be reminded that God desires to bless us through the body of Christ. Most importantly, let us remember that “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for the her...” (Eph. 5:25-27).

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