

## Cultivating Christian Community Part 2

Cultivating Christian community is one of Christ's core values for His church. The Bible's view on Christian spirituality is very different from our culture's perspective on it.

"I am a spiritual person. I am just not into 'organized religion.'" This is the mantra of many who seek and celebrate self-fulfillment in a self-made spirituality devoid of people problems. There is something appealing about a spirituality without the complications of community. Relationships are hard. Cultivating any community, including Christian community, is difficult. Yet the Bible clearly asserts the fullness of Christ and His gospel are experienced in community.

The gospel of Jesus Christ both restores us to personal relationship with God and spiritually connects us with other Christians. The Bible employs several words and metaphors to uniquely describe our spiritual connection to other Christians. "This mystery is that through the gospel, the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 3:6). "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9).

Do you notice the words which describe God's people, including the word "church", are plural not singular? The purpose of God's reconciling work in Jesus Christ is personal salvation from sin, death, and Hell and the restoration of personal relationship with God. And personal faith in Christ identifies us with a new community with a common mission. This missional community is Christ's church. Our union with Christ and His church go together.

The writer of Hebrews says, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25). The verse and passage is not cajoling irregular worship attenders to come to church. The writer of Hebrews is teaching Christians to cultivate a mutual spirituality in community. "Meeting together" is God's exhortation and invitation to share and grow our spiritual lives in community. This "meeting together" is the missing link in so many of our lives.

Doing the Christian life and mission in community is God's design for His people. The Scriptures instruct us to learn the Scriptures and to learn God's Word together; to pray and to pray together; to serve and to serve together. Paul prays, "I pray that you being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp... the love of God... that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:17,18,19). The experience of the fullness of God and His love in Christ is grasped, "together with all the saints."

Great Peace in the Lord,  
Eddie