

“Being a Covenant Community”
July 29, 2018

CORE: Our covenant with Jesus must be seen in the way we love one another.

1 John 4:20-21 TPT- *“Anyone can say, “I love God,” yet have hatred toward another believer. This makes him or her a phony, because if you don’t love a brother or sister, whom you can see, how can you truly love God, whom you can’t see? For he has given us this command: whoever loves God must also demonstrate love to others.”*

HERE ARE 4 KEYS TO BECOMING HIS ‘COVENANT COMMUNITY’:

1. Our love for God is our top priority.

- One of the most common OT phrases describing what the New Covenant would be like is this: **“I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” (Isaiah 54:13)** NOTE: Variations of this phrase are found 28 times in the OT.
- In a **contract—property is exchanged** (i.e., my car, my house)
- But **in covenant—people are connected** (i.e., my God, “My people,”)
- On the Cross, **the veil was powerfully torn (Matthew 27:51)—so that we can “boldly draw near” (Heb. 4:16 NKJV) “to where love is enthroned—to receive mercy’s kiss and discover the grace we urgently need” (TPT).**
- Our **“shadow”** (i.e., our impact on our environment; Acts 5:15) **is the direct result of what overshadows us.**

2. We are convinced that we need one another.

- **Community is a BIG deal to God: “They shall be MY PEOPLE!”**
 - He lives in community with Himself (“Let US make”- Genesis 1:26)
 - He later said: **“It is NOT GOOD for man to be ALONE”- Genesis 2:18**
- **WE are His “TEMPLE” together: “The whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple (naos- the Holy of Holies) in the Lord, in whom you are also being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” Ephesians 2:21,22 NIV**
- “We need other people to complete what we carry” - Bill Johnson

3. We want to reveal His love to the world—by the ways we love one another.

- **1 John 4:12 TPT-** *“No one has ever gazed upon the fullness of God’s splendor. But if we love one another, God makes his permanent home in us, and we make our permanent home in him, and his love is brought to its full expression in us.”*

- (Paraphrase of 1 John 4:12)- The invisible God is made visible in the community of believers who actively love one another!
 - By coming to **connect** with others and **contribute** to their lives (NOTE: A sharp contrast to the “consume & critique” mindset)
 - Investing time and prayer, “bringing community” to others vs. waiting for “community” to come to us (*As we “sow generously” we will “reap generously” 2 Cor. 9:6*)
 - Looking for ways to “assemble” (Heb. 10:25)—building relationships that are honest & honoring; enduring & edifying

4. We see one another—and pray for one another—with a heart full of faith.

- Every church—including every NT church—is filled with imperfect people, at various stages of maturity, who make mistakes as they are learning to follow Jesus.
- How we respond to imperfections—including our own—calls for humility both before the Lord & with one another!
- PAUL saw believers as they truly were in Christ—and how they would be when His work was completed in them.
- Corinth was a “spiritual disaster.” Listen to how he addressed them:

“In writing you this letter addressed to the community of God throughout the city of Corinth. For you have been made pure, set apart in the Anointed One, Jesus. And God has invited you to be his devoted and holy people, and not only you, but everyone everywhere who calls on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ as their Lord, and ours also. ³ May joyous grace and endless peace be yours continually from our Father God and from our Lord Jesus, the Anointed One! ⁴ I am always thanking my God for you because he has given you such free and open access to his grace through your union with Jesus, the Messiah. ⁵ In him you have been made extravagantly rich in every way. You have been endowed with a wealth of inspired utterance and the riches that come from your intimate knowledge of him. ⁶ For the reality of the truth of Christ is seen among you and strengthened through your experience of him. ⁷ So now you aren’t lacking any spiritual gift as you eagerly await the unveiling of the Lord Jesus, the Anointed One. ⁸ He will keep you steady and strong to the very end, making your character mature so that you will be found innocent on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 1:2-8)

- He then continues—as in his other letters—to pray for them (as believers) to come to fully **know & experience** who they **really are** in covenant with Jesus.

FINAL THOUGHT-

Followers of Jesus who radically impact the planet are those who live in covenant community with other followers of Jesus.

This note was found in the Bible of a young pastor in Zimbabwe who was martyred for his faith in Jesus:

“I’m part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I, with my brothers and sisters, am a disciple of Jesus. I won’t look back, let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense, and my future is secure. I’m finished and done with low living, sight walking, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tamed visions, worldly talking, cheap giving, and dwarfed goals.”

“I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits, or popularity. I don’t have to be right, first, tops, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by faith, lean into his presence, walk by patience, am uplifted by prayer, and I labor with power.”

“My face is set, my goal is heaven, my road is narrow, my way is rough, my companions faithful, my Guide reliable, and my mission clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, deluded, or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifices, falter in the words of critics, hesitate in the presence of the enemy, pander at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity.”

“I won’t give up, shut up, let up, until I have stayed up, stored up, prayed up, paid up, preached up for the cause of Christ. I am a disciple of Jesus. I must go till he comes, give till I drop, preach till all know, and work till he stops me. And, when he comes for his own, he will have no problem recognizing us ... our banner will be clear.”