

6 Paths Toward Restoring True Christian Community

Millions of modern Christians have forgotten the true meaning and purpose of spiritual community.

Think about it. I'll say two words—"church" and "fellowship."

What do you picture? A weekly service? A gathering to sing worship songs, give offerings and hear a sermon? A midweek Bible class?

That's the default mindset of most Western believers today. And none of those practices are bad in themselves. God can use them to produce great fruit in our lives! But is that all?

The Forgotten Fire of True Fellowship

Think about it. The early church was not born tucked away below a towering steeple. God birthed our movement out of radical community.

It all began when 120 believers gathered together in an upper room (see Acts 2:1). The Holy Spirit fell, and the gospel immediately spread like wildfire. First, 3,000 were saved, then 5,000 (Acts 2:41, Acts 4:4). In a matter of hours, the Christian church became a vibrant spiritual community pulsating with the passion and purposes of Jesus Christ.

These early disciples immediately "devoted themselves ... to fellowship" (Acts 2:42, NIV)—and that doesn't mean they went to church all day (an idea which would have seemed foreign to them). Acts tells us what it looked like:

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together

and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:42-47, ESV).

Yes, these fiery saints didn’t care where they had to gather. They felt thrilled to meet at home, in the temple courts, in a synagogue, on the street or in the market, as long as they could seek Jesus’ face and represent Him to a dying world.

Why? Because above all, they longed to advance God’s kingdom. To do that, they would willingly sacrifice everything—even sharing their hearts, homes, food, faith and finances, having “all things in common” (Acts 2:44b, ESV).

“Church” in the 21st Century

Fast forward to today. Many modern Christians see “church” as a mere meeting. Even worse, they measure spiritual success just like the world measures entertainment. Was the speaker polished? Was the singer talented? Was the music beautiful? How was the show?

The fact is, we’ve learned to appeal to man’s desires rather than God’s. As a result, we’ve exchanged God’s glory for sterile religion void of the kingdom’s power.

But God didn’t create the church to showcase human talents. He didn’t send Jesus as a church mascot to justify our ministry activities. He created us as “a dwelling place for God by the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22b). The Lord saves us so that we’ll advance as an army, declaring His gospel and shining His glorious light throughout all society!

Recovering the True Purpose of Christian Community

You see, some of the most incredible “churches” I’ve ever visited gathered under trees in other countries. We camped God’s kingdom under those trees, presented the gospel, and God showed up and transformed lives. It had nothing to do with a building, tithes, offerings or fancy songs. It had to do with the glory of God. A community of believers came together longing to see Jesus glorified and sinners saved, and God’s Spirit came down in holy fire.

That’s the true purpose of Christian community. It’s about God’s kingdom moving and Jesus receiving glory. It’s about God surging His purposes forward in the earth through a group of humble believers. It’s all about Him.

Now, don’t get me wrong—God can use our talents to help those ends. But we’ve failed God miserably if we see talent as a measuring rod for spiritual success. That’s a profound symptom of spiritual sickness—and a warning sign that we lack the true substance and purpose of God’s kingdom. God saved us to reveal His redemptive purpose to the earth, not to put on a good show!

Six Paths Toward Radical Community

It’s time to get serious about God’s will for our spiritual communities. We must humble ourselves and cry out to God, asking Him to help us live together in radical devotion to Jesus and His purposes. In short, we should ask the Lord for grace to grow in the following six ways:

- Christ-centered ministry. We must repent for making preachers into idols and showmen while Jesus fades into the background.
- Genuine transformation. We must assess our spiritual communities with brutal honesty. We do well to ask: “What are these gatherings actually accomplishing to turn the tide of

ungodliness encroaching upon our churches, nation and world?"

- Pure motivations. We must ask ourselves, "What truly motivates our spiritual behavior and gatherings—God's glory, or something else?"
- Sacrificial living. We must learn to flee our comfort zones and go into this dying world as "salt and light" (see Matt. 5:13-16).
- Spiritual laser-focus. We must lower the curtain on our religious shows, die to our addiction to image, numbers and popularity, and seek instead to save a generation that's plunging into eternal darkness.
- Putting Jesus first. We must allow Jesus to become our primary reason for existence as a church. We must deliberately focus on Him in everything. He and He alone must drive our actions and inspire our fellowship!

In closing, the harvest is waiting for us! With this in mind, let's continue gathering to receive and share God's encouragement and strength. Only, let's make sure we do this God's way and for His purposes. When we deliberately seek His face together, God will catapult us into divine action and salvage us from shallow, powerless gatherings. Whenever we gather, may we remember—Jesus is not our mascot; He's our Lord and King! Amen! {eoa}

Keith Collins is the founder of *Generation Impact Ministries* and *Impact Global Fellowship*. He is actively involved in itinerant ministry, teaching and writing. In recent years, Keith served as the president of the *Brownsville Revival School of Ministry* and as the director of *FIRE School of Ministry*, which were both born out of the *Brownsville Revival* in Pensacola, Florida. His recent book, *Samuels Arising: Waking Up to God's Prophetic Call*, is now available on Amazon, and his podcast, titled *Maintain the Flame*, can be heard on iTunes and at . You can contact Keith via his websites at or .

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