

Community Life

“Indeed there are many members, yet one body.” (1 Cor. 12:20)

One Body

Addressing the Corinthians, Paul compared the Church to a human body. Comprised of various members and functions, the Church, Paul explains, is an intelligently designed anatomy. It is entirely codependent and made to operate in complete harmony with Jesus, the head, as its leader. And, as with the human body, each member is a vital part of the Church’s operation.

Those who seek to live the forerunner lifestyle are no exception to this principle. Regardless of past struggles and run-ins with the Church, all Christians are called to be a part of a local church. No amount of time spent in personal prayer, fasting, Bible study, ministry, or any other spiritual discipline can substitute for a believer’s involvement in the Church. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “If you scorn the fellowship of the brethren, you reject the call of Jesus Christ, and thus your solitude can only be hurtful to you” (*Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 77).

In contrast to biblical command, however, there has been a recent surge of mass exits from the Church. Many with various distastes for Church community have begun to embrace a concept called “churchless Christianity.” The concept encourages an isolated, rules-free approach to Christianity. There is no biblical support for Christianity without community. The New Testament is an endorsement for Church community—nearly every one of its books is directed toward a specific local church that functioned as a spiritual family.

Community for Righteousness

“A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; He rages against all wise judgment.” (Prov. 18:1)

Scripture reveals the ultimate appearance of every believer—pure and spotless, conformed to the image of Jesus (Rev. 19:7; Rom. 8:29). Indeed, righteousness is the destination of every Christian. And integral to this divine process is the necessity to walk out love in the context of a community of believers who honor other believers outside their specific community.

A Christ-centered local church is the most common context for an individual to walk out the accountability and support that is necessary to grow in righteousness and to express love in a practical way. Just as God is committed to conforming every believer into the likeness of Christ (Gal. 4:19), it is our due part to cooperate with the means that He has provided. Leaders and fellow believers are set in our lives to sharpen and edify us unto righteousness. We grow more effectively by receiving the counsel and encouragement of other believers whom the Lord has set in our lives.

A Culture of Honor

“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.” (Rom. 12:10)

The Holy Spirit is the guardian of the culture of the Body of Christ. He requires that we dwell together in a *culture of honor*. God’s love is experienced most as we honor each other. Part of our inheritance and what we lack is in the hands of others (Eph. 3:18-19). We can receive this by blessing them. Honor heals and dishonor divides. *Blessing comes from honor*. Honor heals families, ministries, and businesses; dishonor divides. We must demonstrate a culture of honor in our personal families, our ministry assignment (church, marketplace, school, neighborhood), and every area of the International House of Prayer (IHOPKC).

We bless the budding virtues of all ministries regardless of their *deficiencies* and without needing to agree with or endorse their *differences* in ministry focus, style, and standards of excellence. The Holy Spirit forbids us to verbalize their deficiencies and differences. We celebrate their increase without pointing out their deficiencies, which may be obvious to us. We must intentionally seek to see their virtues when their deficiencies are obvious.

Encouragement is to put courage in the heart of others. We speak the word of our testimony about them by speaking *affirming truths* about their life. We focus on budding virtues that have not yet matured in their lives. We speak what we believe is truth, but without any flattery.

But encourage one another daily... (Heb. 3:13, NIV)

It is imperative that Christian communities cultivate a *culture of honor*. This is a commitment to honor individuals in our midst and other ministries in our city and in the nations, treating them with dignity. James leaves no question about the relationship of one believer to another. “Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned,” (Jas. 5:9) he warns. In James 4:11, he leaves no gray area around the issue of community relations: “He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother speaks evil of the law and judges the law.”

International House of Prayer Values

The International House of Prayer has implemented various commitments that seek to maintain the well-being of the community. Listed below are our foundational commitments:

- We ask our members to commit to a purity covenant, consisting of several specific guidelines, which serve as a means to strengthen our resolve to walk in sexual purity. For more information, visit www.puritycovenant.com.)
- Our leadership team asks all staff members to refrain from tobacco and gambling and the public or social use of alcoholic beverages.