



**fellowship**  
Love God. Love People. Develop Disciples.

Today we discover the 2nd practice of the person who wants to serve God's purpose in his/her own generation - **LOVING CHURCH** - and it's a bigger deal than you think

The Greek word we get 'church' from always refers to PEOPLE instead of a place. This word, **ekklesia, is used over 100 times** in the New Testament = followers of Jesus.

Sadly, many who claim Christ also discount being plugged into the local church. (for many different reasons)

**Hebrews 10:24-25** (ESV) <sup>24</sup> And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, <sup>25</sup> not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

**1 John 4:21** (ESV) <sup>21</sup> And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Followers of Jesus can't keep one another at a distance.



First, Paul reminds the church that there must be UNITY despite DIVERSITY. Distinctions often bring divisions, but it ought not be so.

### Distinctions Not Divisions

**Colossians 3:11** (ESV)

<sup>11</sup> Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

Paul confronts the cultural segregation of **Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised**. Before the Roman empire, Alexander the Great & his Greek culture saturated the land & the people of the land, both Jews & non-Jews [Gentiles]. Over 300 years later, as Paul writes, the Romans were still heavily influenced by the Greek culture - its language and customs.

- Most Jewish people viewed Greeks & other Gentiles as being unclean, refusing to enter their homes, nor eat meat they prepared or cooked.<sup>1</sup>
- Circumcision was an important Jewish practice commanded in the Law of Moses. Most Greeks didn't follow the law of Moses and didn't view circumcision as necessary.
- These differences caused many Jews to view Greeks as unclean and many Greeks to view Jews as uncultured.

Paul then mentions the **barbarian** and **Scythian**. Greeks called non-Greeks *Barbarians*, seeing them as uncivilized and intellectually inferior.

- **Barbarian** is a term used to mock the crude way these people spoke.
- The **Scythians** were considered the most savage barbarians of all,<sup>2</sup> known for scalping fallen enemies.<sup>3</sup> **Herodotus**, the Greek historian, wrote of them,

*They drank the blood of the first enemy killed in battle, and made napkins of the scalps, and drinking bowls of the skulls of the slain. They had the most filthy habits and never washed with water. (4.64, 65, 75)*

The Jewish historian, **Josephus**, writing after the life of Paul, says

*"The Scythians delight in murdering people and are little better than wild beasts" (Against Apion 2.269).*

**Tertullian** (160–c. 225), an early church Father from Africa, could think of no greater insult to the heretic Marcion than to describe him as *"more filthy than any Scythian"* (Against Marcion 1.1).<sup>4</sup>

The cultural barrier between the Jews, Greeks, and barbaric tribes could not have been more pronounced. So too, the social differences between **slave** & **free** kept these people distanced from one another. Yet...

<sup>11</sup> Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but **Christ is all, and in all.**

Paul is writing to show that while the racial & social distinctions are still recognized, they are no longer to be barriers between those who claim the same King and kingdom.

- Colossian church had both **slave** (*Onesimus*) and **free** (*Philemon*) among its members.

Different backgrounds, different cultures, & different colors **but Christ is all, and in all.**

<sup>1</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *Colossians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 150.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 271.

<sup>3</sup> Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 448.

<sup>4</sup> MacArthur, 151.

The writer of Revelation described what this looked like.

## Many People with One Purpose

### Revelation 7:9–10 (ESV)

<sup>9</sup> After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from **every nation**, from **all tribes and peoples and languages**, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, <sup>10</sup> and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

## Loving Christ leads to Loving Church.

We are to treat each other with value, to love one another as Jesus as loved us.

## Wardrobe of the Saints

### Colossians 3:12 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup> Put on then, as **God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved**, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, <sup>13</sup> bearing with one another

Those in Christ are called **God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved**. This is beautiful language previously used for the faithful Jewish people, now applied to those who to whom Christ [the Messiah] is all (Col. 3:11).

- **Chosen** (Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 1 Chron. 16:13; Ps. 105:43; 135:4; Isa. 41:8; 44:1; 45:4)
- **Holy** (Ex. 19:6; Lev. 19:2; Jer. 2:3)
- **Beloved** (1 Kings 10:9; 2 Chron. 9:8; Hos. 11:1)

### Colossians 3:12 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup> Put on then...**compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience**, <sup>13</sup> bearing with one another

One commentator calls this “**the wardrobe of the saints**”.<sup>5</sup> Remember that Paul had earlier said, “you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self” (Col. 3:10).

- **compassionate hearts**: The KJV renders this “*bowels of mercies*,” because in the ancient world this was a metaphor for deep feelings. All modern translations use a thought-for-thought translation like ‘heart’. This gives us the intent of the author.

✿ **Kent Hughes** “*The ancient world, apart from Biblical revelation, was merciless. The maimed and sickly and aged were discarded; the mentally ill were subjected to inhumanities. But Christianity brought compassion, and it still does.*”<sup>6</sup>

- **kindness**: **Romans 2:4** reminds us that it’s God’s kindness leads us to repentance. Jesus gave an example of how God provides sun & rain for the just & the unjust (Matt. 5:45).

<sup>5</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Colossians and Philemon: The Supremacy of Christ, Preaching the Word* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 101.

<sup>6</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Colossians and Philemon: The Supremacy of Christ, Preaching the Word* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 102.

- **humility:** *Humility* was a word the Greeks never applied to themselves<sup>7</sup>, a word used of a coward or one forced into serving another.<sup>8</sup> But among Christians this was a chief aim. Humility is being willing to serve others and the absence of praising one's self.
- **meekness:** Meekness is NOT weakness. It's been said that meekness/gentleness is strength under control. Moses (Numbers 12:3) & Jesus (Matt. 11:29) were *meek*.
- **patience:** putting up with those who do not respond when or how you want them to. **Bearing with one another** means we don't get angry quickly, especially with each other. Jesus has not returned is because of His **patience**, not wanting any to perish (2 Pet. 3:9).

### Forgive...how?

and, if one has a complaint against another, **forgiving each other**; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

How much have YOU been forgiven? God expects you to forgive your brother or sister... have you?

### Oneness & Worship

<sup>14</sup> And above all these **put on love**, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

<sup>15</sup> And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> **Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly**, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with **thankfulness in your hearts to God.**

**The word of Christ** = WHO He is and WHAT He says - what we find in the Scriptures - is to be at the center of the Church activities and worship. We are to **teach** *the word of Christ* and to **admonish** - or warn- *the word of Christ*, and **sing** *the word of Christ*.

**Teach** and **admonish** (warn) are used earlier in Colossians 1:28 as Paul talks about his ministry purpose.

**The word of Christ** should be echoed in our **singing**. What's the difference between the **psalms, hymns, & spiritual songs**?

☀ **John MacArthur** puts it well:

*They sang **psalms** put to music, much as we do today. **Hymns** were expressions of praise to God. It is thought that some portions of the New Testament (Such as Col. 1:15–20 and Phil. 2:6–11) were originally hymns sung in the early church. **Spiritual songs** emphasized testimony (cf. Rev. 5:9–10). They express in song what God has done for us.*<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Colossians and Philemon: The Supremacy of Christ*, Preaching the Word (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 103.

<sup>8</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 277.

<sup>9</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *Colossians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 159.

## In Jesus' name

<sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, in word or deed, **do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus**, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

"Jesus, I love you with my life."

If...

### Loving Christ leads to Loving Church.

then where are you in that journey? Is church something you attend, or people you love & invest in? Need to go deeper? (**Starting Point** kicks off next Sunday @10am)

### Do you REALLY want your DASH to count?



**1. Sing to God alone & with family.** Do you ever sing to God? Try it on your own. With family: This is going to be a stretch for my family, because this is not the norm. Find a song that communicates God's goodness and sing it together.

**2. Develop & Restore a Relationship.** Do you make time for Christian friends? Hang out. Talk about life. Talk about Jesus. Any brother/sister you need to forgive? Anyone you need to ask for forgiveness?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These open-ended questions are designed to help you LIVE what you LEARN with your Family, Friends, or Small Group.

1. What Scripture did you READ this week? What Scriptures did you SHARE this week? What impact did that make on you?
2. What would you say to the person who says, *"I don't need to go to church. I can worship God in my home, in the tree stand, on the boat, at the ballgame."*?
3. **Read Colossians 3:11.** What are some of the distinctions that could bring divisions between these folks?
4. What are some cultural practices (not sinful) & differences you see that separate those who claim to be followers of Jesus in our day? Should that matter to us? If so, what can we do to begin to break down those barriers?
5. **Read Colossians 3:12-17.** Share what stood out to you from this passage. What challenged, encouraged, surprised, or frustrated you? Explain why you felt that way.
6. **FEET2FAITH CHALLENGES.**
  - **Sing to God alone & with family.** Any songs YOU sing to God? Explain why you sing that song. What song could we sing together RIGHT NOW?
  - **Develop & Restore a Relationship.** How often do you discuss 'the word of Christ' with another believer? Do you have a Christian relationship that needs to be restored? What are you going to do about it - THIS WEEK?