

**CORE — COMMUNITY: Authentic relationships that disciple one another fulfill Christ's mission in the church.**

**June 9, 2024**

Good morning, CrossWinds! This morning, we continue the new series we started last week. In this series, Pastor Jordan and I are teaching about CrossWinds' core values.

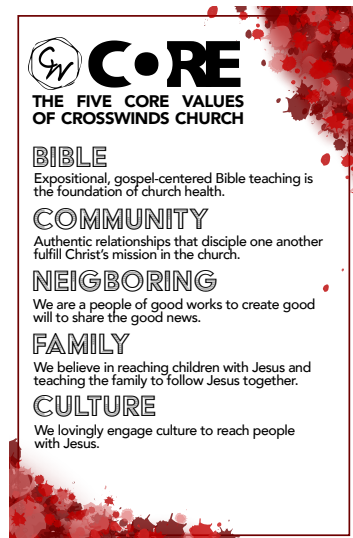
Our core values were created ten years ago before we launched the Spencer campus. They were created to help us articulate what was unique about CrossWinds that we wanted to be sure to replicate from the original Spirit Lake campus on the new Spencer campus. Since we haven't taught them for a decade, Pastor Jordan and I felt it would be good to pull them out and share them again.

I have spelled out all five core values in your bulletin. Last week, we taught on the first, which is the Bible. We believe expositional gospel-centered Bible teaching is the foundation of church health. You will always find solid Bible teaching at CrossWinds.

This week, we look at the second core value. It is summed up by the word Community.

**COMMUNITY: Authentic relationships that disciple one another fulfill Christ's mission in the church.**

At CrossWinds, we believe relationships are an extremely important part of church life. We don't come to church to stare at the back of someone's head for an hour and then leave. Attending church should not be like watching a



movie, where we come to watch the show but leave not knowing anyone who sat around us.

The Bible's vision of the church is that, as Christians, we are part of the church community. We don't just belong to Jesus, but we now belong to one another. When we become a Christian, we join a family. That is why we call other Christians brothers and sisters in Christ. That means Sunday is not an event we come to watch. It is a family gathering where we belong, and when we are gone, we are missed. God gave us spiritual gifts and natural gifts to serve other Christians in the church. We need to be served by other Christians using their spiritual and natural gifts to help us. If we avoid church relationships, we are not living out Jesus' vision for the church. We are not being all God desires us to be. We will not accomplish for the kingdom all God desires to accomplish without being a regular part of a healthy church community.

One of my sons attends a mega-church in Ames. It is a good church. It is a biblical church. One problem he experiences is when people attend that church, about 15 minutes before the service, everyone rushes in like the tide. As soon as service is over, they rush out to see who can be first in the local buffet lines. He has a hard time connecting with people at that church. To the church, he is just another nameless face in the Sunday morning sea of people.

As CrossWinds began to grow and we thought about our future, we didn't want to become that church. We wanted to be intentional about making sure that when people come in the door, everyone is loved, talked to, cared for, and

known. That is how the words “Community” and “Authentic relationships” ended in the second core value of CrossWinds Church.

Some of you know I grew up in the church. We were Baptists, so every time the doors were unlocked, we were in the building. That is an unwritten rule in most Baptist churches. Like most churches of the day, we had a fellowship hall. I will let you guess where it was located. You are right. It was in the basement. That is where we served red Kool-Aid and stale cookies. The basement, with the cheapest cookies that could be purchased, is where we fellowshiped. In a moment, we will see true fellowship is much more than cookies and Kool-Aid.

The term fellowship is a little dated. It is associated with leaky church basements. Since the term fellowship is a little dated, young people today use the term community. It is the same thing. I will use the terms fellowship and community interchangeably this morning.

The ESV version of the Bible that we use, makes liberal use of the word fellowship. Even though our value is called community, we can learn what biblical community looks like by looking at the term fellowship in our Bibles. That is what we will do this morning. First, we will look at what creates a Christian community. Second, we will look at what fellowship was like in the early church. Third, we will look at the symbol of Christian fellowship. Fourth, we will look what Christians fellowship looks like in everyday life.

## 1. What creates Christian fellowship?

Jesus brings us into fellowship with God and one another.

In the New Testament, we find the word fellowship. In Greek, it is the word *koinonia*. If you are a long-term Christian, that word is familiar to you. It means to hold things in common. It means to be in partnership with someone. Genesis 2:8 says it is not good for man to be alone. God created a helpmate for Adam, a partner suitable to do life together with Adam. That partner was Eve, his wife. There is more to this than it is not good for a man to be alone. It is good for him to have a wife. It is not good for any of us to be alone. We need other people. This is not just true for ordinary life, but it is especially true for Christians. Christians are not designed to live alone. We need one another.

Turn with me to 1 John, where we can see how Jesus puts us into relationships with other Christians.

...that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. 1 John 1:3 (ESV)

John proclaims the gospel of Jesus so that people can respond to the gospel and be saved. The result of being born again is they will then have fellowship with God the Father and Jesus the Son. Notice John also says knowing Jesus also brings us into a relationship with other Christians. Notice this. Anybody in fellowship with Jesus is also in fellowship with anybody else in fellowship with Jesus. Jesus doesn't just save us and restore our broken relationship with God but also brings us into a new family relationship with other Christians.

At church, Jesus is the big thing we have in common. It is not social because we all have children the same age. It is not economical because we are all at the same income level. It is not intellectual because all of us are blue-collar or all of us have a four-year degree. The common ground between Christians that brings us into fellowship with one another is Jesus. All of us possess eternal life. All of us have the same Holy Spirit. We are now part of the same family. We are brothers and sisters.

This is not the way most American Christians view salvation. We view salvation as a personal issue. We are brought into a right relationship with God through Jesus, and we think of that personally. Most Christians don't realize their relationship with Jesus is intended to also bring them into relationships with other Christians. Too many Christians see their relationship with Jesus and their relationship with people in the church in two different buckets. They are the same bucket. *The gospel brings us into fellowship with Jesus and into fellowship with one another.*

If Christians don't attend church or they rarely attend church, something is wrong. Something is missing. A person who is in fellowship with Jesus but not a regular part of a church where they are in fellowship with other Christians is like a duck without feathers. They may be alive, but they can't swim. They can't fly. Things are not the way they are to be. Something important is missing. That is what it is like with Christians who have privately trusted Jesus, but they are not in the church where they are in fellowship with other Christians who also love Jesus.

**Absenting myself from church will not destroy my relationship with Jesus, but it will take away my joy.**

What happens to Christians who are in a relationship with Jesus but are not in relationships with other Christians in the church? Look at the next verse in 1 John.

**And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. 1 John 1:4 (ESV)**

John doesn't say those who are absent from the church have lost their salvation. He says they have lost some of their joy. One of the reasons Jesus brings us into fellowship with other Christians is for our joy. It is for our happiness. It is for our maturity. Those absent from the church will never have all the joy God intends for them to have. A good part of that joy comes from relationships with other Christians.

**Sin keeps us away from the church and one another.**

**This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 1 John 1:5–7 (ESV)**

As John continues, he gives us two possibilities. There are people who claim to know Jesus. They claim to have fellowship with Jesus, but they walk in darkness. They live life with no moral, ethical, or life difference from the rest of the world. John says that when there is no moral and ethical difference in our lives, it is because the light of Jesus is not shining out of our lives. We may claim to know Jesus, but the lack of any fruit in their life is proof they don't know him.

Notice what he says next. There is another category of people. There are those who walk in the light, as Jesus is in the light. The result is they have fellowship with one another. This is the theme we looked at earlier. Jesus brings us together. He also says that Jesus' blood cleanses us from our sins. I like this. It means Christian people are not perfect people. They are forgiven people. When Christians sin, they confess their sin. They repent of their sin. They run to Jesus, asking for help with the sin. Jesus forgives them. His blood cleanses them from their sin and draws us into fellowship with one another.

How can we apply this? I want to apply it from the opposite angle. Sometimes, I meet Christians who are absent from the church. They are very critical of the church. They don't like the preaching. They don't like the worship. They don't like the people. The list of excuses is a mile long. When I meet those people, the honest truth is that the problem is usually not with the church. It is with them. They usually have some sin issue they have not confessed and repented of. That unaddressed sin is like sand in the gears of church life. It leaves them irritated with the church. If they confess and repent their sin, Jesus will cleanse them. They will find themselves drawn into the church and to the same church family they once despised.

## **2. What was fellowship like in the early church?**

The nature of fellowship is togetherness. Let's look at the early church and see what fellowship was like for them.

**Christian fellowship was about gathering to focus on Jesus.**

**So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles'**

teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Acts 2:41–42 (ESV)

As soon as the church was born, Christians wanted to be together—all the time. The Jesus who saved them is the Jesus who knit them together. There were no lone-ranger Christians. Look what they did when they met together. They met for the apostles' teaching, the breaking of bread—which means celebrating the Lord's Supper—and prayer.

It also says they devoted themselves to fellowship. They loved being together. They built relationships. I do not picture the apostle Peter saying “Amen” at the end of the service and everyone running out the door for a restaurant. They hung around because the Jesus who saved them knit them together and drew them together.

Let's keep reading, and we will see what fellowship looked like in the early church.

**Christian fellowship was about sacrificing to help your brothers and sisters in Jesus.**

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. Acts 2:43–44 (ESV)

They held all things in common. At first, this sounds like early communism. It looks like everybody sold everything and put their money in one big pot. That isn't what happened. Keep reading, and we will see what this means.

And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. Acts 2:45 (ESV)

Holding everything in common means that everyone had their own stuff, but when people were in need, they loved one another so much that those who



had something extra were willing to sell it, turn it to cash, and help a hungry brother or sister in Christ. If somebody had a piece of land, they sold it to help with the benevolent fund in the church when there was a need. If somebody had an extra lawn mower or couch, they put it on the Facebook marketplace to sell it and used the cash to help with benevolent needs in the church. They did this because Jesus knit Christians together so tightly they were willing to sacrifice to help one another.

That is what a true fellowship looks like. True fellowship is not eating stale cookies and drinking red punch in the church basement. It is genuinely caring about other Christians so much that you are willing to make sacrifices to help them in their time of need. That may be a financial sacrifice. It may be a sacrifice of your time.

I remember when my mother was dying of cancer. Cindy and I were in Pennsylvania caring for my father and mother. At the time, our church family stepped up to help in many ways. When we were in Pennsylvania, a Christian family took care of our youngest daughters. Others helped mow the lawn. My sons were staying in the house alone, so it looked like a bomb went off. One guy from church stopped in to check on them. He saw a dirty house with a big pile of dishes in the sink. He washed the dishes. You never forget stuff like that. Fellowship in the early church, was people sacrificing their money and time to help other Christians in their time of need. Nothing has changed. That is what true fellowship, authentic community, looks like. When we live that way, people will never forget it because it makes such an impact.

Years ago, when Cindy's health was bad due to her lupus and she couldn't get off the couch to make meals, ladies from the church began bringing her meals. Today, whenever she sees the opportunity to bring a meal or make a meal, she feels compelled to cook. She wants to love other Christians in their time of need as Christians loved her in a time of need.

Those who absent themselves from the church or who are only loosely connected to the church do not have the opportunity to be that kind of blessing to others or to receive that kind of blessing from others. Let's see what else we can learn about the nature of fellowship in the early church.

**Christian fellowship was about opening the heart and home.**

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, Acts 2:46 (ESV)

They didn't just have large group gatherings in the temple, but they also had small group gatherings in their homes. They ate together.

When was the last time you had someone from church over your home? That is what authentic fellowship looks like. We don't just talk to people; we love people so much that we open our homes and hearts to people.

Notice the result. There was gladness. People love it when we open our lives and our homes. If we want unity at CrossWinds, one of the best ways to build unity in the church is to love people really well at church. It is to love people so much that you invite them over for a meal. It is spending making time for people to open your heart and life to people.

When we open our lives and homes, people in the church feel that. Relationships are more flexible and loving.

Not only was there unity from this, but outreach came from this. A few weeks ago, I was approached by a company that recommended we put big CrossWinds banners in front of the church to help us reach our community. That is a nice idea. It will attract attention to the church, but it won't reach people with Jesus. We reach our community with Jesus by being really good at loving everyone who comes through the door. When we do that, everyone leaves a raging fan, and they tell their friends about Jesus and the people who love them at CrossWinds.

[By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. John 13:35 \(ESV\)](#)

Everyone wants to go to a church where people genuinely love them.

Aristides was a Christian who lived around 125 A.D. He wrote about life in the church in the second century. It is a long quote, but it is worth hearing.

They abstain from all impurity in the hope of the recompense that is to come in another world. As for their servants or handmaids or children, they persuade them to become Christians by the love they have for them. And when they become so, they call them without distinction brothers. They do not worship strange gods, and they walk in all humility and kindness, and falsehood is not found among them and they love one another. And when they see the stranger, they bring him to their homes and they rejoice over him as over a true brother for they do not call brothers those who are after the flesh but those who are in the Spirit and in God. And if there is among them a man that is poor and needy and if they have not an abundance of necessities, they will fast two or three days that they may supply the needy with his necessary food. And they observe scrupulously the commandments of their Messiah. They live honestly and soberly as the Lord their God commanded them. Every morning and all hours, on account of the goodness of God toward them, they praise and laud Him, and over their food and their drink, they render him thanks... Such is the law of the Christians and such is their conduct — Aristides of Athens, 125 A.D.

**Christian fellowship was not about natural affinity plus the gospel but a new affinity that revealed the gospel.**

In many churches, we build ministry based on affinity groups. We get single mothers together with single mothers. It works. We get retired people together with retired people. There are cowboy churches in the south where everyone who shows up rides a horse. There are motorcycle churches for people who ride motorcycles. We can build community through those natural bonds. Building a community through natural bonds is not wrong, but it has a cost. It doesn't set the church apart from other institutions in the world. It downplays the life-transforming community-creating power of the gospel. You can gather single mothers with other single mothers, and they will always have a connection through their common life experiences. As the church, we are trying to present to our community a Jesus that unites us, who is bigger than the petty affinity factors that divide us. *When Christians unite around something other than the gospel, they form a community that would exist apart from the gospel.* We want to present to our neighbors a community that can only exist because Jesus and his life-transforming power is real.

In Ephesians 2, Paul discusses Jesus and what he did for us. He begins the chapter by reminding us that we were dead in our sins and trespasses, but God made us alive together with Jesus. The gospel doesn't end with restoring our relationship with God through Jesus. It gives us a relationship with one another through Jesus, just like we read about in 1 John. At the end of Ephesians 2, Paul writes about how the gospel transforms relationships between Jews and Gentiles.

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. Ephesians 2:13–16 (ESV)

The dividing wall of hostility was a low wall around the outside of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. It had a sign on it that said no Gentile was allowed to go beyond that wall and approach the temple. If they did, they would lose their life.

We forget the great hostility that existed between Jews and Gentiles. There were thousands of years of hostility between them. There was more hostility between Jews and Gentiles in that day than between Israel and Hamas today.

Paul says Jesus broke down the dividing wall of hostility that separated Jews and Gentiles. He figuratively broke it down by creating one new group of people, who are both Jews and Gentiles, that are saved by Jesus and transformed by Jesus. The Jesus that united Jews and Gentiles is bigger than the thousands of years of deep hatred and hostility that divided them. Through Jesus, Jews and Gentiles were on equal footing before God and equally blessed by God.

What was the purpose of God uniting Jews and Gentiles together through Jesus? The world was in shock when people saw Jews and Gentiles opening their homes to one another, opening their hearts to one another, and even

sacrificing financially for one another. How could this happen? The answer was Jesus! Let's skip down to Ephesians 3:10.

...so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. Ephesians 3:10 (ESV)

It wasn't just the people of Jerusalem that sat up and took notice of the unexplainable love and unity between former enemies, but this was so significant that the very angelic beings of the universe were forced to sit up and take notice, too!

Today, this is one of the big purposes of the church. God's plan for the church is that there should be great diversity within us, but great unity among us. This unity in diversity between people who would be natural enemies shows the world the life changing power of Jesus is real.

What does this look like? This is a young couple at church inviting an elderly couple at church over for dinner. They have nothing in common other than Jesus, but Jesus gives them love for one another and love for one another.

This is Democrats and Republicans in the same church, not bickering and talking politics in the hall but praying together and loving each other because the Jesus that unites them is bigger than the politics that divide them.

This is the church having a funeral for an elderly member of the congregation, and people show up to the funeral not because they had a close personal connection to the person who died but because the person who died was a member of the same church. They were a brother or sister in Christ, so they cared about them. They were family members.

When we read through the book of Acts, at the beginning of the book, as the gospel spread, it was accompanied by miraculous signs. These signs begged for an explanation. The explanation was always Jesus and the gospel. There were miraculous signs at Pentecost, on Paul's first missionary journey, and in a number of other places as Paul traveled on those initial missionary journeys. Later in the book of Acts, when Paul revisited the cities where churches were planted, Luke's reports of miraculous signs in the cities stop. Instead, Paul talks about preaching the gospel and strengthening the church. It is possible that miraculous signs continued to happen, but Luke simply did not tell us about them.

Here is my hypothesis. This is only a hypothesis. The miraculous signs may have temporarily confirmed the gospel's truth in a new community. Once a church was established, God moved from using miraculous signs to confirm the gospel to the witness of miraculous fellowship in the church to confirm the gospel. God proved the life-changing power of the gospel was true by a church filled with people of great diversity who had genuine sacrificial love and unity for one another because of Jesus. That made entire cities stand in awe when they saw the way Christians loved and cared for one another.

That is what we want to be at CrossWinds. We want our relationship with Jesus to unite us in such a genuine, sacrificial, and powerful way that all of Spirit Lake is forced to sit up and take notice because of the love Jesus gave us for one another.

[By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. John 13:35 \(ESV\)](#)

At CrossWinds, this is our vision for what we want people to experience when they come in the doors. We don't want people to attend church like they watch a movie. We everyone to experience Christians going out of their way to know people, to open their homes. And their hearts. The more diverse we are when we love one another, the more effectively the power of Jesus is displayed.

### **What is the symbol of Christian fellowship?**

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. 1 Corinthians 10:16–17 (ESV)

The Lord's Supper symbolizes our fellowship. The cup we share is a symbol of our unity with Jesus. The same is true of the bread we break. Notice what Paul says next.

**The Lord's Supper is not just about Jesus. It is also about our relationships with one another.**

Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. 1 Corinthians 10:17 (ESV)

The Lord's Supper is not just about our unity with Jesus. It is the symbol of our unity with one another.

Our COVID-friendly mini-communion kits lost some of that symbolism. When I grew up, in smaller settings, the pastor would read this passage and break the loaf of bread in front of us. The loaf of bread was passed around, and everyone ripped off a piece. It was a reminder that just as we all partook of the one loaf, we are one body. Occasionally, at CrossWinds, we still celebrate the Lord's Supper that way.



Communion is not just about our restored relationship with God because of Jesus but our relationships with one another through Jesus. I don't know how it works for you, but when I am taking the Lord's Supper, when I hope the bread and the cup before we take it together, that is when God speaks to my heart. When he does, it is usually about a damaged relationship I need to restore.

This verse is not specifically about communion, but it makes the point.

So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Matthew 5:23–24 (ESV)

**The Lord's Supper is more than a memorial. It is participation in the blood and body of Christ.**

If we read these verses carefully, we will notice the Lord's Supper is more than a simple memorial celebration.

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? 1 Corinthians 10:16 (ESV)

In some mysterious way, the Lord's Supper brings us closer to our relationship with Jesus. Participating in it is a blessing. I think that in a similar way, the Lord's Supper doesn't just connect us with Jesus; it connects us to one another through Jesus.

At the table, we all kind of fall to the same level. There is no rich or poor, no smart or dumb, no big or small, no black or white, just sinners in desperate need of saving grace from Jesus.

This means the Lord's Supper is an important part of our worship. It is a symbol of our fellowship with Jesus and with one another. If you are part of the

church family, you should be here for the Lord's Supper. Those who absent themselves from the church do not have the blessing of celebrating the Lord's Supper with the church, a blessing that connects us with Jesus and one another through him.

### **What does it look like to live in Christian fellowship?**

We looked at the source of fellowship in the church. Our relationship with Jesus connects us with one another. We saw what fellowship in the early church looked like as people opened their hearts, homes, and even their wallets to love and serve one another, even those different from them. We looked at the symbol of our unity, which is the Lord's Supper.

I want to finish by looking at some practical ways Christians fellowship expresses itself in the church. The Bible has several one-another commands. These are directives that tell us how to live in an authentic community. Let's look at some of them.

#### **Confess our sins to one another and pray for one another.**

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. James 5:16 (ESV)

This does not mean that next week people stand up in front of the church and confess their deepest and darkest sins. There are many things where the circle of our sin should be kept as small as possible. It is important for all of us to have other Christians in our lives that we can trust, a brother or sister in Christ with whom we can be honest about our struggles and pray for us.

At CrossWinds, we have Life Groups. The longer I have been a pastor, the more important Life Groups have become in my eyes. It is easy to come to

church and have surface relationships with people. In Life Groups, you eat, study, and pray together. There is an entirely different depth. In Spencer, they don't just have adult Life Groups, but they have Life Groups for the students and children's ministry. This fall, Kevin Brown will recruit for Life Groups. When he does, I encourage you to join one. It is in Life Groups where we get to know one another, and pray for one another.

### **Forgive One Another**

...bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Colossians 3:13 (ESV)

Paul begins by saying that we bear with one another in the church community. We are long-suffering and put up with people. We put up with people who are different from us. We learn to overlook offenses.

If we have a complaint with people, rather than making a big deal about it, we forgive them like the Lord forgave us. How many times should we forgive someone? Jesus always forgives us, even when we return to our sins. In a similar way, we must always forgive others.

For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. 2 Corinthians 2:6–8 (ESV)

When we forgive people, we don't rub it in. We don't keep bringing it up, or hold a grudge. After we forgive someone, we reaffirm our love for them.

### **Bear one another's burdens.**

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2 (ESV)

Authentic community in the church is when people go out of their way to care for other people in the church. Last weekend, my daughter had her bridal

shower. My wife was putting it together, but it was getting to be a little much. A number of women from the church offered to help. That made a huge difference and allowed Cindy to focus on our daughter, not the logistics of the bridal shower. That is what Christians do. When we see someone in church carrying a burden, it could be a bridal shower or a graduation party, we offer to help. That is the Christian community in action.

...we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Acts 20:35 (ESV)

Last weekend, an elderly woman named DeeDee passed away from cancer. She lives in a local trailer park. About a year ago, the park served her papers telling her she needed to clean up her yard and repair her mobile home or they would evict her. How could she do that? She was dying of cancer. She wrote a note and sent it to the church. A group of retired men took her yard and home on as a project. They completely transformed the place, making it look like the nicest trailer home in the park. That is what a Christian community looks like. It is far more than stale cookies and red Kool Aide in the church basement.

**Love one another earnestly.**

Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, 1 Peter 1:22 (ESV)

Authentic community means we love other people. Notice how we love them. Peter says we are to love them earnestly. The Greek word means stretching and giving it our best effort.

Some of you know my daughter runs track in college. She runs in the 100, 200, and 400. When she is giving her best, she stretches to get herself across the finish line in first place. That is what this word means. When it comes to how

we love one another, we don't just love people a little. We stretch and love people with our absolute best effort, like a sprinter reaching for the tape at the finish line.

### **Live in peace with one another.**

Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. 2 Corinthians 13:11 (ESV)

I love this verse. It implies there is brokenness in the church. That is reality. Anytime people we work with people, people let one another down. We hurt one another. We will disappoint one another. Look what Paul says relationships in the church should be like. We are to aim for restoration. That doesn't mean we can successfully restore every broken relationship, but we are to shoot for it. We are to try for it. If a broken relationship is not restored, at least you know you did everything you could to try and restore it.

We are to agree with one another and live in peace with one another. Sometimes, there are things that just aren't worth arguing about. Sometimes, we will never change people's opinions or thinking or the way they approach life. It is better to swallow our preferences, to be at peace, and to roll with the punches. That is what happens in a healthy church with an authentic community.

### **Conclusion**

At CrossWinds, we have a very high value on authentic community, that is, genuine fellowship. When we were brought into a relationship with Jesus, we were also brought into a relationship with one another. In the early church, that gave people a supernatural love for one another, leading to them opening their homes, their hearts, and even their wallets in love. The Lord's Supper is our

constant reminder not just of our relationship with God the Father because of Jesus, but we have a new relationship with one another because of Jesus.

If I were to sum this up, here is what I would say

CrossWinds is not a church of people who have a natural affinity for one another, plus the gospel. We are a church of people with a supernatural affinity for one another that reveals the gospel.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the Evangelical Free Church of America. He enjoys reading, writing, and time with his family. Feel free to contact him at [www.Christ2RCulture.com](http://www.Christ2RCulture.com) ([www.c2rc.com](http://www.c2rc.com))

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