

# Cultivate Community

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- [ 0 : 00 ] Please turn your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 12.! 1 Corinthians chapter 12. And this morning, the sermon is entitled or titled! Cultivate Community.
- Cultivate Community. And this sermon is the first of seven similar sermons that I'll be preaching throughout this year. And each one of them is designed to call us to cultivate a particular Christian value.
- The other six sermons are cultivate servanthood, cultivate generosity, cultivate honor, cultivate humility, cultivate respect, and cultivate gratitude.
- And the way we're going to do it is we will always do these sermons. They'll be dispersed throughout the year, but we'll do them on the first Sunday of the month when we're all together as a church, including the children, because these are values that we can, as parents, instill in our children.
- And although they may not be able to manifest the full fruit of these values until they have made professions of faith in Christ, there is a measure that they can begin to exhibit in all of these areas.
- [ 1 : 34 ] But these are values that we as a people should have exhibited in our lives if we belong to Jesus Christ.
- And so this first one, this morning, cultivate community. 1 Corinthians chapter 12, beginning in verse 12.
- 1 Corinthians chapter 12.
- 1 Corinthians chapter 12.
- 1 Corinthians chapter 12.
- [ 3 : 32 ] 1 Corinthians chapter 12.
- 1 Corinthians chapter 13. 1 Corinthians chapter 14. 1 Corinthians chapter 14. 1 Corinthians chapter 14. 1 Corinthians chapter 14. 1 Corinthians chapter 14. 1 Corinthians chapter 14. 1 Corinthians chapter 14.
- 1 Corinthians 14. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that all the members may have the same care for one another.
- If one member suffers, all suffer together. If one member is honored, all rejoice together. Let's pray together.
- Father, we are grateful, again, that we can gather on the Lord's day. Grateful that we have your word, and we are able to read your word and now sit under the preaching of your word.
- [ 5 : 02 ] Would you speak to us, Lord? Lord, this is a broad and somewhat varied text, and we are gathered over a wide spectrum of ages, and I do pray that you would cause us all to hear in a way that we're able to understand.

Lord, grant me grace to be able to speak your word over multiple generations this morning. We thank you for the Holy Spirit, who alone is able to convict us of truth and indeed lead us into truth.

Would you speak to our hearts? Would you use your word today to help us to cultivate community in this church? We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

One of the realities that we faced it, and I think we all know it, is that although we are more connected for electronic communication, we are less connected for authentic community.

And there seems to almost be a direct relationship between how much more wired we become to get instantaneous communication and to interact electronically and the degree to which we cease to enjoy authentic community.

[ 6 : 29 ] So today, thousands of, well, there are people who can boast of having hundreds and even thousands of friends on social media like Facebook, and yet so many of them do not know what it is to enjoy authentic community.

Some of those who would boast of thousands of friends, perhaps, don't even have a true friend that they can count on, that they can hold on to.

And sadly, we in the church are not exempt from this sad state of affairs. And I think it is especially sad when people in the church do not experience true community because the church is the only group of people on earth where true community is possible.

The only group of people on earth where true community is truly possible. And this is because the Lord Jesus, through his sacrificial death and his glorious resurrection, made one people out of many people.

People who were once separated by all kinds of wars and divisions and hostilities and prejudices, he has reconciled them together to God and to one another by his shed blood.

[ 8 : 05 ] But here's what is clear from both experience and scripture. Although it is objectively true that believers have been joined together in one body, the enjoyment of authentic community is not automatic.

Although we have been joined together by that blood we sang about this morning, that blood that purchased a people for God, and joined them together that they can together address God as Father, although that is true, the reality is that the enjoyment of that one family-ness, that oneness, is not automatic.

In other words, it has to be cultivated. This sense of community, this sense of belonging to one another, must be cultivated.

must be cultivated. This sense of community, And so the overall point of the sermon is community and the church must be cultivated. In this letter of 1 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul is largely correcting the church.

It's a corrective letter. And it was written to a church that prided itself on being spiritual. A church that thought it was spiritual because they had many gifts in operation among them.

[ 9 : 40 ] But the truth is, this church was not spiritual at all. One of the evidences that this church was not a spiritual church was, it was a divided church.

At the very outset of this letter to the church in Corinth, in chapter 1, verse 10, the Apostle Paul addresses their divisions.

And here's what he writes. What I mean is that each one of you says, I follow Paul, or I follow Apollos, or I follow Cephas, or I follow Christ.

Is Christ divided? Is Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? This church prided itself on being spiritual and was filled with factions.

And there seemed to have been competitive debates among them regarding who was spiritual and who was not. And which spiritual gifts were the best gifts? And from the way the Apostle Paul addresses the Corinthians in chapters 12, 13, and 14, it seems like this church was primarily obsessed with the gift of speaking in tongues.

[ 11 : 16 ] And so, in the first section of chapter 12, in verses 1 through 11, the Apostle Paul talks about spiritual gifts, and he talks about how the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to the people of God for the glory of God and for the benefit of the church.

And then he goes on to tell them that the manifestation of the Spirit is given to all of God's people for the common good, and he tells them that they're to use all of these gifts, not just tongues, and he begins to list some of these gifts.

But what was happening in the Corinthian church is that the heads of some members were bowed down out of a sense of spiritual inferiority because they didn't possess certain gifts or they didn't have prominent roles in the church.

And the heads of other members were lifted up due to a sense of spiritual superiority because they possessed the prominent gifts, so they thought, and the prominent roles in the church, and they felt that they didn't need others in the church who they viewed as having lesser gifts or lesser roles.

And this ripped to the heart of community. This tore community apart. And so beginning in verse 12 of chapter 12, the Apostle Paul uses the illustration of the human body to remind the Corinthians that although there are many members in the body, they are one body in the very same way that the human body has many parts to it, many members, but it is one unified body.

[ 13 : 12 ] And so if I were to summarize the appeal that the Apostle Paul is making to the Corinthians in this passage that we just read, it would simply be this. You are many members, but one body, therefore, cultivate community.

You are many members, but one body, therefore, cultivate community. community. And brothers and sisters, these were not just Paul's words to the Corinthians.

These were God's words to the Corinthians. The Apostle Paul wrote these words under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and therefore, these are God's words to us this morning.

We are members who are many, but we are members who are one body, and therefore, we must cultivate community.

It's not automatic. We don't do it by osmosis. Community must be cultivated.

[ 14 : 19 ] Now, in this passage, the Apostle Paul touches on three important aspects of community, each of which can be summarized by a single word.

And they are, number one, unity, which he addresses in verses 12 and 13. Number two, diversity, which he addresses in verses 14 through 20.

And then, third, third, dependency, which he addresses in verses 21 through 26.

So, first of all, let's consider what the Apostle Paul says about unity. Now, I'm going to be using these two words frequently this morning, cultivate and community.

And so, from the outside, what I want to do is I want to define what I am meaning by these words so that we can be on the same page. So, first of all, let's define cultivate.

[ 15 : 27 ] This is taken from vocabulary.com. I found a good definition of cultivate, so I'll give that to you. When you cultivate something, you make it, sorry, you work to make it better.

When you cultivate something, you work to make it better. care. Originally, the word referred only to crops that required tilling, but the meaning has widened.

No matter what is being cultivated, the word implies a level of care that is reminiscent of gardening. Sometimes friendships come naturally, and sometimes you have to cultivate them.

to cultivate anything, listen, requires an attention to detail, an understanding of what is being cultivated, and a lot of patience.

That's what I have in mind when I think about cultivate. And then the second word, community. When I use the word community, I'm referring to a sense of belonging to one another that is demonstrated in mutual love, mutual care, and mutual concern.

[ 16 : 43 ] That's what I mean by community. I don't necessarily mean just physically being together and doing things together, as you have all kinds of community things. So they'll say, we have a community meeting, and people who live very separate lives come together, they have the meeting, they go back into their separate lives.

I'm not talking about that. community is the sense of belonging that is demonstrated in mutual love, mutual care, and mutual concern.

Okay? In verses 12 and 13, the Apostle Paul tells us that our unity is God given.

notice how he says it in verse 12. For just as the body is one, and as many members, and all members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

Paul begins by using the human body as an illustration, and he says that in the same way that the human body is a complete unit with many parts, Christ's body, the church, is a complete unit, a body with many members.

[ 18 : 04 ] Now, while it is true that every single believer is a part of the universal body of Christ, in this passage, Paul is not referring to the universal body of Christ, just the common sense reading of the passage.

Paul is referring to a local body of believers, being a part of a local body of believers, and what that means to live that out, as opposed to being a part of the universal body of Christ.

And for me, with so many churches in this area, it is always very easy to illustrate that we have, in the stone's throw from here, at least maybe six, seven congregations, one right next door.

The community that we are talking about this morning cannot be enjoyed with the people next door. It just isn't possible. I don't, beyond the pastor, I don't know anybody else next door.

So Paul is not talking about the universal body of Christ. He's talking about a local body of believers and he's addressing us as to how we are to relate in that local body of believers.

[ 19 : 16 ] He's saying the same way that our physical bodies are made up of many parts, all woven together by God himself. In a similar manner, God joins people in a local church as individual members to be together.

That's what he's saying. Now how does he do that? Look at verse 13. For in one spirit we were all baptized into one body, Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and were all made to drink of one spirit.

this is a very important verse that you need to mark in your Bible and memorize in your head because it is speaking about the beginning of the Christian life.

This is what happens to every single person who comes to Christ. At conversion, they experience baptism in the Holy Spirit.

And notice again how Paul says it. For in one spirit we were all baptized into one body, Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, and all were made to drink of the one spirit.

- [ 20 : 27 ] Now I would grant that here he is speaking about the universal body of Christ. When we are baptized into Christ, we're not baptized into a local church as much as we are baptized into, we are part of a local church, but we are baptized into the body of Christ.
- But we live that out in the context of a local church. So, whatever our distinctives are, whatever our differences are, in one spirit we were baptized into one body and we were all made to drink of one spirit.
- Notice that phrase, one spirit. Paul mentions it two times in this single verse. He says first, in one spirit, and then second, of one spirit.
- And notice that this word one is mentioned three times in this singular verse. Brothers and sisters, the basis for our unity is God given.
- Our unity is God given and it is the foundation of the community that we are called to cultivate. Without recognizing that unity and seeing that being joined together in a local church is an expression of a wise God, we will not be as minded to pursue unity and to cultivate unity if we don't recognize that this is the doing of the Lord.
- [ 22 : 02 ] God has put us in the body of Christ, but he has placed us in the context of a local church to live out that common unity, to live out that oneness as a part of a body.
- This is where community starts. Being reconciled to God and being reconciled to one another through Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul says this in a similar way in Galatians 3, 27-29.
- Here's what he says there. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There's neither Jew nor Greek, there's neither slave nor free, there's neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
- And if you are Christ's, then you're Abram's offspring, heirs according to the promise. Paul's point is that in Christ, the unity that we enjoy comes because we've been baptized into Christ and that is despite our differences.
- We all belong to God, we all belong to one another. And Paul is saying that those differences that we had, and here he uses three sets of differences.
- [ 23 : 33 ] when he talks about Jew or Greek, he's talking about the racial distinctions. Slave or free, he's referring to the social or the economic distinctions. Male or female, he is talking about the sexual distinctions.
- distinctions. And he says that in Christ, none of these distinctions matter. In terms of placing a value on them or placing a discount on them, placing a premium on them or a discount on them, Paul is saying they don't matter in Christ.
- They're neither here nor there. So we don't, because of some difference that we might have, whatever that might be, whether it's skin color, whether it is our sex, whether it is our nationality, whatever that is, it is not a plus nor a minus in Christ.
- When we are placed in Christ, those things fall away in terms of having any high value or low value. They ought not to matter. But when we come to Christ, they don't go away.
- We continue to be whatever race we have been. We continue to have whatever social, economic standing that we ever had. None of those things actually change.
- [ 24 : 55 ] But we are called upon in the church to let those things have no premium or discount in our midst.
- The world is different. We all know that. The world operates differently. The world is going to size us up and relate to us based on these distinctions. In Christ, they do not matter and in community, they ought not to matter.
- We're commanded for them not to matter. What matters is that we've been joined to God. What matters is we've been joined to one another. What matters is we have a God-given unity.

God-given We God-given unity. We have a God-given unity. We recognize this unity that we have in Christ through his blood and by the Holy Spirit, we will not be intentional to cultivate community in a broad and a generous manner.

This begins in our hearts. This begins with a conviction that God has put us in the body of Christ despite our distinctions and he's made us one.

[ 26 : 13 ] He's put us in the context of a local church. In his providence, he's brought us together. And it is only when we begin to appreciate that, we begin to embrace that, that we are minded then to pursue community in a broad and in a generous manner.

And the reality is that we are typically drawn to people who are like us. We tend to gravitate towards people who have what we have in common. But that's what the world does.

Alone, we do that. It doesn't mean that we decide to just ignore people who are like us. No, we can embrace them, but we must not stop with them. We must go beyond that and we must be intentional to pursue people who we may not be naturally gravitated towards.

We must be intentional if we're going to cultivate community. And so I want to ask this morning, how are you cultivating community in this local church that God has joined you to?

And whatever your answer is, the truth is, we can all grow. So we need to consider, how can we grow? How can I grow in cultivating community with others in this local church?

[ 27 : 44 ] And again, remember, our union with Christ is the basis for this unity. And this unity is the basis for our community.

diversity. The next aspect that the apostle Paul addresses is diversity. Look at what he says in verses 14 through 16.

For the body does not consist of one member, but many. If the foot should say, because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any lesser part of the body.

And the heir should say, because I'm not an I, I do not belong to the body, that would not make it any less a part of the body.

Here Paul is addressing the reality that we who are Christ's body sometimes, and I would even say oftentimes, don't appreciate our God-given differences.

[ 28 : 49 ] And that lack of appreciation for our God's given differences can threaten our unity, and as a result, threaten our community. And what Paul is addressing here is not just competition, he's addressing foolish competition and sinful jealousy.

And here's why, look at verse 18. He says, but as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them as he chose.

So when we become a part of a local church, God is sovereignly at work, God is arranging us, putting us in place in the body. He's brought us with whatever experiences we have had, whatever gifts and talents and abilities that we have had.

He brings our whole life into community, and he sovereignly places us in the context of that local church.

And one of the sinful workings of that is we can begin to compare ourselves to one another and we can begin to desire maybe gifts or roles that other people have while neglecting the gifts and the role that God has given to us.

[ 30 : 10 ] But we need to be content with how God has made us, who God has made us, and how he places us in the body, and not be in arrogant rebellion against him regarding what he has chosen to do with us and what he has chosen to do with one another.

So instead of fighting our differences, fighting our diversity, what we need to do is we need to embrace our diversity and we need to celebrate our diversity as well.

And we should recognize that it is only a diverse body that's really going to be a healthy, functioning body. Just imagine, I mean, Paul uses the example here, suppose the whole body was a single member.

Where would the body be? You know, we all have a natural love for ourselves. We don't need to be taught to love ourselves. We do that quite well.

But you know, truth be told, none of us would really like to be in a church that's filled with people exactly like us or in anything. We just wouldn't want it would be a miserable life just because that's not the way God has designed things to be.

[ 31 : 32 ] But you know, one of the things that happens today increasingly is that churches are, and this probably is not so much true in our country because we don't have the ability to do it so much, but in the United States, for example, where they're able to take a zip code, and based on that zip code, they can tell you just about everything about the composition of the people who live there, income, their race, their political convictions, their religious affiliations, they can tell you all kinds of things about people living in a particular zip code.

And so a lot of churches today, they purchase that data, and based on that data, they determine to go in certain communities, and the church really lacks a lot of diversity because of that.

sadly, there are churches today that do not want particular people in them. And yet, what we see is that diversity is part of God's design, that God brings people together who are different, and the same way our body is, I mean, I don't even know all the different parts of my body, and most of us don't, but our bodies are diverse.

Our bodies are very diverse, and this is the picture that Paul is trying to communicate to us. Our bodies are very diverse, and so we should recognize that in the church, it is actually very, very similar.

So what we need to do is we need to think biblically about diversity. And when we do that, we will be more inclined to reach out to brothers and sisters who are different from us in gifting and in circumstances.

[ 33 : 43 ] But diversity is not something to be rejected, diversity is something to be embraced. Let us embrace and celebrate the differences.

you look around this room and we're different. We come from many different experiences, and we are the richer when it comes to embracing one another.

You know, I'll say this. There are some people who have a very narrow range of eating food, and if you were to check it, I mean, they eat the same thing over and over and over again, and even sometimes when they're exposed in a setting where they can experiment with a different kind of food, they just don't have an inclination.

But you know who enjoy food most, I believe? The people who tend to embrace the diversity of foods that God has given to us in nature and in culture.

Because all of them are expressions of a wise and a generous God. All of them are gifts from God. And we can broaden our enjoyment of the many gifts of God.

[ 34 : 54 ] And the same is true in the church. The richest people in this church are the people who are far reaching relationships. The richest people in this church are the ones who intentionally reach out broadly, getting to know one another.

They're the richest ones in this church. And I would venture to say the opposite of that is true. The poorest ones in this church are the ones who are physically in community but are in isolation.

And so I say to us this morning, let us see our diversity as a gift from God and let us embrace them. Third and finally, the apostle Paul addresses another aspect of community and it is the aspect of dependency.

The aspect of dependency, unity, diversity, and dependency. He tells us that our dependency is God-designed.

notice the first thing he says in verse 21. He says, the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

[ 36 : 30 ] On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.

Behind both statements, when we see in verse 21, behind both of those statements is an attitude of independence and self-sufficiency.

but more than that, there are statements of ignorance. Just imagine for a moment if our bodies, every part of our body, had its own mind.

I mean, right now, our bodies are central in terms of our brain and our head, and that's the headquarters and it directs everything else. But just imagine that there was a mind in every part of our body.

A mind in the eyes, a mind in the hands, and you can decide what it wanted to do and not want to do. A mind in the feet, and then the eye just says, you know what, you all don't appreciate me, no sight today, close and down, just close down.

[ 37 : 40 ] Hands say, yeah, okay, and see we can clean you when you need to get clean. I mean, you could imagine the conversation that a body could have like that, and you realize, separate and apart, you're just not anything.

You're only something as you are connected together. If our bodies function that way, we would have drama every day. I mean, amazing drama. But you know that in a sense, probably not that extreme, but when we don't have a sense of community, and remember that we are part of a body, we can act in a similarly independent manner.

We can act in a similarly self-sufficient manner. And it is not so much that we say it. We don't say, I don't need you. We just live it.

We show it. We have this sense that we have everything. We really have everything. You know one of the biggest reasons that we sometimes can feel that we have everything?

Money. money can make us very proud. Money can make us very independent.

[ 39 : 04 ] Money can make us feeling very self-sufficient. But you know, anyone who reads the word of God and takes it seriously will never come to that conviction.

We sang last week Psalm 62. When riches come and riches go, when riches come, what does it say?

Don't set your heart upon it. The psalmist says it will take on wings and it will fly away. Riches is one of the worst things to set our confidence in and to try to think that we are independent and we don't need one another.

in community we are not independent. In community we are interdependent and this is what we would call an axiom.

This is a truth. This is an accepted truth that doesn't need to be proven. The fact that God places us in a body in itself communicates interdependence and communicates our need for one another.

[ 40 : 16 ] Whether we recognize it or not, whether we see the need or not is beside the issue. The fact that God has done that is proof enough that we need one another.

Paul's point is that it is so easy for us to overrate our importance and underrate the importance of other members in the body. When we do that we are deceived and community suffers.



And so look at what again Paul says in verse 22. He says, on the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable. Parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.

We need to think of community in that way as well. We need to think of ourselves in this way as well. here again, Paul is using the illustration of the human body to make a point.

He's talking about the human body again now. And he's building an argument. He says in verse 23, we bestow the greater honor and unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require.

[ 41 : 49 ] care. Now, what Paul is doing here is Paul is using very discreet language to talk about how we treat private parts of our bodies that require special care and special attention.

And we never think of those parts of our bodies as being unnecessary. You know, our elbows and our toes don't need the care and the concern that we would give to our teeth, for example.

brushing our teeth or under our armpits, making sure that we wash properly, that we use deodorant.

We give attention and honor to those particular parts, more than we do to other parts. They require that kind of attention.

bodies, local churches are very similar. Local churches, there are members in local churches that God places in our midst and they require different levels of care and different levels of attention and we need to embrace them the way we embrace our own bodies.

[ 43 : 07 ] families. I remember speaking with a pastor who was sharing with me when he was pastoring in another country how a family called the church and asked if they could come to the church.

He said, what do you mean if you can come to the church? The church is open for everyone. and they explained that they had a son with autism and how in all the other churches that they were in, they were rejected and they were turned away and they were shunned.

And so she wanted to find out if it would be okay to come to his church. Brothers and sisters, that should never be. because God places those special people and that's just one example of someone who would require special attention, special care.

He places them in the body. In his sovereign will he does that. And we should say amen to whom God joins to us.

And we should receive them and we should seek to build community with them. The apostle Paul is talking between the physical body and the spiritual body and we got to follow him to be able to see the truth that he is communicating.

[ 44 : 43 ] I want to submit that starting in verse 24, Paul is now beginning to talk about not the physical body body, but the spiritual body or the local body of Christ that we are a part of.

Notice what he says. He says, sorry, this is the second sentence. That second sentence that begins, but not the first body.

The first body is still talking about the physical body, but in that last complete sentence in verse 24 that reads, but God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, so that the members may have the same care for one another.

Paul is driving home the point now. He's driving home the point how God has so composed the body. God has composed the body in this particular way to cause us to be dependent upon one another.

And here's the reason that he did it. Verse 25, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.

[ 46 : 14 ] That's the reason he does it. That there would be no division, that there would be mutual care for one another.

This is God's design. God is determined to cause us to be interdependent in a local body.

God is determined that there would be none of us who would be able to live as an island, who will have no need. He will cause us to need one another.

Whether it is bringing us to a place where our lives are so overwhelming that praying in private isn't going to help anymore, and we are convinced I need to reach out to others and open my life to them, that they can join me in prayer.

sometimes the circumstances that come in our lives are God designed to cause us to reach out to one another, to show that we need one another.

[ 47 : 19 ] We're not an island unto ourselves. in verse 26, the apostle Paul says this, he says, if one member suffers, all suffer together.

If one member is honored, all rejoice together. See, brothers and sisters, when we genuinely enter into one another's sufferings, when we genuinely enter into one another's rejoicings, then we are experiencing true community.

If this morning, there's some aspect of your life in which you're suffering, and you're suffering alone, that's not God's best for you. God's best is that others would join with you and they would help to bear and shoulder those sufferings.

The Bible tells us that we are to bear the infirmities of the weak. And if you have reason to rejoice this morning, and you are rejoicing all by yourself, and your reasons for rejoicing are not known to others, you're not experiencing God's best.

God's best is that we are to genuinely enter into the sufferings and the joys of one another, and in so doing, we enter into true community.

[ 49 : 00 ] This requires an attitude and a spirit of dependence, not independence. In community, we are to demonstrate dependence on one another.

God's best is to be a better position to experience community when we recognize, number one, that our unity is God-given. Number two, our diversity is God-designed.

And our dependency, number three, is God-determined. And when we think about these things, brothers and sisters, let us think about why this is true.

Why do we have this unity? We have it because Christ purchased it. This is a precious, precious thing that we have.

Not bought by silver and gold, but bought by the blood of Jesus Christ through his sacrifice on the cross for sinners. That's how we enjoy this community that is God's will for us.

[ 50 : 17 ] But again, it's not automatic. After this sermon, we're all going to make choices. We're all going to respond in particular ways to what we have heard.

I want to remind you again, community is not automatic. We've got to be intentional. We have to reach out to others if we're going to experience the community that God desires for us.

The way, I think a lot of times some of us can sit and wait for others to reach out to us, but I think this is the way community should look. Community should look this way, we have two sides of a bridge being built, reaching out and others reaching out to us as well.

And even sometimes when we may build a bridge to reach out to someone, it may not be reciprocated right away. But I can tell you that even as we do that, God is going to ensure that other bridges are being built towards us.

It may not be the one right in front of us, but maybe there's one coming behind to build in the way. So brothers and sisters, let us cultivate this. This is a value that we need.

[ 51 : 37 ] It is sad in the world when we read accounts of people who could be dead for days and nobody knew.

And when they happen upon them, the person is in a bad state. He's living outside of connected relationships. it's bad in the world, it's worse in the church.

Because we are the ones who can experience true community because Christ purchased it. And so my prayer for us is that we will cultivate this by the grace of God.

Let's pray. Worship team, please come. Worship team,