

## Formed Together: Why We Need Christ-Centered Community

**Big Idea:** Christ-centered community is not optional to our formation. It is one of the primary ways God teaches us to hold onto hope, practice love, and become more like Jesus.

**Intro Story:** Me 17 years ago, so different than today. From the outside, it may have looked like I was connected. But internally, I felt more unseen and unknown in that season than I ever had.

It is possible to be surrounded by people and still not be known. There is a difference between having people around you and having people who know you deeply enough to help you become more like Christ.

**We cannot experience the fullness of life in Christ by ourselves. We need one another.**

We live in a culture that celebrates independence. We admire people who can handle things on their own, push through pain, keep going, and not need anyone. But the Christian life was never meant to be lived alone.

**Joseph Hellerman writes, “God intends for salvation to be a community-creating event.”** He saves us into a people, into a body, into a family.

The kind of community Scripture calls us into is deeper than having people to hang out with, grab coffee with, or text when life is hard. We are talking about **Christ-centered relationships** — relationships where **Jesus is the center, formation is the goal, love is the practice, and honesty is welcomed.**

And this kind of community is not just a modern church idea. It is part of the original picture of the church.

In Acts 2, after the Spirit is poured out and people respond to the gospel, we are told that the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. They shared life. They met needs. They gathered in the temple courts and in homes. They ate together with glad and sincere hearts. And their life together became part of their witness.

Their community was not just social. It was spiritual. It was not just casual. It was devoted. It was not just about having people around. It was about becoming a people centered on Jesus.

And while Acts 2 gives us this beautiful picture of what this type of community looked like, Hebrews 10 gives the heart and why behind this type of relational living.

**Hebrews 10:23–25** - *“Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. <sup>24</sup> Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. <sup>25</sup> And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.”*

- Hebrews does not say, “You hold on.” - It says, “*Let us hold tightly...*”
- It does not say, “Figure out how to stay encouraged by yourself.” - It says, “*Encourage one another.*”
- It does not say, “Keep your struggles private and pretend you are fine. - It invites us into a community where we help one another stay anchored to Jesus.

### **Point 1: We hold onto hope together.**

*Hebrews 10:23 - “Let us hold tightly without wavering to the hope we affirm, for God can be trusted to keep his promise.”*

He says, “**Let us hold tightly...**”

The Christian life is personal, but it is never meant to be private.

**Quick Illustration:** Current season and my community carrying it with me and reminding me what is true and pointing me back towards Jesus.

**Galatians 6:2** - “*Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*”

Some burdens are too heavy to carry alone. Some seasons are too painful, too confusing, too overwhelming, or too exhausting for isolated faith. **Christ-centered community helps us hold onto hope when our hands are tired.**

There will be moments in life when you cannot preach truth to yourself clearly. Grief gets loud. Anxiety and shame get loud. Fear and negativity get loud. And when those voices are loud, we need people who will lovingly point us back to Jesus. We need people who can say:

- “God is still faithful.”
- “You are not alone.”
- “This is heavy, but we will carry it with you.”
- “That thought may feel true, but it is not the voice of Jesus.”
- “Let’s bring this back into the light.”

**One of the reasons Christ-centered community matters is because isolation gives lies room to grow.** A thought that stays hidden can start to feel like truth. But when we bring that thought into a safe, Christ-centered relationship, someone can help us discern truth.

**Story:** Twins birth story

We often don’t need people to fix our situations, but we do need people to hold hope with us.

When our thoughts are spiraling, when shame is loud, when fear feels believable, we need friends who do not just validate every feeling but lovingly help us return to Jesus.

Jennie Allen says, *“You and I need friends who, instead of trying to fix us, help us to fix our eyes more firmly on Jesus.”*

**Ask:**

- Who helps you hold onto hope when life gets heavy?
- Who knows enough about your life to help carry your burdens?
- Who has permission to speak truth when your negative thoughts are spiraling?
- Are you letting anyone close enough to know where you are struggling?

Christ-centered community helps us hold onto hope. But it also helps form us into people who look more like Jesus.

**Point 2: We grow in love together.**

**Hebrews 10:24** - *“Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works.”*

That phrase “let us think of ways...” matters. It means we are supposed to give thought, attention, and intentionality to one another’s spiritual growth.

Community is not just about having people to hang out with. It is about having people who help us become more like Jesus.

And Hebrews says we are meant to stir one another toward two things: Love and good works

Jesus said in **John 13:35**, **“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”**

Love is not a side issue in the Christian life. Love is the identifying mark of the people of Jesus.

But here is what is so important: the early church was not perfect at this. So much of the New Testament is written to church communities learning how to live together in Christ. They had conflict, division, immaturity, pride, misunderstandings, people hurting each other, people needing correction, patience, forgiveness, endurance, and love.

And the answer was not, **“Walk away from community.”** The answer was, **“Learn to be the people of God together.”**

The New Testament does not give us a picture of perfect people in perfect community. It gives us a picture of redeemed people learning how to love each other because of Jesus.

That is why **1 Corinthians 13** is so powerful. It gives us a picture of what that love looks like - patient, kind, not self-seeking, not easily angered, keeps no record of wrongs, rejoices with the truth, protects, trusts, hopes, and perseveres.

This is not just wedding language. Paul wrote this to a divided church. He was teaching a community how to live together in the way of Jesus. This is not sentimental love. This is cruciform love. This is love shaped by Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit..

We cannot learn this kind of love in isolation.

- You cannot learn patience unless someone requires patience.
- You cannot learn forgiveness unless there is something to forgive.
- You cannot learn humility unless your pride is exposed.
- You cannot learn perseverance unless there is a relationship that requires you to stay, repair, and keep showing up.

Christ-centered community is one of the places where God forms Chris-like love in us. This is why community is a spiritual practice.

Sometimes we think community exists primarily to meet our needs. But biblical community does more than comfort us. It also changes us.

- It teaches us to love when love is inconvenient.
- It teaches us to serve when we would rather be served.
- It teaches us to confess when we would rather hide.
- It teaches us to forgive when we would rather keep a record.
- It teaches us to move toward people instead of withdrawing.

We love the idea of community until community requires love. Our instincts are often self-protection, image management, avoidance, defensiveness, comparison, or withdrawal. But Christ-centered community invites us into a different way.

Because real community includes real people.

- People with different personalities and preferences.
- People who disappoint us, misunderstand us and need grace.
- People who reveal places in us that still need to be formed by Jesus.

**Story:** Example from our group

**Ask:** Where are you asking for community but resisting the call to love? Where are you keeping a record of wrongs? Where is God inviting you to be patient, kind, or humble? Who are you intentionally encouraging toward love and good works?

So we need community to help us hold onto hope, and we need community to stir us toward love and good works. And we need to keep showing up and encouraging one another.

**Point 3: We build endurance together.**

**Hebrews 10:25** - *“And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.”*

A warning and an invitation: Do not give up meeting together. Encourage one another. - This is about refusing the drift toward isolation.

Paul says something similar to this part of Hebrews in **1 Thessalonians 5:11**: “Encourage one another and build each other up.” Christ-centered community is one of the ways God puts courage back into us when we feel weary.

The writer of Hebrews knows that when people are discouraged, tired, ashamed, overwhelmed, or spiritually weary, one of the first things they often do is pull away. They stop gathering. They stop being honest. They stop reaching out. They stop letting people in.

**And Hebrews says: do not neglect the very thing God may want to use to strengthen you.**

Isolation rarely feels dangerous at first. It often feels protective.

- “I just need space.”
- “I do not want to be a burden.”
- “No one will understand.”
- “I will come back when I am doing better.”
- “I do not want people to see me like this.”

But isolation often strengthens what community is meant to help heal.

**Christ-centered community interrupts the spiral.** It gives us people who can encourage us when we are weary, remind us of truth when we are confused, and help us take the next faithful step when we feel stuck.

In Hebrews 12, the writer uses the image of a race. He says, “Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus.” And that image matters because following Jesus requires endurance. There will be moments when we get tired. There will be moments when we want to slow down, sit down, or step away. But Christ-centered community helps us keep running. We help one another fix our eyes on Jesus. We remind each other that the race is worth it, the finish line is real, and Jesus is faithful.

**Ember/fire image:** A coal separated from the fire may stay warm for a little while, but eventually it cools. It was not designed to burn alone.

Healthy, honest, Christ-centered relationships provide a safe place to experience the freedom and redemption Jesus came to give — and they also give us the opportunity to help others experience the same thing.

In other words: this has always taken work.

**Ask:** Where have you started to pull away? Who do you need around you to keep running this race?

Hebrews 10 gives us a beautiful picture of Christ-centered community: Helps us hold onto hope, forms in us Christ-like love and teaches us to keep showing up, so that together we can become more like Jesus.

Today is Group Kickoff Day, and I do not think that is disconnected from what Hebrews 10 is calling us to.

This is not just about signing up for a church program.

This is about taking a step toward Christ-centered community — the kind of community where we help one another hold onto hope, stir one another toward love and good works, and encourage one another when life gets hard.

Because you cannot experience the fullness of life in Christ by yourself.

So today, the invitation is simple: **take a step.**

- **Join a group, lead a group, show up more consistently, open up, try again.**

Community takes practice. It takes vulnerability. It takes time. But it is one of the ways Jesus forms us.

Let's be a people who: hold onto hope together, grow in love together, and keep showing up to encourage one another.

**Because we do not become like Jesus alone. We are formed together.**