

# 05

Experience  
God's  
Community

*“Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.’”*

Genesis 2:18, ESV

## You Were Designed for Community

No matter what your personality is like—introverted, extroverted, socially-skilled, or socially-agitated—something inside of you longs for meaningful relationships with others. There is a reason for that longing. God designed it into you. The Bible makes an irrefutable argument that humans were designed by God to be in community with one another.

## God’s Community

The community that God has designed for His children is known as the Church. Whoa...hold on. I bet your mind just flooded with all sorts of ideas and images of what a “church” is. Before you get lost in images of stained glass, stuffy rules, or old hymnals, let’s set your understanding of church aside for just a moment to explore what the Bible has to say about the Church.

In **Matthew 16:18** Jesus tells His disciples that He is about to build something magnificent. He calls it the Church. The original Greek word used in Matthew is “ekklesia”. Ekklesia means “to be called out of”. It was a common term in Jesus’ day that referred to people being called out of their homes and workplaces and into the public square to receive news.

The New Testament spends a great deal of time showing us what the followers of Jesus are both called out from and called out to.

# Called Out From Death to Life

*Read Ephesians 2:1-10.*

The Bible describes our condition with sin as being spiritually dead. We will all physically die someday, and those who are still spiritually dead will be separated from God forever. This issue is why Jesus came to call us out of death and into life.

*Read the story of Lazarus in John 11:1-44.*

Jesus' friend Lazarus was not just sick or wounded. He was dead. They buried him and mourned him. But when Jesus called Lazarus out, life rushed into the tomb! This is what happens to each of us when we respond to the call of God and begin to live a life in Christ: life rushes into us!

# Called Out From Darkness to Light

Even from the earliest pages of Genesis in the Bible, the contrast of dark and light are used to show the goodness of God and His creation. When Jesus arrives and begins to share the good news of the Kingdom of God, He makes a bold statement.

*“Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”* (John 8:12, ESV)

In contrast to the darkness of sin, Jesus doesn't just claim to be a light. He says He is the Light. The only source of true light. In other words, Jesus calls us out of darkness and to Himself. When we draw close to Him, something amazing happens.

*Read Matthew 5:14.*

As we follow Jesus, not only does His light shine in us...it shines through us. We have the ability and the opportunity to reflect His light into the world around us. This perhaps shows up best in the Church as we love and care for each other.

*Read John 13:34-35.*

# Called Out From Impurity to Holiness

When the Bible speaks of God's holiness, it speaks to His "otherness." He is not like humanity in the sense that He is without sin or darkness. He is perfect. He is good. He is just. He calls us to the same.

*"For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness."* (1 Thessalonians 4:7, ESV)

The pursuit of holiness for the follower of Jesus then is to imitate God's ways. Compared to the world around us we are called to be "other" – different. The follower of Jesus does not live their life by the same standards as the world.

*Read Romans 6:12.*

When we encounter frustrations in this world, a difficult relationship, an unexpected inconvenience, or a financial surprise, we don't turn to Google, we don't rely on emotions—we turn to Jesus and His Word. Even if all the world is going one way, we aim to go the other if He says so. It's in this way that the Church becomes visible saints.

## A Community Called Out for One Another

When we begin to walk in our calling as people who embody life, light, and holiness, we will make an inevitable impact on others. The Bible gives us a very practical view of what this looks like with a simple phrase: "one another." This phrase is mentioned nearly one hundred times in the New Testament to reference how the Church should treat and care for each other. Here are a few examples.

### Be At Peace with One Another

*"If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."* (Romans 12:18, ESV)

## Forgive One Another

*“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”* (Ephesians 4:32, ESV)

## Seek Good for One Another

*Look up 1 Thessalonians 5:15 and write it out here:*

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## Love One Another

*“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”* (John 13:34, ESV)

## Bear Burdens for One Another

*“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”* (Galatians 6:, ESV)

## Pray for One Another

*Look up James 5:16 and write it out here:*

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Imagine a community of Jesus followers who care deeply for one another while they pursue growth and holiness together. Out of that growth and holiness we would see neighbors, coworkers, families, and friends impacted as they see light and life radiating from this community. That is how the Bible describes the Church.

Now, it must be said, that churches don't always get this right. We must remember that there is no perfect church because churches are made up of people who are unfinished (remember session 1?). As imperfect as it may be, we must remember that Jesus loves the church. He refers to it in the Bible as His body. In other parts of the Bible, He calls it His bride. The Church is the reason He sacrificed Himself (Ephesians 5:25).

If Jesus is building the church, and if Jesus believes that the church is worth His life, should not we believe the same?

## Questions to Consider

- What has your experience with church been in the past? How do your past interactions with church influence the way you approach it today?
- How does the good news of Jesus “call you out” of old ways of living and into a new community?
- Which of the ways in which believers of Jesus are “called out” most resonates with you? Why?
- How do you think a church that is truly living out the “one anothers” would impact their community?

## Next Session

Next time...Scripture reference 6:5-13.