



THE COMPELLING COMMUNITY OF A LOCAL CHURCH TWO VISIONS OF COMMUNITY | JANUARY 11, 2026

DEFINITION

Christian Community: The covenantal life of believers, united by Christ, governed by truth, and marked by _____ love for the sake of God’s glory and the world’s belief

HOW TO BUILD CHURCH COMMUNITY WITHOUT THE GOSPEL

Most of the “tools” we use to _____ community center on something other than the gospel:

- *Similar life* _____: Singles groups, newly married Bible studies, and young professionals networks build community based on demographic groupings.
- *Similar* _____: Cowboy churches, motorcycle churches, and the like are all gospel-believing churches with something other than the gospel at the core of their identity.
- *Similar* _____: Ministry teams for feeding the hungry, helping a school, and combating human trafficking build community based on shared passion for a God-honoring cause.
- *Similar* _____: Program-based churches build community by assembling people into programs based on the similarity of their felt needs.
- *Similar* _____ *position*: Sometimes a ministry — or an entire church — gathers the “movers and shakers” in society.

There’s nothing wrong with wanting to be with people with _____. It’s entirely natural and can be spiritually beneficial. But if this is the sum total of what we call “church community,” we’ve probably built something that would exist even if God didn’t.

Building community purely through natural bonds has a cost as well as a benefit. If groups like this come to characterize community in our churches, then our community ceases to be _____ to the world around us.

Even though many relationships that naturally form in our churches would exist even if the gospel weren’t true, we should aspire for many relationships that exist only because of the _____. So often, we aim at nothing more than community built on similarity, but we should aim at community characterized by relationships that are obviously supernatural.

TWO TYPES OF COMMUNITY

1. Gospel-Plus Community: Nearly every relationship is founded on the gospel plus something else as church leaders enthusiastically use _____ to build community.
2. Gospel-Revealing Community: Many relationships would never exist but for the truth and power of the _____ — either because of the depth of care for each other or because two people in relationship have little in common but Christ.

You can't physically see the gospel, but when we encourage community that is obviously supernatural, it makes the gospel _____.

On the other hand, when Christians unite around something other than the gospel, they create community that would likely exist even if _____ didn't.

SUPERNATURAL COMMUNITY IS GOD'S PLAN FOR THE CHURCH

The apostle Paul lays out God's plan for the church in Ephesians 2-3. It begins with our salvation (2:1-10). Then it leads to _____ among the members of the church (2:15-18).

The gospel alone creates this unity. After all, what else could bring together two peoples with such different history, ethnicity, religion, and _____?

The _____ for such unity is "that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places" (3:10). Unity that is so unexpected causes the unsaved world to sit up and take notice!

Gospel-revealing community is _____ along two dimensions:

1. Breadth — It stretches to include peoples as divergent as Jews/Gentiles (Ephesians 2:18).
2. Depth — It doesn't just bring people together to _____ each other, but to a strong commitment referred to as a "new humanity" and a new "household" (Ephesians 2:15, 19).

Supernatural depth and breadth of community make the glory of an invisible God to be visible.

1. This community is characterized by commonality in _____.
2. If this community is not _____, it doesn't work.

PRESSURE TO BUILD A GOSPEL-PLUS COMMUNITY

Community makes people feel included. When people feel included, they stay and volunteer and give. When they don't feel included, they leave. So the growth of our churches and the apparent success of our ministries depend on effective community. With something that important at stake, it's understandable that we want it to be as _____ as possible.

When we build gospel-plus community, we may get the inclusive relationships we're looking for. But aside from an unusual act of God, we will not achieve the supernatural breadth and depth of community that makes the world sit up and take notice. We build a demographic phenomenon, not a _____ phenomenon.

FOCUS ON THE GOAL, NOT THE EFFECT

Fostering church community is like learning to ride a bike. If you focus too much on the _____ of what you're doing, you'll crash. But eventually, we all realize that if we focus on the goal ahead, the riding happens.

Our new society of the church is not a mutual admiration society, but a shared admiration society. Our affection for each other derives from our _____ of God, as His glory in the church is the ultimate goal.