CORE VALUE 5 OF 10 · WEEK 5

ANABAPTISH

Belonging to the Community of Faith

We value integrity in relationships and mutual accountability in an atmosphere of grace, love, and acceptance.

Kris Randall | Sunday, October 11, 2026 | Crest Community Church

For the Nightstand

THE TEACHING

Community can be painful. And not only because people are broken. Sometimes a church goes wrong in its bones. Some of us have lived through that. So why would the Brethren in Christ put belonging at the center? Because God's ultimate purpose isn't just saving individuals. It's forming a people.

In Matthew 21, Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey. The crowd expects him to take on Rome. Instead he rides into the temple. He drives out the sellers. He flips the tables of the money changers and the dove sellers, right where the foreigner and the poor came in. Then he quotes two prophets. Isaiah: "My house shall be called a house of prayer." Jeremiah: "a den of robbers." A hideout where people who live off others go to say, "I am safe."

Isaiah promised a place in God's house to two people who had none. The eunuch and the foreigner. The traumatized and the othered. This is anger that protects love. For some of us, that's warm welcome. For some, it's an indictment. For most of us, it's both at once. So throw yourself into the embrace of the community of faith.

KEY SCRIPTURES

Matthew 21:12–13
He flips the tables in God's house.

Isaiah 56:5–7
A name better than sons and daughters.

Jeremiah 7:11
A den of robbers is no refuge.

Matthew 21:14–16
The blind healed. The children singing.

A PRAYER

God, who welcomes the stranger, the orphan, and the widow, the eunuch and the foreigner, teach us to love like you love. Where we've been left outside, give us a name. Where we've done the leaving out, soften us and humble us. Form us into a house of prayer. In Jesus' name, amen.

PART TWO

For Your Home Church

Gather together. About 60 minutes, after your meal or around it.

FOR LEADERS

This is shared language, not a script. Everyone in the room can see these notes, so feel free to read them out loud. The times add up to an hour. Hold them loosely. If a conversation is alive, stay with it and trim somewhere else.

Check In

5 min

Start by hearing how last week actually went.

LEADER NOTE

Go around the room. **How did last week's practice go?** Three were offered: the still-exploring prayer ("Jesus, if you're real, and you're calling me, I'm listening"), ask the three questions each morning and say yes to the nudge, or ask the three plus ten quiet minutes a day and tell someone from home church what you're hearing.

Some people will not have done it. That is fine, and it is worth saying out loud so nobody performs. Ask them instead what the week was like. No fixing and no follow-up questions. Just receive it.

Take Communion

5 min

God sets the lonely in families. Come to his table together.

LEADER NOTE

Share the bread and the cup, before, during, or after your meal. If your group doesn't have its own words yet, have someone read this psalm out loud first.

PSALM 68:4–6

4 Sing to God, sing in praise of his name,
extol him who rides on the clouds;
rejoice before him—his name is the LORD.

5 A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows,
is God in his holy dwelling.

6 God sets the lonely in families,
he leads out the prisoners with singing;
but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.

Read This Overview

5 min

LEADER NOTE

Ask someone to read this out loud.

Some of us came to Crest after a long, painful season of looking for a church that felt safe. If you don't know what that means, you are blessed. If you do, we're sorry.

Community can hurt. And not only because people are people, doing the best they can. Sometimes a church goes wrong all the way down. Some of us have lived through that.

So here's an honest question. Why belong to a church at all?

The Brethren in Christ, the family of churches Crest belongs to, give a surprising answer. Some traditions treat the church as a means to an end. The goal is getting people saved, and church helps. Our tradition turns that around. *Compelling Convictions*, the book behind this series, quotes the theologian Simon Chan: God's ultimate purpose is the formation of a people. The people of God. Personal salvation is the way in. The people are the point.

That's why Jesus gets angry in Matthew 21. The temple was supposed to show the world what God's family looks like. Jesus walks in and flips the tables. It's the kind of anger that protects love.

And belonging doesn't mean we all agree. John Wesley, one of the great-great-great-grandfathers of our tradition, said that on anything that doesn't strike at the root of the faith, we "think and let think." Not live and let live, where we go our separate ways. We think together. We talk it through around our tables. Then we come, shoulder to shoulder, to the Lord's table.

Belonging to the Community of Faith

We value integrity in relationships and mutual accountability in an atmosphere of grace, love, and acceptance.

Fierce protection. Warm welcome. A house of prayer for everybody.

Go Deeper in the Scripture

20 min

Watch Jesus clear God's house so the outsider can come in.

LEADER NOTE

Have someone read Matthew out loud, then someone else read Isaiah. Jesus is quoting Isaiah in verse 13. Use the background notes as you need them. You won't get to every question. If time is short, start with the three marked START HERE

MATTHEW 21:12–16

12 Then Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying
in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the
seats of those who sold doves. 13 He said to them, "It is written,
'My house shall be called a house of prayer,'
but you are making it a den of robbers."

14 The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them. 15 But
when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he
did and the children shouting in the temple courts, "Hosanna to the Son of
David," they were indignant.

16 "Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him.

"Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read,

"'From the lips of children and infants
you, Lord, have called forth your praise'?"

Verses 12–13 from the NRSVue (the updated NRSV), verses 14–16 from the NIV, the way Kris read them on Sunday.

ISAIAH 56:3–8 · NIV

3 Let no foreigner who is bound to the Lord say,
"The Lord will surely exclude me from his people."
And let no eunuch complain,

"I am only a dry tree."

4 For this is what the Lord says:

"To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths,
who choose what pleases me
and hold fast to my covenant—

5 to them I will give within my temple and its walls
a memorial and a name
better than sons and daughters;
I will give them an everlasting name
that will endure forever.

6 And foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord
to minister to him,
to love the name of the Lord,
and to be his servants,
all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it
and who hold fast to my covenant—

7 these I will bring to my holy mountain
and give them joy in my house of prayer.
Their burnt offerings and sacrifices
will be accepted on my altar;
for my house will be called
a house of prayer for all nations."

8 The Sovereign Lord declares—
he who gathers the exiles of Israel:
"I will gather still others to them
besides those already gathered."

BACKGROUND NOTES

Matthew's church had no temple. Matthew's gospel was probably written down around AD 80 or 90, after the Romans had destroyed the temple in AD 70. Worship had moved into homes, into courtyards, around tables. A lot like home church. They were remembering what Jesus said God's house was supposed to be.

Money changers and doves. Passover brought pilgrims from all over the Roman world. The money changers swapped their coins for the money the temple accepted. The doves were the offering the law allowed for people who couldn't afford a lamb (Leviticus 5:7). So the tables Jesus flips sit right where the foreigner and the poor came in.

"A den of robbers." The Greek word means a bandit. Someone whose whole living is taking from others. A den is the hideout they go back to so they can feel safe. Jesus is quoting Jeremiah 7, where God warned his people, "Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord.'" In between, God names what he wants: stop oppressing the stranger, the orphan, and the widow. Then: "Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your sight?"

"A house of prayer for all nations." That's the full line in Isaiah 56:7. Matthew's version stops at "house of prayer," but anyone who knew Isaiah would have heard the rest.

The eunuch and the foreigner. Eunuchs were often captives of war, made that way as boys so they could serve a king. They could never have children. No family line, no land, no future. The law kept them out of the assembly (Deuteronomy 23:1). The foreigner is not the new neighbor from another culture. It's the outsider. The one nobody wants to sit with. Naming two extremes like this is a way of saying "and everyone in between."

The blind and the lame. All through Matthew, Jesus heals the people whose illness had cut them off from the community. There was even an old saying that "the blind and lame" will not enter the palace (2 Samuel 5:8). Right after the tables go over, they come to him in the temple. And he heals them there.

The children and Psalm 8. The children are still singing the song the crowd sang as Jesus rode in, from Psalm 118. Jesus answers the leaders with Psalm 8:2 and only says the first line. The rest of the verse says this praise from children is a stronghold "to silence the foe and the avenger." The powerless are the ones who bring enemies to nothing.

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

1. Make two lists. Who gets driven out in verse 12? Who comes in, in verses 14 and 15? START HERE
2. Read Isaiah 56:7 and the Jeremiah lines in the notes. What is God's house supposed to be? What has it become?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

3. Kris called this "the kind of anger that protects love." What is Jesus angry about here? What is he not angry about? START HERE
4. Isaiah promises the eunuch and the foreigner "a name better than sons and daughters." What would that have meant to someone with no family and no future? What might it mean to someone in your life?

5. Blind and lame people are healed. Children are singing. And the leaders are indignant. What do you think they were protecting?

WHAT DOES IT ASK OF US?

6. Kris said most of us feel both at once: a warm welcome and an indictment. Where do you find yourself in this story right now? START HERE
7. Our value puts integrity and accountability right next to grace, love, and acceptance. What would it look like for this home church to "think and let think," to disagree honestly and still come shoulder to shoulder to the table?

Practice for the Night: Both at Once

20 min

Bring Jesus the places you've been left out and the places you've done the leaving out. Receive his welcome for both.

LEADER NOTE

Have paper and pens on hand. The silence will feel long. Don't fill it. When it's time to share, go first, and keep yours small and honest.

This one can touch real hurt, including hurt from a church. Say out loud that nobody has to share anything, and passing is always fine. If someone shares something heavy, don't try to fix it in the room. Thank them, pray for them, and check in with them later this week. Jesus is angry about that hurt too.

1. **Get quiet** · 3 min
   Phones face down. A couple of minutes of silence. Then the leader prays: **"God, who welcomes the stranger, show us where we stand. Spirit, form us into a house of prayer."**
2. **Ask the two questions** · 6 min
   The leader asks each question out loud, slowly, and leaves about three minutes of silence after each one. **"Where have I been left outside?" "Where have I done the leaving out?"** Write down a word or two for each. Nobody else will see it.
3. **Pair up** · 8 min
   Share only what you want to. One of the two is plenty. The listener doesn't fix or advise. When your partner finishes, say, **"You belong here."** Then pray for each other.
4. **Read it together** · 3 min
   Come back together. Read Isaiah 56:7–8 out loud, all at once, from the box above. Then the leader says the last line one more time: **"I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered."**

Practice for the Week Ahead

3 min

Choose one small, honest step. Start where you are, not where you think you should be.

IF CHURCH STILL FEELS NEW, OR STILL FEELS RISKY

Read Isaiah 56:3–8 once a day this week. Slowly. In verse 3, put your own name where it says “foreigner.” Notice what God promises. Then come back next week. Belonging starts with showing up again.

IF YOU’VE FOLLOWED JESUS A WHILE

It is alarmingly easy to take belonging for granted. Each morning, ask: **“Who is on the outside of my table?”** Then make one move of welcome this week. Learn a name at the gathering. Sit by the person on their own. Invite someone to dinner, or to home church.

IF YOU’RE READY FOR MORE

Go back to what you wrote under “Where have I done the leaving out?” Take one step to make it right. An apology. A conversation. A repair. Then tell one person from your home church what you did, so they can ask you about it next week. That’s what mutual accountability looks like.

Next week, we’ll start by checking in on how it went.

Close in Prayer

2 min

LEADER NOTE

Gather everyone and close your time in prayer, however the Spirit leads.

COMING UP · SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18

Core Value 6: Witnessing to the World

We value an active and loving witness for Christ to all people.

WANT TO GO FURTHER?

Compelling Convictions, the companion book to this series, is free to borrow from the church library. The Simon Chan quote in this week’s overview comes from it. Just ask John.