




# The Basics of Life in Christ

## Week Five

Sharing My Life with  
Others—Practices that lead  
us to interdependence and  
community





## **Introduction: The “One Others”**

Adele Calhoun writes this in her appendix to *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*:

*Just as the Trinity is one, so followers of Jesus are one. No matter how many schisms divide us, the supreme reality we are to incarnate is oneness. We belong to one another. We cannot apprentice ourselves to Jesus and live without regard to one another. (SDH, 313)*

The reason for Calhoun’s insistence on “one another” is simple: the Bible is consistent, profoundly repetitive, in its command for us to “love one another.” In fact, there are several, important “one another” commands throughout Scripture (from Calhoun):

- *Love one another* (John 13:34-35; Rom. 13:8; 2 Pet. 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7; 4:11-12; 2 John 1:5)
- *Encourage one another* (1 Thess. 4:18; 5:11; Heb. 3:13)
- *Bear one another’s burdens* (Isa. 41:6; Gal. 6:1-5)
- *Care for one another* (1 Cor. 12:24-25)
- *Accept one another* (Rom. 14:1-4; 15:7)

- *Be kind to one another* (Gal 5:22; Eph. 4:31-32)
- *Live in harmony with one another* (1 Pet. 3:8)
- *Forgive one another* (Eph. 4:32)
- *Be hospitable to one another* (1 Pet. 4:9)
- *Honor one another* (Rom. 12:10)
- *Belong to one another* (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:24-25; 2 Cor. 13:11; Eph. 4:25; Heb. 10:25)
- *Be devoted to one another* (Rom. 12:10)
- *Speak truthfully to one another* (Eph. 4:25; Col. 3:9)
- *Teach one another* (Col. 3:16)
- *Agree with one another* (1 Cor. 1:10)
- *Look out for one another* (Phil. 2:4)
- *Worship with one another* (Eph 5:19-20)
- *Lay down your lives for one another* (1 John 3:16)
- *Do not provoke one another* (Gal. 5:25-26)
- *Do not grumble against one another* (James 5:9)
- *Do not envy one another* (Gal 5:25-26)

## A Crisis of Community

*Q: How are Christians in the US doing at these “one anothers”? What challenges have we faced?*

The Bible describes the Christian life as one lived within and rooted in the body of believers. But several things in our current world work against this and inhibit our ability to live this vision out (pre-COVID):

- 1. Radical individualism:* The current culture in which we swim, built up over the last three-hundred years, has culminated in a radical **individualism**: a hyper-focus on the individual and their self-actualization. People abuse one another, use one another, and then discard each other and move on. Community in this way of living only happens when you align with people **you share interests with** (i.e., country clubs).
- 2. Disregard for families:* Never has a culture so radically worked against the structure of the family as the modern west has. The family is the nuclear core of community, and as it has been disregarded people have drifted into isolation. The end result is that people now subconsciously **limit intergenerational engagement** in community.

3. *Abuse and Disillusionment:* Every week a new mega-pastor or evangelist is revealed to have had an abusive relationship. On more local levels, Christians often fail to live this “one another” life out and the result is hurt both within and outside the church. Communities become therefore either **superficial** (to avoid further hurt) or **abusive**.
4. *Partisan Political Discipleship:* The divisions of our political atmosphere have seriously hampered our ability to live in community. On both sides of the political spectrum, people are spending more time than ever before listening to pundits and talk-show hosts (who often don’t act and speak with Christlikeness), and this contributes to a heavily partisan environment. The result is Christian brothers and sisters who, while actually disagreeing on little, view each other as **enemies** because of their digital mentors.

*Q: How have you seen these four hindrances hurt both our community at VCL and your pursuit of community individually?*

**Sharing Our Lives with Others:** Practices that lead us to live in community the way God does as the Trinity, rooted in our union with Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-31).

Question for Reflection: *Think of one relationship, church, or experience with others that was life-giving for you. Why did you enjoy it? How did God bless you through it?*

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## **Desires that Lead us to Share our Lives with Others**

As we've said before, the beginning of pursuing the spiritual life is simply taking the time to recognize what we desire, and following that desire to God's throne.

I want...

*...to give a regular and honest account of my choices, priorities and temptations to a godly and wise companion who points me to Christ (the discipline of Accountability Partner)*

*...to revere God by receiving and honoring my body and the bodies of others with purity of thought and action (the discipline of Chastity)*

*...to enter into authentic, confidential, and healing relationships with a committed group of fellow pilgrims (the discipline of Covenant Group)*

*...to be in a relationship where I am encouraged or where I encourage another to become a disciple of Jesus (The discipline of Disciplining)*

*...to connect in person beyond the surface of screens and texts (the discipline of Face-to-Face Connection)*

*...to be a safe person who offers other the grace, shelter, and presence of Jesus (the discipline of Hospitality)*

*...to accompany and encourage others to grow to their God-given potential (The discipline of Mentoring)*

*...to reflect the helping, caring love of God in the world (the discipline of Service)*

*...to develop a friendship that encourages and challenges me to love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength (the discipline of Spiritual Friendship)*

*...to live in harmony with Christ's desire for the church to be one; to be a bridge-builder and peacemaker in the body of Christ (the discipline of Unity)*

*Q: Do you resonate with these desires? Do they spark any memories, thoughts, or reminders for you?*



## Spiritual Disciplines For Sharing our Lives

Accountability Partner	Means that I appropriately and reciprocally disclose struggles, failures and temptations to a godly friend who is committed to asking hard questions, willing to challenge, and given to encouragement and prayer.
Chastity	Rooted in a deep acceptance of, respect for and protection of the glorious body God has given me and all other human beings. Chaste behavior cultivates sexual purity and nourishes trust.
Community	Exists when believers connect with each other in authentic and loving ways that encourage growth in Christ. They engage in transparent relationships that cultivate, celebrate and make evident Christ's love for all the world.
Covenant Group	Composed of people who commit themselves to helping and encouraging one another, as each prayerfully seeks to live out God's will for their lives.
Discipling	The process of equipping, training and encouraging another in his or her apprenticeship to Jesus. It means journeying with and helping others to grow in knowledge as well as in the virtues and character of Christ.

Face-to-Face Connection	Happens through the gift of presence and body language.
Hospitality	Creates a safe, open space where a friend or stranger can enter and experience the welcoming spirit of Christ in another.
Mentoring	A relational experience in which one person empowers another by sharing his or her life, experience and God-given resources. A mentor nurtures an apprentice's personal development, faith and skill.
Service	A way of offering resources, time, treasure, influence and expertise for the care, protection, justice and nurture of others.
Small Group	A group that intentionally connects people, regularly gathering them together to help one another grow in loving God and doing his will.
Spiritual Friendship	Involves cultivating a covenant friendship where I can naturally share about my life with God. It is grounded in relationship to God and a commitment to support, encourage, and pray for one another.

Unity	The mark that demonstrates to the world that the body of Christ is one organism, with one faith, one hope, one baptism and one God and Father of all. Unity lives to the reality that Christ has already reconciled all things to himself. So in him we belong to one another.
Witness	Means modeling and telling the difference Jesus has made in one's life.

Question for reflection: *Which of these practices inspires you as you think of the desires above? Which could you try this week?*

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### **An Example: Small Group**

**Desire:** to make my spiritual journey with a community of trusted friends.

**Definition:** A group that intentionally connects people, regularly gathering them together to help one another grow in loving God and doing his will.

*“In our world full of strangers, estranged from their own past, culture and country, from their neighbors, friends and family, from their deepest self and their God, we witness a painful search for a hospitable place where life can be lived without fear and where community can be found.”—Henry Nouwen*

*Q: Why is it important that Christians gather for intentional spiritual relationships outside of the Sunday service?*

### The Four Stages of Small Groups (SDH, 173)

**Forming**—a group decides its purpose, content, structure, and covenant.

**Storming**—a group runs into conflict, difficulties and personality quirks. Different ideas about what it means to journey together emerge. Control issues surface. Some people dominate while others clam up. Often if a group disintegrates, it is during this stage.

**Norming**—the group makes it through the “storming” stage and settles into the gifts and struggles of the journey for the long haul.

**Transforming**—the group accomplishes its goal or mission and in the process grows and becomes more of who God created them to be.



## **Schedule (From Calhoun's *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*):**

Week Six (2/21): “**H**earing” from God—practices that form the mind of Christ in us.

Week Seven (2/28): “**I**ncarnating” Jesus—practices that let us be Jesus to the world.

Week Eight (3/14): “**P**raying” my life—practices that lead me to pray without ceasing.