



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:

Firstly, you will notice that at the start of each lesson there are three important bits of information. These will be the basic tools you need to lead the study.

All Scripture will appear in this BLUE colour. All Scripture references are taken from the NIV version of the Bible unless otherwise stated.

All discussion questions are in this GREEN colour. These discussion questions are meant to help open up times of sharing in your group.

The bulk of the text will be in BLACK. This is the script and information for your lesson. However, please do not stick to the script word for word. The information is there just to serve as a guideline. Please feel free to lead or facilitate the discussion in the way which GOD is leading you.

Call To Community: Christ-Centred Community
Michael Shadbolt
12th June 2022

Getting-to-Know-One-Another Questions:

- What does a dream vacation look like for you?
- What is currently one of your favourite restaurants?

Opening Discussion Question:

- What is something that you are passionate about and you desire to share with others?

In our message series, we are exploring what it means to respond to Jesus' call to community. In the first message of our series, we observed that traditional community at large has been destroyed and replaced by a transient shallow society reminiscent of an international airport departure lounge – a place of fleeting interactions, isolation and lack of belonging. Pastor Steve challenged us to stand up and begin to live and act in a different way than we see all around us. To build what he called 'contrast communities' that are the very foretaste of the Kingdom of God.

Pastor Steve talked about that the biblical community that we are being invited to create here in Tauranga must emphasise six characteristics if it is going to model the "contrast" with what we see around us:

1. Christ-centred
2. Authentic
3. Hospitable

4. Authentic
5. Missional
6. Live Sacrificially

This week, Michael unpacked more of how these contrast communities are modelling the Kingdom of God. That Kingdom is an upside-down Kingdom, where the traditional pyramid structure is flipped on its head. In God's Kingdom, the King does not rule with fear, violence and taxes. Rather, in the upside-down Kingdom, the King rules with service and gifts.

Michael described it as "A Kingdom where the poor and the immigrant and the widow and the orphan are no longer being ignored and despised at the bottom of the social pyramid. Instead, that pyramid is flipped over, and those with power, those with privilege, those with resources can support those without. Why? Because they are valued. They are community. They are part of the same family. They are loved by God, and loved by God's people."

However, the kind of diverse, contrast communities that we are speaking of will not succeed unless Christ is at the centre.

Michael talked how Jesus' prayer specifically for believers like us has been recorded in the Bible:

Read [John 17:20-23](#):

["20 'My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all](#)

of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one – ²³ I in them and you in me – so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

- What does it mean to you that Jesus prayed this prayer over us?
- Does the focus of Jesus’ prayer surprise you? Why or why not?

Out of all the things that Jesus could have prayed over us, He decided to pray for common-unity. Jesus’ prays:

- ‘that all of them may be one’ (v.21)
- ‘that they may be one as we are one’ (v.22)
- ‘that they may be brought to complete unity’ (v.23)

Why?

Why does Jesus desire this common-unity for us?

- Why does Jesus desire this common unity for us? What do you think?

To put it simply, Jesus wants us to experience what He experiences within the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). He speaks of the unity with His Father as follows:

- 'just as you are in me and I am in you' (v.21)
- 'that they may be one as we are one' (v.22)
- 'that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.' (v.23)

Jesus experienced the profound beauty of common-unity as part of the very nature that He has within the triune God-head. Michael explained "Jesus knows how powerful that Unity is. He knows all about Oneness. He has existed in the ultimate unity together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. A community of love since before the creation of the world. (John 17:24)

And Jesus, knowing what it means to live in that state of unity, wants to share that with us, His Church. He knows exactly what it is to experience the beautiful, powerful, eternal community of love that is the Trinity. And the number one thing that he wants for us? He wants that same experience for us that He experiences"

- What does it mean to you that Jesus wants to share with us the common-unity that He experiences as part of the Trinity?

How?

How do we enter or experience this common-unity? Jesus' prayer also guides us in how we can experience this common-unity. In [verse 23](#), Jesus says 'I in them, and you in me'. The only way to enter this common-unity and to experience it is through our receiving of Christ and His presence in us.

Michael points out, "And this is heart of the good news: God the Father united with Christ.

Mankind separated from God, because of sin.

But, through His death and resurrection, Christ Jesus stands in the gap and makes a way.

A way that we can receive his sacrifice and his forgiveness.

A way that we can be in Christ and He can be in us."

- Have you entered and experienced this common-unity with the Father, Son and Spirit? If yes, how does that common-unity look like for you now?
- What do you think are barriers to experience this common-unity with the Father, Son and Spirit?

First, Jesus, in the common-unity of the Father and Spirit in the Trinity together. Then Jesus in us as we receive His sacrifice on the cross and His forgiveness of our sin. Then because of that, us together in God fully as forgiven and redeemed people. Which in turn then brings us into '[complete unity](#)' ([verse 23](#)) – complete because we are fully in God through Christ and complete because we are now able to be fully bonded together as a new family through the forgiveness of our sins.

*God in Christ – Christ in Us – Us in Christ – Us in God –
Us with Each other.*

All of this community – both with God and with one another – is possible only because we are in Christ first and foremost. Christ is central to it all, and is the mediator in whom we gain access to God in His fullness, and also common-unity with one another in the process. Without Him, none of it would be possible. There would be no common-unity at all. What unites us together is not our community with one another, it is Christ Himself. To put it another way:

“...it is not in community where we find Christ, it is in Christ where we find true community.”

- What do you believe is the significance of this statement, “It is not in community where we find Christ, it is in Christ where we find true community?”

What?

What is the purpose of this common-unity with Father, Son and Holy Spirit and with each other? In verse 23 Jesus says ‘[Then the world will know...](#)’. Jesus wants to reveal His love and his purposes to the world through our common-unity.

- How do we go about living out this common-unity?

When Jesus is talking about our mission to the world to reveal his love, He is not talking about just through Connect Groups or Sunday gatherings. Rather, what happens in our homes, work places, schools, sports teams, social groups, etc.

So, let's get even more specific about what it means to be Christ-Centred in community. In verse 23 Jesus says that we are to live in common-unity, ['in order that the love you have for me may be in them.'](#) Jesus tells us it's all about love. This is why we are called into Christ-centred community – love.

Jesus commands us in [John 13:34](#) ['A new command I give to you, that you would love one another'](#). Also, following this up, He then gives us how we are to love one another in [John 15:13](#): ['Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.'](#) Throughout Jesus' ministry, He constantly and consistently demonstrated what common community looked like for Him – to literally go to the cross for His friends. It was to lay down His life for His people. Out of love. Selfless, sacrificial, unconditional love.

Our call to Christ-centred community is a call to sacrificial love. Jesus says that through Him we will receive this kind of self-sacrificial love, and through our common-unity together we will release to the world this kind of self-sacrificial love. The Father's love.

That's what it means to be Christ-centred in our communities – to be like Christ in our everyday moments,

to love others sacrificially, to forgive, to show grace in the ordinary places in which God has invited us to have our being.

- How is Jesus calling you to release this self-sacrificial love to those around us?
- Michael shared the story of the Bethel community and the von Bodelschwinghs. Theirs was a Christ-centred community. It was a contrast from the world around them. It was a slice of the upside-down Kingdom, where all people are valued as the image of God.

- How does the story of the Bethel community encourage or challenge you?
- How can sacrificial love express itself in your everyday life? What has that looked like for you?
- How might Jesus be calling you to put Him at the centre again and to live a life of love?

Lifeline thanks The Vine Church HK for making this resource available for the wider Church.