



A Biblical Vision For A Healthy Local Church

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Genuine Christian Community and Relational Vitality

Introduction: Where we are at in this series?

Central to our identity are the following:

- The God-centeredness of God
- The centrality and supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things
- A strong teaching / thinking / questioning ministry model
- **Genuine Christian community and relational vitality**
- Creative cultural and civic involvement

Why we are here?

To learn from God, through the Bible,

1. what genuine godly community and healthy relationships are
and

2. how it is possible to participate in something so healthy, so profound, so beautiful ...and so
God-centered and God-honoring!

Countless are the people who have become discouraged and disgruntled about their experience of life in a local church. There are many reasons why this happens...and we know there are always 3 sides to the story, don't we. Some abandonment from the local church has arisen from the church leadership being the partial cause of the problem, and some responsibility rightly falls on those who are part of the congregation...you and I. It takes two to tango!

We are all flawed people, intersecting with other flawed people, who are living together in a fallen world! Never forget that! "We got Trouble: O we got trouble...That's a capitol T and that rhymes with P and that stands for pool...as in cesspool. As in cesspool of our sin, as in your total depravity and mine!

The true Christian's nostril is to be continually attentive to the inner cesspool.

C.S. Lewis

Yet the good news of the Christian faith is that One is present among us, even in us, who is altogether Faithful, True and Gracious...even our God! Even our Jesus!

And He performs miracles...miracles of a new birth...and a miracle of shaping a collected group of miracles...you & me...the church. We must realize that a Christian is a miracle. A miraculous surgery has occurred in the heart of a Christian, that God has taken out a heart of stone, and given a heart of flesh...dearly loved by God in Jesus and now one in love with Him!

A miracle. So therefore, a collection of miracles...you and I, is by definition a miracle! A local Christian church is a miracle of God's grace! A *healthy* local gathering of believers is a double-miracle!



This morning we want to focus on A Biblical Vision for Genuine Christian Community...
And a Biblical Vision for Relational Vitality (Joie de vivre- zhWAduh **vee**-vRuh, a delight in being alive, carefree joy of living, enthusiasm, get-up-n-go, animation, life) (antonym: lethargy, stupor, coma, laziness, slothfulness) . We want to grow in our understanding of what the Bible says about being an authentic Christian Community...and we want to actually experience this!

When we speak of Genuine Christian Community, or genuine Divine Community....where must we begin? Think God-centered...not man-centered...

Where does real Divine community begin? Think! Where in the Bible do we find the very first, the most healthy, the most pure, the most stunningly glorious relationship that exists?

Think God...not man...

The Divine Community of the The Triune God!

The Eternal God: Father, Son, Holy Spirit

And it is here, in this perfect Oneness of God, the relationship of the Father, Son & Holy Spirit...that all genuine Christian, Healthy and Vital relationships comes from!

Because God is Most Healthy...then in Him, we are too...and will become moreso...and will one day see, taste and experience perfection in this regard! Very soon...and in the meantime, in increasing measure!

The Trinity (ESV Study Bible)

The biblical teaching on the Trinity embodies four essential affirmations:

1. There is one and only one true and living God.
2. This one God eternally exists in three persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
3. These three persons are completely equal in attributes, each with the same divine nature.
4. While each person is *fully* and *completely* God, the persons are not identical.

The differences among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are found in the way they relate to one another and the role each plays in accomplishing their unified purpose.

Westminster Confession of Faith Chapter II

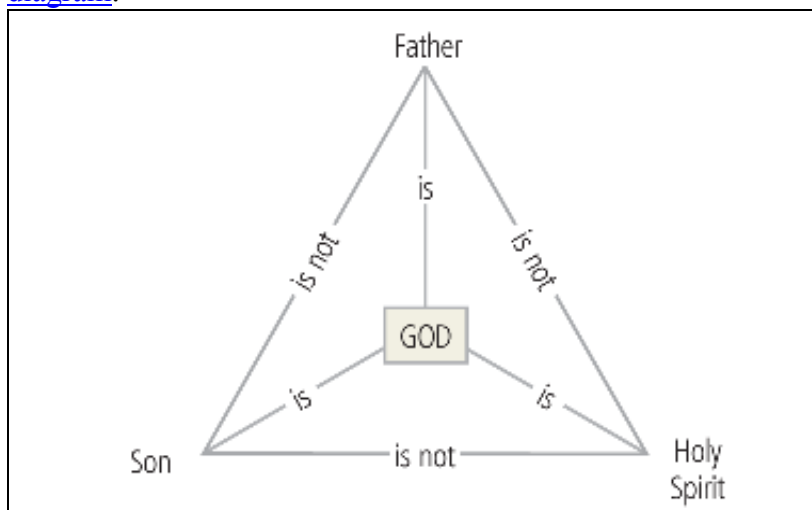
Of God, and of the Holy Trinity

I. There is but one only, [1] living, and true God, [2] who is infinite in being and perfection, [3] a most pure spirit, [4] invisible, [5] without body, parts, [6] or passions; [7] immutable, [8] immense, [9] eternal, [10] incomprehensible, [11] almighty, [12] most wise, [13] most holy, [14] most free, [15] most absolute; [16] working all things according to the counsel of His own unchallengeable and most righteous will, [17] for His own glory; [18] most loving, [19] gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; [20] the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him; [21] and withal, most just, and terrible in His judgments, [22] hating all sin, [23] and who will by no means clear the guilty. [24]

II. God has all life, [25] glory, [26] goodness, [27] blessedness, [28] in and of Himself; and is alone in and unto Himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which He has made, [29] nor deriving any glory from them, [30] but only manifesting His own glory in, by, unto, and upon them. He is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things; [31] and has most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them whatsoever Himself pleases. [32] In His sight all things are open and manifest, [33] His knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature, [34] so as nothing is to Him contingent, or uncertain. [35] He is most holy in all His counsels, in all His works, and in all His commands. [36] To Him is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship, service, or obedience He is pleased to require of them. [37]

III. In the unity of the Godhead there be three Persons of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. [38] The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begottenⁱ (unique, one & only) of the Father; [39] the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son. [40]ⁱⁱ

The unity of nature and distinction of persons of the Trinity is helpfully illustrated in the [diagram](#).





(John 1:1) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

(Acts 5:3) But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? (Acts 5:4) ... You have not lied to men but to God."

(Matthew 28:19) Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

(2 Corinthians 13:14) The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Where in the entire Bible do we find perhaps the most insightful glimpse into the relationship that exists within the Godhead? What kind of relationship is there between the Persons of the One true God?

John 17

ESV John 17:1-26 When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, (2) since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. (3) And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. (4) I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. (5) **And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.** (6) "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. (7) Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. (8) For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. (9) I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. (10) **All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.** (11) And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, **that they may be one, even as we are one.** (12) While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. (13) But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, **that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.** (14) I have given them your word, and the world has hated them **because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.** (15) I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. (16) **They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.** (17) Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. (18) **As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.** (19) **And for their sake I consecrate myself,**



that they also may be sanctified in truth. (20) "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, (21) **that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us,** so that the world may believe that you have sent me. (22) **The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one,** (23) **I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one,** so that the world may know that you sent me **and loved them even as you loved me.** (24) Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me **because you loved me before the foundation of the world.** (25) O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. (26) **I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."**

26 verses...73 propositions (statements, subject matter to be encountered)

He prays to His Father

1. For those given to Him: the Apostles (perhaps others of the close group?)
2. For those who will believe in Jesus through their message...you, me!

...notice theology coming before practice. Notice the word "AS"

Truth before application.

This relationship effects us in like manner...

Matthew 6:10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth **as** it is in heaven.

Heaven...(better yet, God comes down into our world...our lives...our hearts! Emmanuel, God with us!

Ephesians 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just **as** in Christ God forgave you.

Colossians 3:13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive **as** the Lord forgave you.

Ephesians 5:22 Wives, submit to your husbands **as** to the Lord.

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just **as** Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her



Our Genuine Christian Community and Relational life is found in God! His genuine love for Himself and the vibrant life He is...becomes ours, in Christ, and by faith alone.

2 Corinthians 3:12-18 Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. **(13)** We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away. **(14)** But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. **(15)** Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. **(16)** But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

Are you A Christian? Is Jesus in you by His Spirit?
Has He made the way for you to get back to the life of God?
Like God...like His people!

(17) Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. **(18)** And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Conclusion:

The Genuine Christian Community and Relational Vitality of HCC is only possible because:

1. This is what God is!
2. Jesus has done what is necessary to bring us to God
 - A. He bore the wrath of God upon Himself
 - B. He forgives sin
 - C. He gives new (resurrection) life by the Spirit

AMEN!

Let's partake of His broken body and shed blood!

ENDNOTES

ⁱ **Bible Question:** What does the Bible mean when it says Jesus is the only begotten Son?

Bible Answer: The expression "only begotten" is a poorly translated Greek word. This word actually means "unique," "only," or "only one of its' kind." This expression is found in the familiar passage,

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. (NASB)
John 3:16

Meaning. The Greek word for "only begotten" is MONOGENES. It is a compound word made of two other Greek words MONOS meaning "only" and GENOS meaning "kind or race." If we combine the words we get "only kind" or "unique."

Scriptural Example. Most of us are familiar with Abraham and his eight sons: Ishmael (Gen. 16:15), Issac (Gen. 21:3) and six other sons by Keturah (Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah, Gen. 25:1-2). Issac was not Abraham's first born son, but he was Abraham's special son (Gen. 17:19), being the promised one from God. Now turn to Hebrews 11:17,

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, "IN ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS SHALL BE CALLED."
(NASB) Hebrews 11:17-18

Notice that Isaac is called "only begotten." Was Isaac Abraham's only son? No! He had eight sons. The Greek word has been misunderstood and poorly translated. It does not mean he was born. The Greek word means "unique" or "one and only." Some of the newer Bible translations such as the New Century Version, New International Version, and the New Living Translation are now using the correct wording. Here is the NIV's wording,

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (NIV) John 3:16

Conclusion: Jesus is the one and only Son of God - not created and not made. And since the expression "[Son of God](#)" was an ancient expression meaning that Jesus was and is God, Jesus is the one and only God. He is the eternal One!

ⁱⁱ [1] DEU 6:4 Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord. 1CO 8:4 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God by one. 6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

[2] 1TH 1:9 For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God. JER 10:10 But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting King.

[3] JOB 11:7 Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? 8 It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? 9 The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. 26:14 Lo, these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?

[4] JOH 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

[5] 1TI 1:17 Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

[6] DEU 4:15 Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: 16 Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female. JOH 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. LUK 24:39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

[7] ACT 14:11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. 15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein.

[8] JAM 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. MAL 3:6 For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

[9] 1KI 8:27 But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded? JER 23:23 Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? 24 Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.

[10] PSA 90:2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. 1TI 1:17 Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

[11] PSA 145:3 Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.

[12] GEN 17:1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. REV 4:8 And

the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

[13] ROM 16:27 To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.

[14] ISA 6:3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. REV 4:8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

[15] PSA 115:3 But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.

[16] EXO 3:14 And God said unto Moses, I Am That I Am: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you.

[17] EPH 1:11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

[18] PRO 16:4 The Lord hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil. ROM 11:36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

[19] 1JO 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. 16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

[20] EXO 34:6 And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, 7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

[21] HEB 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

[22] NEH 9:32 Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day. 33 Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly.

[23] PSA 5:5 The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity. 6 Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.

[24] NAH 1:2 God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. 3 The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. EXO 34:7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

[25] JOH 5:26 For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.

[26] ACT 7:2 And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran.

[27] PSA 119:68 Thou art good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes.

[28] 1TI 6:15 Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. ROM 9:5 Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.

[29] ACT 17:24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; 25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.

[30] JOB 22:2 Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? 3 Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?

[31] ROM 11:36 For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

[32] REV 4:11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. 1TI 6:15 Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. DAN 4:25 That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. 35 And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

[33] HEB 4:13 Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

[34] ROM 11:33 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! 34 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? PSA 147:5 Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.

[35] ACT 15:18 Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. EZE 11:5 And the Spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and said unto me, Speak; Thus saith the Lord; Thus have ye said, O house of Israel: for I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them.

[36] PSA 145:17 The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. ROM 7:12 Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.

[37] REV 5:12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. 13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. 14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

[38] (Traditionally, I John 5:7 is placed here, but we have, for obvious reasons, omitted it in our online edition) MATT 3:16-17 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* MATT 28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. II COR 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

[39] JOHN 1:14,18 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

[40] JOHN 15:26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me. GAL 4:6 And Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.