

The Power of Biblical Community  
2 Corinthians 3:16-18  
(Grace, February 7, 2010)

## I. Introduction

[Much of the material in this message was taken from the work of Tod Bolsinger and his book, *It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian*.]

Play the U2 song, "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For."

What are some of your thoughts about this song?

Why are there so many Christians who, if they were honest, would say, "I still haven't found what I'm looking for?"

What are you looking for? What do you want at the deepest core of your being?

Over the next few weeks, I would like to share what I would *propose* we are all looking for.

I believe that one of things we are really looking for is to be **accepted** just as we are and then to **become** all we are meant to be.

We want to belong to a community that welcomes us in all our pain and brokenness and helps us to be healed and transformed into more than we ever imagined.

Tod Bolsinger in his book, *It Takes a Church to Raise a Christian* says, "...the change we most yearn for is available to us only through the Triune God who transforms his people within the divine community, the church."

The problem is that while we all want to be accepted, we are not often very accepting.

We want (and need) to be loved, but we are not very loving.

We know we need to change, but are unwilling to pay the price associated with genuine transformation.

We come to God and to church with a lot of expectations that we will receive the above, but we are often not willing to make the necessary changes to enter into all that God has for us.

We want to write the script of our own life, and the idea that we must surrender our story, our lives, to God's greater story as presented in the Bible is a difficult for us.

But even more challenging is the idea that this surrender of our lives to God is mediated by a community of fallen people we frankly don't want getting in our way and meddling with our own hopes and dreams.

So, this idea of being accepted for who we are and then becoming all that we were created to be touches on our deepest yearnings, but is not that easy to attain.

And so for most people the song plays on, “I still haven’t found what I’m looking for.”

In light of all this, I want to look at three concepts over the next few weeks and see how they apply to our lives. I believe that if we are willing to open our hearts to what I will share, it will certainly help us find what we are looking for.

What are these three concepts that I believe are so critical to our lives?

1. God as Trinity
2. The church as community
3. The goal of humanity is transformation

## II. The Power of Biblical Community

Let me briefly introduce these today and we will explore them in a little more depth over the next three weeks.

### A. God as **Trinity**

*“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Corinthians 13:14, NLT)*

*“God the Father knew you and chose you long ago, and his Spirit has made you holy. As a result, you have obeyed him and have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 1:2, NLT)*

I can not overemphasize how critical it is to understand God as Trinity.

Because I will go into more depth about this later, I will limit my comments to this: we do not worship some vague God or higher power.

Our faith is not in some celestial force or being.

It is not in some Santa Claus god, the big man upstairs, or anything else of our own imaginations.

If you want to find what you are looking for, you must come to know and put your absolute trust in God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We do not believe in Jesus alone, because we need more than a redeemer/savior. We do not believe in the Father/Creator alone, because we need more than a ruler/parent. We do not believe in the Spirit alone, because we need more than a comforter/guidance counselor.

We need the triune God of the Scriptures who is all that I just stated and so much more!

Jesus said we were to make disciples and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19)

Understanding God as Trinity is also vital to understanding true biblical community.

## B. The Church as **Community**

After someone comes to Christ, you often hear the evangelists say that it will help people grow if they find a “Bible-believing church.” But the idea of finding a church is often presented like a car dealer would present the choosing of various options when buying a car.

Many are tempted to say, “I’ll take Jesus, but not the church.”

But what do the Scriptures teach? “...*repent of your sins, turn to God, and be baptized...*” (Acts 2:38, NLT)

Yes, we must begin with faith in Christ, but then we are to be baptized.

Baptism has a variety of important meanings associated with it, and one of them is the fact that we are baptized into the body of Christ. We become a part of the biblical community.

*“But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.”* (1 Corinthians 12:13, NLT)

The Scriptures teach over and over that we are to put our trust in Christ and then join with His people. We are to know God, who in His triune nature is community, and become a part of His community here on earth.

Biblical community is not just a place of shared experiences. It is not polite conversation at the monthly potluck or time spent at a Christian camp.

Biblical community is a living reality that is filled with the very Spirit of God. In true biblical community the triune God dwells and draws others into relationship with Himself and with one another.

Biblical community is God’s tool upon the earth to see that each one of us becomes more and more like Jesus Christ, and then together we are a witness to Christ.

## C. Goal of Humanity is **Transformation**

The purpose of God for humanity is the whole-life transformation of every person into the likeness of the triune God **through** the divine community.

*“But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. 17 For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.” (2 Corinthians 3:16-18, NLT)*

This is the work of the Holy Spirit!

The purpose of God’s plan is not just that you would make it to heaven, but that you would become like Christ.

*“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son...” (Romans 8:29, NIV)*

### III. Application

Today, I want to extend to you an invitation.

Come on in and join the family for dinner.

I understand that we are dysfunctional at times and I wish that as a whole we did a better job of expressing the reality of God to the world and to one another.

But deep within me I know that (in the words of Tod Bolsinger), “the church – that messy bunch of quasi-hypocritical, well-intentioned, and mostly off-key do-gooders, is Christ in the world today. There is no Jesus here but us.”

And we are being challenged by a world that “still can’t find what it’s looking for.”

We need to let go of Christianity lite and start eating real food. No more salad bar Christianity where we pick and choose what we like about Jesus.

Jesus says, “Come, eat and be satisfied” – but to do so you need to sit down at the table.

Will you come and **sit down** with the community today?