

**Understanding Community** | This all starts with a similar foundation – something that draws people together. For some, they'll gather around one unified cause (i.e. Medicine, Poverty, and Education) But for us at CBC, we unify our cause around the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The biblical commands of how the church ought to run aren't random. They are given because of something bigger – something that defines the purpose of its members. Paul writes in Colossians 3:12 "as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, do this..."

What does real community really look like? I'm glad you asked. Well, we said first off this church community is NOT about you and what you like. We're NOT here to make you awesome or to make you feel good about you. Sorry, not at this church at least. This community is circled around the fact that on our best day, we're broken, hopeless, sinners...and so we need someone to save us from ourselves. For some reason we always eat the food out of the trash rather than waiting for the meal to cook. We need Jesus to help us...oh man, do we need him. So yeah, because of this fact we come open, honest, and with humility. We don't pretend to have it all figured out. Actually do you remember John 4? The woman at the well is so desperate for healing that she goes against all cultural norms just to find him. Jarius in Luke 8 drops his high ranking authority to find the only man that can heal. So it is with us. We follow the example of Acts 19 and we come confessing and divulging our practices. It's the first step of genuine community – a sense of open, honesty, and grittiness.

But what else? I think if we really understand that Jesus is enough and that he's what we're after...we follow how he lived and what he taught. If we are truly following Jesus then the light is in us (we see differently) and we love our brothers/sisters and our hearts are moved to reach out to our neighbors. And this is much more than your last name and the next door...actually Luke 10 tells us that our neighbors are anyone that is in need. And it makes sense because if Jesus has really changed our hearts...then we can't help but to extend that love to others. So we try to live out the book of Acts and care for, love on, and share with everyone who is in need. We share our lives with them, encourage them, rebuke them when they're headed off in the wrong, life-robbing direction. We constantly die to ourselves and do all that we can for the sake of our family's growth. So who's our community?

- I. **Internal:** "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need..." Acts 2:42-46.

"Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, and serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality." Romans 12:9-12

**How?:** So we try to live this out within our youth group. And I think practically it's easier than anyone thinks...but the problem is that we're selfish and we're lazy. But you want community to really happen here? Live this stuff out with other people. Yeah...get out of

your room and off facebook and invest your life in someone else. I promise you it'll challenge you more than you know. You'll soon find out how selfish and prideful you really are. Open up to your fellow youth – go “hey look...this is me. This is what I'm dealing with right now and I need your help and prayers.” Maybe you need to ask someone for advice? Here's an easy way to start this...go support them. Drop by their work and just say hi. Buy them a birthday card, go to watch their games or concerts. It's not the hardest thing in the world...but it does cost right? But you can't grow community if you're always invested in yourself. Nor can you attend church once a week and expect community to just happen. And it's not up to the youth pastor...it's everyone playing their part and trying to do this. From 6<sup>th</sup> graders to the leaders and teachers. Esp. the teachers...I mean you guys teach this stuff...you need to show that it's true by living it out.

- II. **Local:** “To the church of God that is in...To the Churches in...” They are the ones in an area that have been redeemed through Jesus' blood, forgiven of their trespasses. For us, it's Chinese Baptist Church on 900 Brogden.

The local church is also within the walls of CBC. Although we need to build community within the youth group, we also need to be aware of community within our own church. I think for too long each group in the church has become their own independent entity. Like there's the Chinese congregation and English congregation...and outside of joint services, there's hardly any interaction that takes place. Why is this important? Because the church needs to run in one direction, not 10948 different ones. And when one group in the church goes their own way...then there's always collateral damage.

**How are we doing?** Honestly, we're doing pretty poor on this front. We congregate together during lunch and any time there is a lull between services, we're right there with the people we're comfortable with. And I think that's the main point. We hang out with those who we're comfortable with and we don't see those in church as people we need to make and build relationships with. It's a pride issue. It holds the attitude of “I don't need to get out of my comfort zone...they need to come here and talk and fellowship with me. Don't you know how busy I am?”

**Killers:** Facebook, Texting, and Video games. We've gotten so used to talking with others indirectly that it gets awkward talking to people face to face. At the root of these devices, if not redeemed by Jesus, because a pride-induced idol factory. We use it to make much of ourselves, gossip, not encourage, avoid confrontation...leads to a false sense of community.

**How to get better?** I think it's a little easier than we've made it. I think it just takes a little effort on our part. Wait, before you go out there and just mass meet people...I need to tell you about the “why” again. Jesus saves sinners like us and therefore we have nothing to boast about. Sinners then get together locally within a church to celebrate what Jesus did. And so that's your foundation – Jesus. We don't meet people and function as a “Church” because it's the fun thing to do...we come together because of the cause of Christ. Ok...how

to get better at this? I think it's time for us to finally make the effort to talk, plan, and missionally live together with the members of this church.

- III. **Universal:** This is the church that Jesus has come to redeem – His people. It is the same people that God has promised Abraham that will one day be a multitude that glorifies the name and renown of God. This community is the universal church of Jesus Christ.

This last community is made up of anyone that belongs to the body of Christ. We may look different, think different, but at the end of the day...those who have been chosen by God, commits to following Jesus, and lives by His word belong to this community. Why? Because again this is not about us and what we did – rather it is about Jesus and about what He did. And because his power is bigger than just within our local body...the community extends to every region of the world.

**What it looks like:** CBC is made up of mostly Chinese folk right? But right down the street there's Memorial Drive Baptist, Grace Evangelical Presbyterian, and First Baptist. Do they do things differently there? You bet. Would we disagree on certain theological stances and philosophical things? You know it. But at the end, we stand together on the foundation of Jesus Christ. And here's the tough one...if you're not jiving well with the way we do things and you honestly want to grow...then please, for the sake of your depth go to another church that might be able to help you get there...and please plug in there. But we don't stand here and say that we're the only church. We're not! We do things the way Christ has led us to do things and we're trying with all of our abilities to get there.

**What do we do?** Well...what we do is we partner up with other churches in the area and around the world. CBC is only so big...but imagine if we could partner with other like-minded believers and as a whole go reach the world? Imagine what it would be like if there were youth from First Baptist, Second Baptist, Memorial Drive, and CBC and we put all the of the Memorial HS students together and told them, "Ok, you guys look differently but your ultimate goal is Jesus...so go reach your schools." We could do things so much more efficiently and effectively. So we're going to force this issue – we're going to try to put as many different Christians in your path so that you have to understand that heaven IS NOT filled with only Chinese people. And that you have to learn that community is a LOT bigger than these walls here at CBC.

- IV. **Challenge:** Community happens when it rallies around something. Our 'something' is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If you are playing that game then when we make it difficult to become a member or when we require things from you...you bail, you stop attending when there's a choice between church and school or church and social life. And I'm not saying don't have a social life...I'm just challenging the way you view this walk. Do you really understand this gospel?

Have you been neglecting fellowship with other believers? Do you think that this "church" is all about you and how you feel? Are you actively or passively attending church? Do you

belong anywhere? Or are you just going here and there and not really joining? Do you know the people in the church? Do you actively seek out other brothers and sisters outside of this wall? But imagine what it could look like...imagine if Jesus becomes our focal point and the Holy Spirit guides our speech, thoughts, and hearts. Perhaps we are really just rehearsing for heaven.