Introduction
“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:34-35

Our most powerful witness to the world, next to the Word of God, is our love for one another.

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 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. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” John 17:20-23

Jesus prayed that we would be an authentic community of believers who love one another and shine like lights in a dark world.
“Authentic community is extraordinarily powerful, but extraordinarily rare.” Chip Ingram

How do we experience authentic community?

I. AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY IS BASED ON REAL LOVE. VERSE 9

“Love must be sincere” – without hypocrisy.
Stop pretending. Don’t wear a mask.

II. AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY IS BASED ON REAL COMMITMENT VERSE 10

If we are going to be real, we also need to feel safe.
We need to feel that we are among friends.
Our love must be pure.
“Be devoted to one another... honor one another.”

Relationships take time to develop.

What a joy it is to go through life with like minded believers who love us and care about us!

We share joys together.

We share sorrows together.

III. AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY IS BASED ON REAL SPIRITUAL LIFE  VERSES 11-12

In a church that is alive there is

- Enthusiasm
- Energy and excitement
- People are using their gifts to serve the Lord
- Joy
- Patience and endurance
- A dependence upon God in prayer.

You won’t find authentic community in a dead church.

You won’t find authentic community in a critical or divisive church.

You can see the difference when people enjoy coming to church and God is at work.
IV. AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY IS BASED ON REAL CONCERN AND GENEROUS LIVING.

VERSE 13

“Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.”

Our first priority in care giving is within the church.

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” Galatians 6:10

Our care for one another is a powerful witness to the world.

Open your home to others. Use it as a place for ministry.

Conclusion

Theme Song from Cheers

Making your way in the world today
Taking everything you’ve got.
Taking a break from all your worries
Sure would help a lot.
Wouldn’t you like to get away?

Sometimes you want to go
Where everybody knows your name,
And they’re always glad you came.
You wanna be where you can see
Our troubles are all the same.
You wanna go where everybody knows your name.
An authentic Christian community takes

- Real love
- Real commitment
- Real spiritual life
- Real concern and generous living.

Am I doing my part?