

When bad things happen in this world, people look for the presence of God. The way God designed His presence to be known is through a community of faith called the church. When God's people live like the family they are called to be, they reveal the presence of the Father.

In His book "Reaching for the Invisible God," Phillip Yancey tells about a man he met who asked about another of his books, "Where is God when it hurts?" the man said he didn't have time to read the book and wondered if Yancey could summarize it for him. After a moment, Yancey replied, "I suppose I'd have to answer your question with another question: Where is the church when it hurts?"

In other words, the church is God's presence on earth. If the church is doing its job to care for those who hurt, then nobody will ask, "Where is God?" When the world sees those who profess to be God's people taking care of the hurting people in this world, they will know that God is there. It's only when the church fails to represent God adequately that people wonder why God hasn't shown up.

- I. Community requires Unity
 - Unity is at the heart of community
 - Unity provides focus, purpose, and direction
 - In the church, our focus is Jesus Christ; our unity comes from our common commitment to Him
 - Unity means we don't focus on WHAT we know but WHO we know. We can have different views and preferences on methods and means, but we are united around the single unifying purpose of the church: fulfilling the Lord's commands
- II. Community reacts with Sympathy – Vs 8
 - A community that lives effectively together is one that lives sympathetically – with compassion for one another.
- III. Community responds like Family
 - Loving one another within the body of Christ is a high priority for Peter. Three times in this letter – here and in 1:22 & 2:17 – Peter admonishes the church to "love as brothers," to love like a family loves
- IV. Community reaches out in Sincerity
 - "Tenderhearted" toward one another – a word echoed by Paul in Eph 4:32
 - To have hearts that are moved to embrace the suffering and needs of another person
 - See: John 11:35, Matt 23:37
- V. Community reinforces Humility
 - When you live in community, in a family, you don't always get your own way. It takes humility to yield to another person, to give up your point of view, to be flexible, to compromise.

Ques: Read I Cor 12:20-26

1. By what two corporate actions can the body of Christ display its community? (vs 26)

2. When was the last time you suffered with another believer in his or her time of suffering?

Close: When Peter wrote that believers should "love as brothers," he used a single word to express that idea: PHILADELPHOS – love of one's brother. Philadelphos is a compound noun made of two other Greek words: PHILOS means "beloved, dear, friendly," and ADELPHOS means "brother." This means to love with brotherly love as one would love a family member.

Happy Studying