# Marks of the church: An everyday community

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My friends, if anyone is detected in a transgression, you who have received the Spirit should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness. Take care that you yourselves are not tempted. 2Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. 3For if those who are nothing think they are something, they deceive themselves. 4All must test their own work; then that work, rather than their neighbor’s work, will become a cause for pride. 5For all must carry their own loads.

6Those who are taught the word must share in all good things with their teacher.

7Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow. 8If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit. 9So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up. 10So then, whenever we have an opportunity, let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith. [[1]](#footnote-1)

This week’s “mark” or “sign” or “evidence” of a true church seems very simple: The true church is an everyday community. This is what Andre Gingerich Stoner says:

“Church happens Sunday morning, but it also happens Friday night and Wednesday noon and Tuesday morning. Church happens in the church building, but because church is a community knit together by Jesus, it also happens over the dinner table, at the Ten Thousand Villages store, in the neighborhood and over the phone.”

Pretty simple, right? So, we *could* just stop here.

But we won’t.

Can I just mention what a strong contrast this is to the way some theologies think of the true church? Some say that the true marks of the church is where the sacraments are rightly celebrated and the Scripture is rightly preached — basically, things that happen during the worship service. Those are good things indeed! But are they enough? One way to think of this is how we might celebrate the sacraments rightly — that is, things such as communion and baptism and weddings. Don’t we have to be thinking about these things *outside* the church walls in order to be ready? And the same thing with the Scriptures — how can we hear the word rightly preached unless we are training our ears to listen outside of the church walls?

But the real reason we believe that the church is really an everyday thing is that the Scripture tells us it is, by precept and by example.

Have you ever noticed how often the expression “one another” occurs in Scripture? Can you think of some examples?

* Be devoted to one another in love.
* Honor one another above yourselves.
* Live in harmony with one another.
* Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.
* Let us stop passing judgment on one another.
* Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.
* Instruct one another.
* Greet one another with a holy kiss.
* Agree with one another.
* Encourage one another.
* Serve one another humbly in love.
* Be patient, bearing with one another in love.
* Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.
* Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit.
* Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.
* In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.
* Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone.
* Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.
* And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.
* Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.
* Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another.
* Don't grumble against one anohter.
* Love one another deeply, from the heart.
* Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.
* All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another.
* Love one another (7 times in John's letters!)

Let’s look at today’s epistle — in some ways, just an ordinary, everyday part of Paul’s letters.

1. Let’s make a list of the things that we are admonished to do that requires us to do *together*, that is, things we can’t do on our own.
2. Consider the “you reap what you sow” passage. We usually think of this as an *individual* thing — something you might see in an old-fashioned cross-stich on the wall. But do you think that Paul meant it this way?
3. Notice, if we haven’t seen it already, that we are to *bear one another burdens* and also that we must *carry our own burden*. These are the same words in Greek. (What does Barb’s Bible say?)

Here’s a discipline I would like us each to take up — that, at least once a week, we pray for everyone who regularly attends Kalamazoo Mennonite Fellowship. Alternatively, that, at least once a week, we contact someone from the church. (Pass out signup list for names, addresses, and phone numbers).

1. *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Ga 6:1–10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)