



## **Theme: Simply Irresistible - “Irresistible Community”**

### **Weekly Memory Verses:**

<sup>17</sup> *This is my command: love each other.* –John 15:17

**Spiritual Formation or Family Activity Ideas for the Week:** One of the ways the apostle Paul talks about Christian community is by comparing it to a human body. Every different part has a unique gift and ability. That’s true for each one of us in a community of faith, and it’s important for us to share our gifts with one another. We all have different gifts, and sometimes it can be easier to see the abilities others have rather than our own. As a family or group of friends, take a few minutes to recognize and celebrate the gifts you see in one another. Start with one person and have everyone else share at least one way they see and experience that person as special, important, gifted, or valuable to the family or friend group. Then, do that same thing for each person in the group. (Some people are more comfortable with this than others, but it can be a really cool way to celebrate and show love to the people in our community.)

**Monday, October 25** – Read Acts 2:42-47. This passage is often looked at as one of the first pictures we have of the early church. Though the rest of Acts goes through a lot of the struggles the church had, Christians through the ages have found this to be a compelling image of what the church *could* look like.

 As we consider the idea of Irresistible Community, what parts of the description of this early Christian Community do you find most attractive? Are there attributes of this community that bring forth feelings of discomfort or uncertainty? How do you think this description is relevant to us today? Is it something we should seek to recreate, or is it instructive in other ways?

 Verse 46 talks about people gathering in both the temple and their homes. Many of us are familiar with experiencing Christian community in the “temple” context by gathering at church for worship, classes, and events. How have you found Christian community in the context of the home? What might it look like to approach our faith through the lens of both “temple” and “home” experiences?

**Prayer:** *Lord, I know that following you is something that I can’t do on my own. Being part of a faith community is essential. Help me to follow you in a way that honors you and welcomes others. Amen.*

**Tuesday, October 26** – Read Philippians 2:1-11. Several readings this week will include instructions that Paul is giving to early Christian communities. That’s what’s happening in verse 1-4. Then, in verses 5-11 we have what is known as the “Kenosis Hymn,” which comes from the Greek word for “to make empty.” This may have been one of the earliest hymns sung by the first followers of Jesus, and it continues to remind us of Christ’s character today.

 Paul begins by asking a series of questions about the experiences of those in the faith community. Have you ever experienced encouragement, comfort, fellowship, tenderness, and/or compassion in the context of Christian community? What might it look like for that to serve as the foundation for “loving one another, and working together” as Paul talks about?

*(Meditation Moments – October 23-24, 2021 – For more, go to [www.summitdurango.org](http://www.summitdurango.org))*

👤 The beginning of the Kenosis Hymn starts by acknowledging that Jesus was God, and it continues by describing how Jesus expressed his divine nature. Though neither you nor I are God, how might we consider giving of ourselves for the good of others?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, I am inexpressibly grateful for your generosity of self, and I ask by the power of the Holy Spirit that you would continue to form that attitude in me. Amen.*

**Wednesday, October 27** – Read Romans 12:4-21. Again today we’re reading some of Paul’s instructions to an early Christian community, this time in Rome. This is one of several times Paul uses the metaphor of a human body to communicate some important ideas about being in faith communities. One key idea that emerges early in this passage is the notion of mutuality and interdependence (which, importantly, is neither independence nor codependence). Paul uses the phrase, “we all belong to each other.” What does this mean to you? What do you think this might look like?

👤 In verses 6-8 Paul talks about us all sharing freely the gifts God has given us. If you haven’t yet, now would be a good time to try the Spiritual Formation/Family Activity. As you hear the ways those around you experience your gifts, how does that make you feel? How might you continue to share those gifts? Are there new and creative outlets for some of your gifts to be shared? Maybe you’re a really gifted drummer, and you could start playing in the worship band? 😊

👤 There are a couple points in this passage where Paul talks about choosing to do what is good. (vs. 9 & 21) One thing we often talk about at Summit is that loving others isn’t always about our feelings (though those are wonderful), but it is always about choosing to do the loving thing whether we feel like it or not. One way to grow in our ability to choose the loving thing when we don’t feel like it is to actively choose it when we do. Today, look for a way to choose the loving thing when it’s easy and reflect on it a bit. Allow it to strengthen your ability to choose love even when it’s difficult.

**Prayer:** *Jesus, you always chose to love people, even when it was unfathomably difficult and cost you everything. As I receive the love you have for me, help me to choose love as often as I can today. Amen.*

**Thursday, October 28** – Read Psalm 133. (Don’t worry. It’s short!) One of the themes seen throughout Paul’s teaching to early Christian communities is that of living in harmony, and this isn’t a new idea. Psalm 133 is a brief poem reflecting on the beauty of experiencing harmony in our communities.

👤 One of the images used in this Psalm is anointing oil. Such oil would have been a very precious, valuable, and luxurious thing. In the context of anointing a priest (such as Aaron) it would also have represented an outpouring of God’s gifting, similar to what we read about in Romans yesterday. Anointing oil isn’t something we often encounter today. What do you think is something we experience today that could convey a similar idea?

👤 The second image is “the dew from Mount Hermon,” and this is another image that can be better understood with a little background. This could be seen as a light rain in a place that had plenty of moisture and was agriculturally fertile, so it’s an image of life, abundance, and prosperity. Here in Durango, we certainly understand the importance of good rainfall! When you think of experiencing refreshing and rejuvenating rain, what does that bring to mind for life in a community?

**Prayer:** *Oh God, we know that living in harmony with one another is a gift from you. Help me to not only receive it as a gift but to also participate in cultivating peace and harmony in our community. Amen.*

**Friday, October 29** – Read John 13:34-35. Almost all of what we think about, read about, and talk about when it comes to living in Christian community is rooted in Jesus’ command for us to “Love each other.” This command from Jesus comes up multiple times in the gospel of John and in other parts of John’s writing. Love for one another is the foundation for all of the instructions that Paul and others give to early faith communities. And this passage takes the commandment of love a step further. It’s not just about

(Meditation Moments for October 16-17, 2021 – For more, go to [www.summitdurango.org](http://www.summitdurango.org))

how we treat one another inside the Christian community. It's this love that makes the community irresistible and will "prove to the world that you are [Jesus'] disciples."

 Earlier this week we thought a little bit about what it means to love people. In this passage we see Jesus saying that we are to love each other "just as I have loved you." What do you think it means to love others in the way that Jesus loves us?

 Jesus says, "Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." Does this mean that the opposite is also true? If we don't love others, does it prove that we're not really following Jesus? None of us are perfect, and we'll all struggle to love one another well over and over. It's worthwhile to ask ourselves if we're growing in love. "Am I more loving than I was a year ago? Five years ago?" We trust that it's the Holy Spirit and God's timing at work in our journey of growth, but we can still seek to live into this command of Jesus. The world around us is paying attention.

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, you are perfectly loving, and I often struggle to love others well. Still, I trust your power to continue to shape me and mold me into your likeness. Help me to be open to how you want to work in me today to make me a more loving person. Amen.*

**Saturday, October 30** – Read Matthew 5:14-16. Today we're looking at some more of Jesus' teaching.

Jesus, the light of the world, is passing that identity onto his followers, and that includes you and me. An observation about light is that light is not so much the thing we see as the thing by which we see. Light is not itself the thing we look at. Rather, it illumines the world around us.

 Jesus coming as the light of the world reveals a lot of things. Jesus has the power to illuminate all of creation in the fullness of its restoration and redemption. As people come into our Christian community, what sort of light do they experience? Do they feel like their mistakes, failures, or flaws are highlighted? Or do they feel like they can see themselves in a new light? Can we all see ourselves in the light of being made new and experiencing new life? If we are the light of the world, what gets highlighted by our illuminating presence?

**Prayer:** *Jesus the Light of the World, you light us up with life, love, and freedom in ways that continue to amaze us no matter how long we've known you. Continue to shine through us into the world as we participate in your work of restoration that is already happening all around us. Amen.*