

The Followers of Jesus Should be in True Community

Skip Moen shows from linguistics and his reference to Paul's letter to the Philippians that the followers of Jesus in the 1st Century were in true community together. They were of one accord, although individually unique, full of compassion and hospitality, and fully relational.

Philippians 2:2 (NASB) - make my joy **complete** by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

"Complete – So what do you think? Is Paul's wish being fulfilled in you? Is he filled to the last drop by your actions and attitudes? It's interesting that Yeshua's remark about being filled to overflowing carries the same meaning. Yeshua promises life abundantly. Paul tells us that the way to have that abundance is to maintain the same mind, love, spirit and purpose. You can't have the abundant life by yourself. Abundance is a cooperative, communal concept. Want to know if you're living the abundant life? Ask yourself if others are blessed by your spirit, your purpose or your benevolence.

Let's take a look at the words Paul uses to describe this abundant life, this life that makes his deepest desire come true. First, there's phroneo (mind). This is a word that is about the disposition of the inner person. It's not the Greek nous. It's not about knowledge or intellect. It's about your willingness to comprehend. It's about the insight you have received from the Spirit. It's about a godly approach to life. It's about a longing for true community and the willingness to bend in order to get it. It's about hospitality and compassion toward others. It's about the code, the way you live, the things you hope for, the dreams you share. "Same mind" has very little to do with what you think you know.

"Same love". What's that? Same as what? Same as the love everyone around me talks about? No, I don't think so. If I really want the same love to flow through my life, then I have to exhibit the love God demonstrated on my behalf. I have to show benevolence toward others at cost to myself. You'll notice the NASB translation suggests "maintaining" this same love. The Greek verb is echo (to have) but Hebrew thought doesn't have a word for "have". In Hebrew, the basic condition of life is relational. So the proper understanding is "to be to", not "to have". I don't own this love. I exhibit it in the way that I am toward another. Love exists in the action. Without the action, it isn't there. I love because He loved. I mimic Him. Then I have the same love. You and I are measured by the standard of Yeshua's obedience. Country Western music has nothing to do with it.

"United in spirit" is the Greek sympsychoi. It means to be in full accord with one another. Does that mean we must agree? No. It means we share the same hunger to see God's Kingdom come on earth. We have the same goal, the same hope, the same passion. But you might dress differently, speak differently, pray differently. Does it really matter? If we hunger and thirst for righteousness, are we not of the same spirit? Do we not serve the same Lord, worship the same God? Share with me the greatest longings of your heart and we will see if we are really that far apart.

Finally, "one purpose". But in Greek it says hen phronountes—one thinking. Hey, this is the same word Paul started with, phroneo. Apparently it wasn't enough to

*say it once. Back we go to disposition, attitude, willingness, insight and wisdom. A double dose of phroneo is a good thing. It's like closing the envelope on a gift card. Now put it in the mail and let someone enjoy the present."*¹

Laurence
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