

It's the time of year when people start talking football. Your favorite college team is one week away from playing their first game of the season. That team already has the attitude that it's "us versus them". Every game, all season long, that's the attitude they play with. It's "us versus them". Do what it takes to win, play together, play with a singular focus to beat the other team.

Sports always involves that "us vs. them" attitude. Individually it's "me versus my opponent". That's the competition. It's challenging yourself to be better than everyone else. But that "us versus them" or "me versus them" mentality can take over our lives. School becomes me versus the teacher or another student. At home it's me versus my spouse. Work is me versus the boss or my coworkers. Even in church it can become me versus them, yes versus no, school versus no school, spend versus save. Sides are taken, teams are formed, and any fellowship or support seems to disappear.

Watch professional and college athletes right after a game. They shake hands, greet each other, laugh and smile. Fierce competitors one second, the next old friends. They know when to turn it on and off. There's actually a fellowship among players of most sports. They can have the "me versus them" attitude on the field and still get along as friends and support each other after the game. As Jesus was nearing the end of his life he brought his disciples to a place where they would see it wasn't about them. It wasn't going to be them versus the Romans or them versus each other. This moment was all about Jesus. In the gospel he lets them know about what we have made our fifth and final mission vision component. Christ tells us we are to...

Make use of Christian fellowship and support

The golfer's best friend on the course is the caddy. That's the person carrying the bag. It's the person giving distance to the hole and making club recommendations. They're right next to the golfer for most of the round. That is until the actual shot. Only the golfer swings the club and hits the ball. The caddy stands to the side. Jesus had been with his disciples for three years but that was all changing. It was time for them to step to the side and let Jesus do for them what they could not do for themselves. He would go to the cross for them. They needed to step to the side; this one Jesus had to do alone.

Do you think any of the disciples wondered why Jesus asked them to come along but then didn't let them help him like they had in the past? Are you mad at someone right now who didn't ask for your help when you were perfectly capable of helping? That can form a grudge, an attitude of "fine, you don't want my help, then you won't get my help any other time either." You're being selfish focusing on your hurt feelings rather than being supportive. It can go the other way too. Something needs doing here at church. You can't believe that no one will step up and help. You're convinced they don't care, not about you, the church, they don't care at all. You're convinced they're all selfish. Aren't we a fellowship, aren't we supposed to show support? Where's your support? The attitude forms, "fine, I won't help them next time they ask me for something at church."

Christ Jesus was in Gethsemane with people he was already in fellowship with. ***"Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.'*** This trip to Gethsemane was to get Jesus ready for suffering. While in this garden his sweat would be like drops of blood. He pleaded with the Father in heaven for another way, but this was it. Jesus was the way, the truth, and the life. He would give people the way to heaven through faith in him. He would pay the sins of the entire world. The disciples, Jesus' friends, his family really, would do nothing. ***"Sit here while I go over there..."*** Jesus would go over there to the cross and pay for your selfish attitudes, your thoughts of repaying hurtfulness with hurtfulness. You will sit here while he goes to the cross and lifts all your sins off you by his grace.

Listen as Jesus calls you into Gethsemane. Not just the garden along with the disciples, but this congregation under the name Gethsemane. He doesn't want you to help; he wants you to be in fellowship. He wants you close enough you can see what he's done for you clearly. There you'll see debts forgiven, relationships healed, and fellowship created. Christ brings us into the bond of Christian fellowship. To make use of that we get close enough, often enough, that we never forget Jesus. We put Jesus first and let him guide our relationships with others. We get encouragement from him to make use of Christian fellowship and support.

I know when I was a little kid I looked up to my dad. I still do. When my dad did something outside I wanted to be there with him. Under the car changing oil, planting the garden, mowing the lawn. I was really young though and couldn't get under the car or push the lawn mower unless it was those little plastic ones. My dad didn't need my help, but I think my dad was happy I was there with him. I supported him by just being with him. Jesus brought his disciples with him to Gethsemane. His disciples couldn't help save the world from sin. They would be Jesus' support just by being with him. He needed their thoughts and prayers. He probably smiled when he came back to them sleeping each time knowing they couldn't do what he was doing, but he was glad they were there anyway.

Being a Christian doesn't put you in an isolation booth. Being in Christian fellowship means the exact opposite. It means being among people, knowing them, and pulling with them. If you're trying to come to church to get isolated or you want to run out after the Amen so you don't learn anything about anybody you're missing the point of fellowship. If you're coming with a "me versus them" attitude or finding clicks with an "us versus them" that's sinful. Thinking that churches, denominations, and church bodies are unimportant or hypocrites so you'll take care of your spiritual needs alone is wrong. You've put yourself further into danger. You've become easy prey for Satan. Without the fellowship of a congregation of believers you're at greater risk of falling away from faith.

Listen as Jesus calls you into Gethsemane. **“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.”** That point of death saves you. Jesus brought you here to save you, to have you close to him, to not add anything but keep watch. It’s all about what he’s doing for you. He’s brought you into fellowship with himself. He’s brought you into that relationship that can’t be broken because it’s based on Christ. He’s saved you by that relationship with him. He’s saved you from those sins you’ve committed while trying to avoid other people even other Christians. He’s saved you from those times you didn’t help when you could have, and when you purposefully avoided offering yourself because you didn’t want to be bothered. You thought fellowship meant nothing, but Christ saved you from that by the cross.

You have a fellowship with Christ Jesus that means everything. Next to you, across from you, in front of you is someone else who has that all important fellowship with Jesus too. That means you both, everyone here has a fellowship with each other. Every Christian is a brother or sister in Christ to you. These are people who need you to keep watch with them. They need you to love them, support them, encourage them, and pull with them to do the work of the congregation. Fellowship won’t work if we split into teams against each other, “us versus them” or “me versus you”. Division in a church like ours means death. Healing only comes through fellowship with Christ. It only comes through each one getting back into the Word of God for motivation to love and support each other. Only through Christ can fellowship that’s broke be fixed. We have that Savior that unites us all into a fellowship so we can make use of Christian fellowship and support.

Imagine trying to be on a team for soccer or baseball and all the players care about is their own individual stats. Or a bunch of players don’t ever come to the practices. Or some players don’t feel that communication with other players on the field is important. Wouldn’t be much of a team, would it? Each part of the mission vision statement means to make us a team, a team of believers all with our hearts focused on Jesus. We practice and grow in grace and faith by being in worship and Bible study. We grow the team by outreach. We communicate with other players through serving and fellowship. Brothers and sisters, we’re a team. Let’s work like a team. Let’s love like a team. Let’s grow in grace and glorify God like the team that Jesus has made us by making use of Christian fellowship and support.