

**May 2, 2021 Tyler Ferguson**  
**Creating Community Series: Without Reservation**

In our series on community, we've talked about what community among Christians looks like. Real Christian community exists with those who love Jesus that can come together with others who love Jesus that are different. Now, we'll look at what kills community. It isn't actually the differences that separate but the way we handle those differences. **Psalm 46:4** *There is a river - its streams delight the city of God.* This is a picture of what Christian community looks like. The river includes all who love Jesus. The streams that feed into that river are all believers with different personalities, preferences, priorities, life experiences, and more. But all flow into the river of Christ's love.

How can we have a thriving community of believers with many differences? **Romans 14** shows us 3 truths to help us as Paul talks about the Roman church. They had differences yet were to be in community together. Today, we have things that cause division within the church. This chapter addresses some of those non-essential differences among those who love Jesus.

This whole chapter boils down to this word - "accept." "Accept" means to incorporate one another into our communities without reservation. Paul is writing to a divided people that were not wanting to associate with each other. So let's learn three ways to live in a thriving community with those who don't believe as we do (on non-essential elements).

1) Loving Jesus can result in different people coming to different conclusions. **Romans 14:6** *He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.* Paul wants them to see that they all love the Lord and yet have different outcomes. Real community insists that two people can love Jesus wholeheartedly and have different opinions.

2) Agree to disagree. **Romans 14:14** *I know and am convinced in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.* This truth is based on what Paul doesn't say. He doesn't tell them how to believe because we know from verse 14 what Paul's position is. Paul's higher goal was that they learn to be a community in spite of differences. Even resolving all differences does not work because there will always be others who don't agree. Agree to disagree and focus on what we have in common. We should have healthy discussions on things that are in conflict as we learn but the real answer is to love one another above those conflicts. The real conflict might be impossible to fix. Paul was not saying that we do not talk about our differences but he was saying stop trying to make yourself right among all others. Sometimes we sacrifice relationships when we have to prove that we are right.

3) Pursue a common purpose. **Romans 14:19** *So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.* **Ephesians 2:14** *For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall.* Real community exists when, despite our differences in opinion or conviction, we rally around Jesus. Jesus is the unifying thread between Christians.

Jesus welcomes and accepts each of us into His family without reservation. We should seek to accept others so that we have this authentic and loving community.

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How can we have a thriving community of believers with many differences?

What are some differences that you have lost community over? Have you been able to rectify that situation?

What is a personal example of gaining or keeping community even with differences?

How hard is it for you to agree to disagree and still love someone?