FREEDOM IN CHRIST

Transforming Discipleship

There's a ~~Place~~ Healthy Culture for You
Transform Retreat
May 6, 2025

Smells Like Freedom in Christ

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary Definition of Culture

1a: the customary **beliefs**, social forms, and material traits of a [racial, religious, or social] group; also, the characteristic features of everyday existence (ie "way of life") shared by people in a place or time

1b: the set of **shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices** that characterizes an institution or organization

1c: the **set of values, conventions, or social practices** associated with a particular field, activity, or social characteristic

1d: the integrated pattern of human knowledge, **belief, and behavior** that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations

Jenni Patron Definition: "Culture is clarity of who we are and how we work together to achieve our mission."

A Generous and Growing Church

Acts 2:42-47 (CSB)

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the
breaking of bread, and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many
wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles. 44 Now all the
believers were together and held all things in common. 45 They sold their
possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need.
46 Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and
broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with joyful and sincere
hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all people. Every day the Lord
added to their number those who were being saved.

What was the 'smell' of the early church in Jerusalem?

The Christian Life

Colossians 3:11-17 (CSB)

[11]In Christ there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all.

[12]Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, [13]bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also are to forgive. [14]Above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. [15]And let the peace of Christ, to which you were also called in one body, rule your hearts. And be thankful. [16]Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. [17]And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Based on this passage, what are we as believers being encouraged to 'smell' like?

Love One Another

- ‘A new command I give you: love **one another**. As I have loved you, so you must love **one another’** (John 13:34).
- By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love **one another**’ (John 13:35).
- My command is this: love **each other** as I have loved you (John 15:12).
- This is my command: love **each other** (John 15:17).
- Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love **one another**, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law (Romans 13:8).
- May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for **each other** and for everyone else, just as ours does for you (1 Thessalonians 3:12).
- Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love **each other** (1Thessalonians 4:9).
- We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the **love all of you have for one another** is increasing (2 Thessalonians 1:3).
- Keep on loving **one another** as brothers and sisters (Hebrews 13:1).
- Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love **one another** deeply, from the heart (1 Peter 1:22).
- Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love **one another**, be compassionate and humble (1 Peter 3:8).
- Above all, love **each other** deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8).
- For this is the message you heard from the beginning: we should love **one another** (1 John 3:11).
- We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love **each other**. Anyone who does not love remains in death (1 John 3:14).
- And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love **one another** as he commanded us (1 John 3:23).

- Dear friends, let us love **one another**, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God (1 John 4:7).
- Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love **one another** (1 John 4:11).
- No **one** has ever seen God; but if we love **one another**, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us (1 John 4:12).
- And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but **one** we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love **one another** (2 John 1:5).

Pause for Thought #1

Questions:

- **How would believing and valuing these verses about loving one another contribute to a healthy culture? Please be specific.**

- **How have you personally experienced agape love within Christian community? Examples could include your family, church, small group, Transform hub etc. Please be specific.**

- **How can you contribute to a loving culture within the people system(s) where God has placed you? Please be specific. Reviewing Colossians 3:11-17 may prove helpful.**

Who We are in Christ Together

- Together we are the family gathering of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:29, John 1:12f).
- Together we are Christ's body and He is our Head (Ephesians 1:22, 4:15f).
- Together we are Christ's body that is filled with His glory (Ephesians 1:23).
- Together we are the place where all conflict can find reconciliation (Ephesians 2:16).
- Together we are a people equipped for works of service (Ephesians 4:12).
- Together we are built up and reach unity and maturity in King Jesus (Ephesians 4:12f).
- Together we are built up in love as we help each other (Ephesians 4:16).
- Together we are the community of Holy Spirit-filled worshipers of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:18-20, Colossians 3:16f).
- Together we are provided and cared for by Christ as members of His Body (Ephesians 5:29).
- Together we are Christ's assembly built by Him on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Matthew 16:18, Ephesians 2:20).
- Together we hold the keys of kingdom authority to be those who proclaim, teach, heal and deliver (Matthew 10:7-8).
- Together we are God's flock gathered together and safe in the Father's hands (John 10:29).
- Together we are the dwelling place of God – Christ in us the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27).
- Together we are the people of God: members of God's family; participants in all God's promises to Israel (Galatians 6:10, Ephesians 2:12, 3:6).
- Together we are God's True Temple, His dwelling place where heaven meets earth, the place for true worship (1 Corinthians 3:16, 2 Corinthians 6:16, John 4:23-24).
- Together we are God's holy priesthood offering sacrifices of ourselves, our praise, our good deeds and our goods (1 Peter 2:5, Romans 12;1, Hebrews 13:15f).
- Together we are witnesses with the risen Lord who is the faithful and true witness (Revelation 3:14).
- Together we are the literal body of Christ and share His mandate to preach the good news, to bind up the broken-hearted and to set captives free. (Isaiah 61:1, Luke 4:18).

THE CORE VALUES OF FICM, USA

1. We believe in the authority of Scripture (2 Timothy 3: 16, 17). The basis for the message and methods of ministry of FICM-USA is the Word of God, the written Word and the Living Word, which should be seen as inseparable. Jesus is the Truth and so is His Word. FICM-USA appreciates the contribution of empirical research, and scientific investigation when the results are interpreted through the grid of Scripture. Science is mankind's attempt to understand natural law. Theology is the Christian's attempt to systematize divine revelation. Science and theology are fallible, but God's Word isn't. FICM-USA is committed to Truth and sound doctrine, but not to any one particular systematic theology and does not see any incongruity between natural law and divine revelation, since both originate in God. All those under the spiritual authority of FICM-USA are to be subject to God's Word and all governing authorities established by God (Romans 13:1-5).

2. We worship God and believe that prayer is our greatest work (John 4:23). Worship is to ascribe and embrace the true attributes of God, both corporately and individually, and then live accordingly. We strive to practice the presence of God and consider prayer our first priority, seeking to know Him and to do His will. We don't try to manipulate God or persuade Him to our point of view. We desire to be on the path that He has chosen for us, and choose to identify with Jesus when He said, "Not my will be done, but Your will be done." We try to bathe everything we do in prayer, not asking God to bless our plans, but submitting to His plans as discerned in prayer. Paul's instruction in Ephesians 6 on the armor of God concludes with the admonition for all believers to pray at all times in the Spirit. We believe that the prayers that God the Holy Spirit prompts us to pray are the prayers that God answers. God uses such prayers to accomplish His work through us.

3. We believe in the centrality of Christ (Hebrews 12:1-3). Our identity, acceptance, security and significance are all found in Christ, who is the ultimate revelation of God. Therefore, our purpose is to help Christians, their marriages, mission, vision, core values, and their ministries to be established

alive and free in Christ. God has given the Church, and consequently FICM-USA, the ministry of reconciliation, which removes the barriers to having an intimate relationship with our Heavenly Father through repentance and faith in God.

4. We believe in the unity of all true believers in Christ (John 17:20-23). We serve the one true God who manifests Himself as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The unity of the God head serves as the model for all relationships. We work to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3). This unity is found in our common heritage as children of God. Where Satan works to divide our minds, marriages and ministries, FICM-USA works for the oneness of mind, marriage and ministry as peacemakers (Matthew 5:9).

5. We base our identity in Christ (John 1:12). Those who put their trust in Christ are children of God. They are no longer "in Adam," they are spiritually alive "in Christ." Spiritual life means union with God, which was how the early Church Fathers described salvation (i.e. union with God). Christians are new creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17) and they are no longer "in the flesh," though they can still choose to walk after or according to the flesh (Romans 8:11). Those who are not yet Christians have neither the presence of God in their lives nor the knowledge of His ways; consequently, their minds have been programmed to live independently of God. Salvation doesn't bring instant renewal of our minds, which is why the Apostle Paul warns us not to be conformed any longer to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2). We believe that Scripture identifies all believers as saints rather than sinners; this does not necessarily reflect our behavior or maturity, however. Being a saint refers to our position in Christ. All Christians are identified with Christ in His death (Romans 6:3; Galatians 2:20); in His burial (Romans 6:4); in His resurrection (Romans 6:5,8,11); in His ascension (Ephesians 2:6); in His life (Romans 5:10,11); in His power (Ephesians 1:19,20); and in His inheritance (Romans 8:16,17; Ephesians 1:11,12).

6. We minister with grace and truth (John 1:17). The law came through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. Since all men and women are created in the image of God, ministry in Christ must afford every person dignity,

as we serve them with compassion, love, kindness and respect, no matter where they stand in relation to Christ and His Word. God offers redemption, restoration and freedom to all who truly turn to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith, and so we offer that hope of salvation without reservation to all to whom we minister. However, we will not compromise what the Bible teaches as our standard of truth and practice, and we will not condone, engage in or agree to assist others in any actions, ceremonies or lifestyles that are not in accordance with our Statement of Faith.

7. We strive for a balanced biblical worldview that includes the reality of the spiritual worldview (Ephesians 6:10-20). We understand that the enemies of our sanctification are the world, the flesh and the devil. There is a present spiritual battle between good and evil; between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness; between the Spirit of truth and the father of lies; between the true prophets and the false prophets. All of these call for Christians to have a solid biblical foundation, exercise discernment and keep their focus on Christ. We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with spiritual rulers and authorities of this present darkness with the understanding that they have been disarmed (Colossians 2:15). We understand this battle to be primarily a truth encounter rather than a power encounter, since the devil is already defeated. The reality of the spiritual world includes the present work of the Holy Spirit, and we seek His filling and guidance.

8. We seek a holistic answer to the problems of life (Matthew 6:19-34). We try to avoid simplistic answers that address only one dimension of life, and try to consider the proper functioning of our spirits, souls and bodies. First, we take into account that all problems have spiritual components, including the need to be rightly connected to God; the necessity to walk by faith in the truth according to the power of the Holy Spirit; and the need to escape from the snares of the devil. Second, we acknowledge psychosomatic illnesses and believe that emotional needs can be met in Christ, and we seek to resolve the problems of fear, anxiety, panic attacks, depression, and addictions in Him. Third, we teach the need for a balance of diet, rest and exercise and respect the role that medications play in healing and maintaining the body. We believe in a

whole God, who deals with a whole humanity, who takes into account all reality, all the time, and we seek Him and His kingdom first.

9. We seek a biblical balance between God's sovereignty and mankind's responsibility (1 Corinthians 3:4-9). We cannot ask God to do for us what He has revealed to be our responsibility, and we cannot do for ourselves what only God can do. Any attempt by one person to help another should be done with the understanding that God is present, and there is a role that He and only He can play in each of our lives. Only God can set a captive free and bind up the broken hearted person, so, we seek to establish our methods of ministry with the awareness of God's omnipresence, omniscience and omnipotence. We also seek to understand the sensitive relationship that exists between the encourager and the inquirer helping them to realize their responsibility. As reconcilers and encouragers we depend upon God and avoid being enablers, co-dependents or rescuers, insuring that inquirers remain responsible for their own attitudes and actions.

10. We strive to be in the center of God's will (1 Thessalonians 4:3). We believe that God will lead all of His children who seek to follow Him. God's overall will for all our lives is our sanctification, i.e. that we conform to His image. The goal of our instruction is love (1 Timothy 1:5), which is the character of God (1 John 4:16), and not knowledge that makes one arrogant (1 Corinthians 8:1). God is not trying to enlarge our minds (though He is seeking to renew them); He is trying to enlarge our hearts so that we may be like Him. We can have knowledge and be arrogant, but we cannot know God and be arrogant. Our goal is to know God, and become like Him (Philippians 3 :8-14), so that others will know that we are servants of God, because of His love shining through us.

11. We live under the new covenant, ministering new life by the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:5-6). We believe that we are servants of a new covenant, for the law kills, but the Spirit gives life. Grace is neither legalism nor license. We could not live up to the law by the law, but we can live a righteous life if we do so by faith, according to what God says is true and by doing so in the power of the Holy Spirit, rather than by our own strength and resources. Part of our purpose

is to help Christians and their ministries to move from a works and program orientation to a grace and faith orientation. Biblical strategies and programs will not work unless they are empowered by the life of God, because apart from Christ we cannot do anything of lasting consequence (John 15:5). Bearing fruit should not be our focus; abiding in Christ should be our focus. When we abide in Christ, we will bear fruit. Ministering grace also means that we don't put a price tag on our ministry, and we will not compromise ourselves, our message or our ministry for money.

12. We strive to be servant leaders (Matthew 20:20-28). We don't get our significance from titles, degrees, gifts or ecclesiastical positions. We strive to be significant and secure in Christ, and not lord it over others (1 Peter 5:1-11). The qualifications to be a spiritual leader (1Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:6-9) are all related to godly character. As servant leaders we choose to walk in the light and speak the truth in love. We want all Christians to reach their highest potential and use their talents and gifts to glorify God and edify others. It is the purpose of FICM-USA to empower God's people by helping them to understand who they are in Christ, enabling them to be all that God intended them to be so they will be able to do all things through Christ who strengthens them (Philippians 4:13).

13. We desire our Ministry to be one of integrity and authenticity (Matthew 5: 13-16). Spiritual integrity and authenticity are more important than recognition, and perceived impact. We believe the proper order is to have maturity before ministry, character before career, and being before doing. Who we are is more important than what we do, and we should never compromise ourselves or our message in order to gain the approval of others. God's work done God's way will never lack His support; therefore, we don't subscribe to deceptive methods of fund raising, including exaggeration of accomplishments, hype, false pretenses, exploitation, or self-promotion. Our focus is to grow in our maturity, bring clarity, correctness and balance to our message, and let God expand our ministry.

FICM, USA Statement of Faith

• The Bible is the inspired, infallible, and only authoritative word of God (2 Timothy 3:16,17; John 17:17; Matthew 5:18).

• There is one true God, eternally existing in three persons--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—each of whom possesses equally all the attributes of Deity and the characteristics of personality (Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Peter 1:4; John 10:27-30; Acts 5:3,4).

• Jesus Christ is God, the living Word, who became flesh through His miraculous conception by the Holy Spirit and His virgin birth. Hence, He is perfect Deity and true humanity united in one person forever (John 1:1-4; Matthew 1:21-23; Philippians 2:5-11).

• He lived a sinless life and voluntarily atoned for the sins of men by dying on the cross as their substitute, thus satisfying divine justice and accomplishing salvation for all who trust in Him alone (Isaiah 53:4-6; 1 Peter 2:24,25; Acts 4:12; John 3:16-18).

• He rose from the dead in the same body, though glorified, in which He lived and died (1 Corinthians 15:1-6; Luke 24:36-43).

• He ascended bodily into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God the Father, where He, the only mediator between God and man, continually makes intercession for His own (Acts 1:9-11; Hebrews 1:1-4; 1 Timothy 2:5,6; Hebrews 7:25).

• Each human being is wonderfully and immutably created by God as either genetically male or genetically female. These two distinct and complementary genders together reflect the image of God (Genesis 1:26,27).

• All human life is sacred and of inestimable value. That includes the pre-born, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, as well as every other stage or condition of humanity from conception through natural death (Psalm 139).

• The original man sinned by disobeying God; thus, he was alienated from his Creator. That historical fall brought all mankind under divine condemnation (Genesis 3:8-12; Romans 5:12-14; Romans 6:23).

• Man's nature from Adam is corrupted, and he is thus totally unable to please God. Every man is in need of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:12; Titus 1:15,16; Romans 8:7,8; Hebrews 11:6; John 3:5,6; Titus 3:3-7).

• The salvation of man is wholly a work of God's free grace and is not the work, in whole or in part, of human works or goodness or religious ceremony. God imputes His righteousness to those who put their faith in Christ alone for their salvation, and thereby justifies them in His sight (Ephesians 2:8,9; Romans 11:5,6; Galatians 2:15,16; Romans 3:21-26).

• All true believers in Christ are children of God, new creations in Christ, saints who are free to walk in newness of life in Him though never achieving sinless perfection in this life (John 1:12; 1 John 3:1; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Romans 6:4-7; 1 John 1:8).

• It is the privilege of all who are born again of the Spirit to be assured of their salvation from the very moment in which they trust Christ as their Savior. This assurance is not based upon any kind of human merit, but is produced by the witness of the Holy Spirit, who confirms in the believer the testimony of God in His written Word (Romans 8:15,16; 1 John 5:11-13; John 5:24).

• The Lord Jesus Christ commanded all believers to proclaim the gospel throughout the world and to disciple men of every nation. The fulfillment of that Great Commission requires that all worldly and personal ambitions be subordinated to a total commitment to "Him who loved us and gave Himself for us." (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Colossians 1:27-29; Revelation 5:9,10; 2 Corinthians 5:11-16; Galatians 2:20)

• The Holy Spirit has come into the world to reveal and glorify Christ and to apply the saving work of Christ to men. He convicts and draws sinners to Christ, imparts new life to them, continually indwells them from the moment

of spiritual birth, and seals them until the day of redemption. His fullness, power, and control are appropriated in the believer's life by faith (John 15:26; John 16:7-11; John 3:5,6; 1 Corinthians 6:19,20; Ephesians 1:13,14; Ephesians 5:18-21).

• Every believer is called to live in the power of the indwelling Spirit so that he will not fulfill the lust of the flesh, but will bear fruit to the glory of God (Galatians 5:16-23; 2 Corinthians 3:17,18).

• God has established marriage as a lifelong, exclusive union between one genetic male and one genetic female (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6).

• Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, His Body, which is composed of all men, living and dead, who have been joined to Him through saving faith (Ephesians 1:23,24; Colossians 1:18-20).

• God admonishes His people to assemble together regularly for worship, for participation in ordinances, for edification through the Scriptures, and for mutual encouragement (Hebrews 10:24,25; 1 Corinthians 11:22-26; Matthew 28:19; Colossians 3:16).

• At physical death the believer enters immediately into eternal, conscious fellowship with the Lord and awaits the resurrection of his body to everlasting glory and blessing (2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:21-23; 1 Corinthians 15:51-57).

• At physical death the unbeliever enters immediately into eternal, conscious separation from the Lord and awaits the resurrection of his body to judgment and everlasting condemnation (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; Revelation 20:11-15).

• Jesus Christ will come again to the earth--personally, visibly, and bodily--to consummate history and the eternal plan of God (Philippians 3:20,21; Ephesians 1:9,10; 1 Corinthians 15:20-29; Revelation 1:4-8; Revelation 22:20,21).

Pause for Thought #2

Questions

- **Look back over the Who We Are Together in Christ statements. Why do you think it's so important to believe in our group identity in Christ – Who we are in Christ *together*? How can believing these statements contribute to a healthy culture?**

- **ALL of the Core Values work together to help FICM, USA 'smell' a certain way. Which of the Core Values is especially meaningful to you, and why?**

- **How ought we to respond to one another when we think maybe we aren't living according to what we say we believe and value? Be specific.**