

ENCOURAGE

“So that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” - Eph. 6:3

WHAT DOES FELLOWSHIP?

Fellowship means being a part of a group, a body of people. It is opposed to isolation, solitude, loneliness and our present-day independent kind of individualism. Of course, it does not stop there because we can be in a crowd of people and even share certain things in common, but still not have fellowship. Fellowship means having or sharing with others certain things in common such as interest, goals, feelings, beliefs, activities, labor, privileges and responsibilities, experiences, and concerns. Fellowship can mean a partnership that involves working together and caring for one another as a company of people, like a company of soldiers or members of a family.

But what about Christian fellowship according to the Word of God and the words for fellowship as they are used in the New Testament? Koinos is the root word in the Greek. Koinwnia (noun) and Koinwneo (verb) are the primary words. There are two main ideas with this word: “to share together, take part together” in the sense of partnership or participation, and “to share with” in the sense of giving to others.



As humans, we need people. We need people with which to share life, grief, happiness and more. As Christians, the fellowship of believers can help us in many ways. Three key ideas come out of this:

1. Fellowship means being a part of a group, a body of people.
2. Fellowship means having or sharing with others certain things in common.
3. Fellowship can indicate a partnership, which involves people working together.

Sharing” and “partaking together” are central to fellowship. Acts 2:42 shares two key ideas that are important if we are to grasp the Biblical teaching on “fellowship.” The first is that, in the New Testament, what we have in common is shared, to begin with, because of a common relationship that we all have together in Christ. We can have fellowship and share with each other because we have a relationship with Christ; we share Him in common.

Paul writes in I Corinthians 1:9, “God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” The

continued on page three

FELLOWSHIP BUILDS GOD’S KINGDOM

Notice the last phrase of the text from Acts chapter 2: “And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).

Our fellowship, the relationship we have with one another and with Jesus, is a witness to the world. The early church was committed to Jesus and to one another and the world saw it.

When Christians regularly meet together to worship God and fellowship with one another, we are a witness to the world. Jesus said: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35). We are to love God and love people.

Fellowship is first the sharing together in a common life with other believers through relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Fellowship is first and foremost a relationship, rather than an activity. The principle is that any activity that follows, should come out of the relationship.

In Acts 2:42 the early church was not merely devoting itself to activities, but to a relationship. It was this relationship that produced an active sharing in other ways. It is so important that we grasp this. Fellowship means we belong to each other in a relationship because we share together the common life and enabling grace of Jesus Christ.

CONTACT INFO

REMEMBER...

“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:28-29).

In the New Testament, what is shared in common is shared first of all because of a common relationship that we all have together in Christ. Koinwnia was an important word to both John and Paul, but it was never used in merely a secular sense. It always had a spiritual significance and base.

In the New Testament, believers can have fellowship and share together because they first of all have a relationship with Christ and they share Him in common (1 Cor. 1:9; 1 John 1:3).

THE KINGDOM...

“The kingdom of God is not for a select few, but for anyone who willingly follows Christ on this journey of life.”

– Gugu Mona

“The kingdom is not an exclusive, well-trimmed suburb with snobbish rules about who can live there. No, it is for a larger, homelier, less self-conscious caste of people who understand they are sinners because they have experienced the yaw and pitch of moral struggle.”

– Brennan Manning

“The greatest kingdom of all time is the kingdom of heaven.”

– Tamerlan Kuzgov

A SPIRITUAL KINGDOM

The essence of the message of both John the Baptist and Jesus was that the kingdom of heaven was near during the time they lived:

- John: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” (Matt. 3:2)
- Jesus: “From that time, Jesus began to preach and to say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ ... Now Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom...” (Matt. 4:17, 23).

Jesus taught about the character of those who would be in His kingdom (Matt. 5:3-10). He taught parables that described various features of the kingdom (Matthew 13). He reiterated its nearness as He said, “There are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.” (Mark 9:1)

In the moments before His death, Jesus told the disciples, “And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me” (Luke 22:29). Finally, before Pontius Pilate, Jesus affirmed: “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.... You rightly say that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth” (John 18:36-37).

Jesus came to establish a kingdom, to be anointed and enthroned as King, to gather all authority unto Himself in the heavens and on earth, and that is exactly what He did. (Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:20-22; Col. 1:16-18) Confusion comes from those who do not understand the nature of this kingdom, and it leads them to deny that any kingdom was established.

Pilate and the Jewish leaders were confused by their own presuppositions and expectations. Jesus did not come to raise a literal army, drive the Romans out of Palestine, establish Himself in a fortified palace and secure a decades of reign. His kingdom is more powerful, glorious and enduring than an earthly kingdom.

When sinners respond to God in faith and obedience, they become part of a special group belonging unto God. The New Testament calls the saved members of the body (1 Cor. 12:27), living stones in the temple (1 Pet. 2:4-5), saints in the church (1 Cor. 1:2) and citizens in the kingdom (Eph. 2:19; Col. 1:13; Philip. 3:20). These terms are synonymous: body, temple, church, kingdom. They are collective nouns describing those who belong to God, who have been redeemed from their sins and now live in fellowship with Him.

The time will come when we will leave this physical world behind and enjoy the fullness of the heavenly kingdom, but for now we are living on earth as foreigners or sojourners. Christ is our King; we are His citizens; He rules the universe on behalf of His kingdom.

Fellowship IS IMPORTANT!

Revised English Bible translates 1 John 1:3 as, “It is this which we have seen and heard that we declare to you also, in order that you may share with us in a common life, that life which we share with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.”

Fellowship is first the sharing of a common life with each other through a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. We were all individuals with little in common until the Father’s calling separated us from everyone else in this world, and we became part of Christ’s body through His Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13, 27). In this, we can see that true Christian fellowship is primarily a relationship rather than an activity.

In Acts 2:42, the young church was not merely devoting itself to common activities but to a vital, spiritual relationship. It was this relationship that produced an active sharing in other ways. Many of us have gotten this backwards – that the activities produce the relationship. Not so! The relationship comes first, then the common activities follow.

It is so important that we grasp this. Fellowship means that we belong to each other in a relationship because we share with one another the common life and grace of Jesus Christ. From this flows additional sharing of our time, experiences, wisdom, and many other things.

The second key idea derives from the fact that both New Testament Greek words for “fellowship,” koinônia and metochos, mean “to share together” in the sense of a partnership. As sharers together with Christ, we are automatically co-partners with Him and with our brethren in His enterprise



here on earth. His work is our work.

Paul writes about this Christian unity in the book of Romans 15:5-6, explaining that its aim is to glorify God: “Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Peter also states that our service for God is ultimately to bring Him glory: “If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 4:11).

Thus, fellowship also means that we have been brought into partnership with our Savior and with each other to fulfill God’s will and glorify Him.

God has called us and put us together as His Family to accomplish His purpose in us and ultimately in all of mankind. We should not forget that when we fellowship, we are sharing and working together toward a common goal, the Kingdom of God.

– Faires Austin

“What we have seen and heard we declare to you, so that you and we together may share in a common life, that life which we share with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

– 1 John 1:3