

Fellowship

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God created us for fellowship with Himself.

'and for thy pleasure we were and are created' Revelation 4: 11

Fellowship is an essential part of living a meaningful life. (Including fellowship with family, friends, yourself, strangers, neighbours, and, of course, within the Church.

Great fellowship is vital for welcoming new people into the Church and retaining people as part of the Church. So it's an essential part of evangelism and discipleship.

It's worth spending some time exploring the way we fellowship with each other!

Key Scripture:

We proclaim to you what we have seen, so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. 1 John 1: 3

What is fellowship?

The Greek word for fellowship is *koinonia*.

The many shades of meaning in Greek words can often be lost when they are translated into English. This is certainly true for *koinonia*.

The word is translated as

fellowship, communion, association, sharing, participation, communication, companionship, contribution, distribution

So fellowship is all about togetherness. We interact with each other in a personal, unselfish, respectful, intimate and loving way.

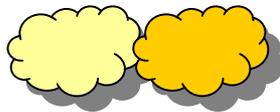
Isn't that what is desperately needed in our modern world where so many are lonely? Everyone lives in their own little bubble:

In our bubble are the things we really care about:

memories, ideas, hopes,
dreams, doubts, experiences,
learning, fears, self-image,
skills, joys, relationships,

Fellowship is about sharing of bubbles!

We can do this at different levels:



acquaintances
(many)



friends
(few)



soul-mate
(one)

Deep fellowship is risky. As you open yourself up to others you can easily get hurt. But isn't this what we all desire deep in our hearts? To love and be loved; to know and be known.

It's worth **investing** in koinonia. With God; with your friends; with your neighbours (which is at the heart of evangelism), with others in the Church (which is at the heart of discipleship), and especially with your soul mate (if you have one).

This is how God created us: for fellowship with Himself; and to live in relationship with others. This is what life is all about!

Let's look at the New Testament scriptures containing *koinonia*. They'll help us understand the richness of all the possibilities there are in fellowship.

Fellowship with each other flows out of our fellowship with God

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. 1 John 1:3

God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.
1 Corinthians 1:9

Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation (communion) in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation (communion) in the body of Christ?
1 Corinthians 10:16

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. 2 Corinthians 13:14

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 1 John 1:7

Some aspects of great fellowship

- **Love for the Lord**

Love for others flows out of our love for the Lord. The more passionate we are about the Lord, the more open we will be to fellowship with people (whether Christian or not).

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength' and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

Mark 12:30, 31

- **Laying down of your life for others (unselfishness)**

We are pretty individualistic and selfish! Deep fellowship requires us to be focused on others, not on ourselves. (Which is why fellowship is threatening, but, ultimately, so rewarding!).

Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. John 15: 13



- **Willingness to share**
- **Hospitality**
- **Generosity**

Sharing and hospitality always go both ways: from you to others and from them to you. While it is better to give than to receive (Acts 20:35), it is also true that when you give you will also receive (Luke 6:38). The key is to have generosity of heart!

All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. Acts 2:44-47

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. 1 Peter 4:8-10

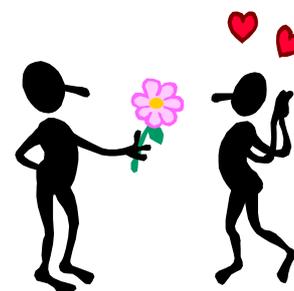
...if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously;...Romans 12:8

- **Companionship, friendship**

There is so much loneliness out there. People are craving for intimacy, friendship, companionship,

That's why deep fellowship is so attractive.

I thank God every time I remember you ...because of your partnership (koinonia) in the gospel from the first day until now, Philippians 1:5



- **Communication**

Good communication is vital! If we don't communicate well our fellowship soon falls apart. It's worth being open in your communication with others; investing in the development of your communication skills; asking for feedback on your communication skills; and discussing how communication is going in the fellowship.

And do not forget to do good and to share (koinonia) with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. NIV But to do good and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. KJV Hebrews 13:16

- **Contribution**

Your contribution to fellowship is vital. Without you the fellowship wouldn't be the same! Play your part; make your contribution and the whole fellowship will be built up. You will be blessed as you bless others!

For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution (koinonia) for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Romans 15:26

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 (and the rest of the chapter, plus Chapter 13).



Discussion questions:

- Why does God want to fellowship with us?
- What is fellowship with the Father/Jesus/the Holy Spirit like? Is it different for each person in the Godhead?
- What is *koinoinia* like as you take communion?
- Why are we wary about getting into intimate relationships?
- What stops us from experiencing deeper levels of fellowship?
- How inviting is our fellowship for us? For Christians outside of our Church?
For Christians outside of the Church? For people who don't know Christ?
- Why are most New Zealanders turned off by Christian fellowship groups?
- What is your vision for the future of your Church? How important is fellowship in the achievement of this vision?
- What systems/procedures/groups/approaches ... should we have in place to deepen our fellowship and make it inviting for new people to join us/us join them?

