

Missio Dei Fellowship exists to glorify God by delighting in Him and making Him known through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Church's Core Activities, Pt 3

Acts 2:41-42

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SermonAudio Blurb: We hear the word “fellowship” quite a bit but what exactly does it mean in the bible? The answer is quite beautiful but also discomfiting as it ought to cause every believer to ask how well they practice this fellowship.

I. Introduction.

- A. Read Acts 2:41-42.
- B. As stated the prior sermons, in this passage we have six core activities upon which the early Church focused their time and energy.
 - 1. The word that is key here is “devoting.”
 - 2. It is also key to note that this is not speaking of private worship but of the public gathering of the local church. Not what you devote yourself to do in private, but what the gathered Body is to devote themselves to do.
- C. We've learned about three of them last time, baptism, membership, and a devotion to the teaching of the Apostles.
 - 1. Give quick review of first two.
 - 2. Apostolic teaching is simply the New Testament from the book of Acts on to Revelation.
 - a. But this devotion is never at the expense of the rest of Scripture. All of it is inspired. So we do not reject or ignore the Old Testament, but we understand that it is pointing us to the goal, which is the restoration of all things through Jesus Christ, about which the New Testament speaks.
 - b. The Bible gives us commands, prohibitions, counsel and principles by which to live. In the mind of Jesus to love Him is to obey His Word.
 - c. In our age where emotions and life happily exist in separate realms this is somewhat hard to grasp. But the Scripture is clear that love acts in accordance to what is loved.

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- d. This is why Jesus can make an absolute statement that you cannot serve God and money at the same time. One will be hated and one loved, or the other way around. But, of course, this is not really believed by many in our land.
3. And these are all driven by the Holy Spirit.
 - a. They did not need to be told to do this, they simply did it. It was natural.
 - b. And the reason is that we learned that the teaching of the Apostles is not somehow of a lesser value than the words of Jesus. In fact all of the bible is the result of the Son.
 - (1) He is the Word that was in the beginning.
 - (2) He is the Word that came to the prophets in the Old Testament.
 - (3) His Word is what the Holy Spirit brought to mind to the Apostles.
 - (4) To not do His Word is to not be a follower of Him. But this starts in Genesis 1:1 and end in Revelation 22.
 - c. So we see in this activity certain things worth noting:
 - (1) We see here that there was already a basic structure to the church where there were those who taught and those who learned.
 - (2) What you don't see is the idea that each just began to figure out what truth and doctrine was on their own. It flowed from the Apostles.
 - (3) Teaching is a central part of the corporate life of the church. It is less about experience and more an increase of knowledge of God and how we relate to Him.
 - (4) There was a devotion, a commitment, by the people to learn, just as there was a commitment by the Apostles to teach.
- D. Today we will focus on the fourth activity which is a devotion to fellowship.
 1. Again, this is something that was diligently and closely attended to. This is not something they were commanded to do and then did begrudgingly. It was a natural desire born out by the Holy Spirit drawing them together.

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2. Fellowship is a word we use rather loosely today, sort of like worship. Cold casseroles and bad punch. Guys sitting around the backyard while doing a barbeque.
 3. Often it is simply the Christianized word we use to describe hanging out together and having a good time. It is a nice time but it is also very vague.
- E. We talk about doing life together and having community but do we understand what fellowship is? We will explore the richness of the term itself and then how it is applied in the New Testament.

II. Core Activities of The Church—Fellowship.

- A. What does the term “fellowship” mean?
1. Notice that if you have the ESV it says, “the fellowship,” while the other translations just say “fellowship.” ESV is most precise here and it is worth noting.
 - a. When you have the definite article present in Greek it is emphasizing identity vs nature or essence. So here Luke is emphasizing a specific fellowship rather than merely the concept of fellowship.
 - b. It is no different the apostle’s teaching. It is not describing the idea of apostles who happen to be teaching, but rather, it is the content of what the apostles taught that was the focus of these new believers. They wanted to know the teachings.
 - c. So, here we have the idea that the fellowship they had was a specific type. It was the church’s fellowship. And this is important to grasp up front.
 - d. Some of you may already think that you practice good Christian fellowship by gathering to share needs, to discuss or learn from the bible, to pray for one another and encourage each other. But that really still is not capturing the essence of this term.
 2. The term itself is a word many of you know, *koinonia*. Now there are words that are offshoots from this main, root term that help enlarge its meaning.
 - a. When you learn biblical Greek, which almost all of the New Testament is written in, you discover it is called *koine* Greek. It is the common or shared language that arose from Alexander the Great.

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- b. The term *koinonia* speaks of mutual interests and sharing or communion. But it also involves a close relationship where you feel at home as well as developing a sharing life.
 - (1) Another term to use here would be a generous spirit toward one another. This also leads to the idea of participation because when you participate in something you share in it.
 - (2) Along with this we can find a secondary term that speaks of being a partner or companion.
 - (3) Think a marriage, where you begin to learn to share life and thought together.
 3. So now we can begin to ask what sort of fellowship did these new Christians have that was unique enough to be called “the” fellowship.
- B. How do we apply the idea of fellowship?
1. First of all it is a sharing of our mutual faith in Jesus Christ **through** the Lord’s Supper and prayer (Acts 2:42).
 - a. Fellowship is more defined here than we tend to define it. The structure of this passage makes the Lord's Supper and prayer function as an expansion of what is meant by the fellowship.
 - b. This is rather limiting to our minds but it is worth noting and considering. Remember that Luke is describing a specific fellowship since he include the article with the term.
 - c. There are many ways people share life and we see it every day. Sports, activities, clubs, hobbies and such all become a place of fellowship, but it is not Christian fellowship.
 - d. Perhaps the simplest example is family. There is a sharing and partnership that begins with the marriage and extends with children. In the most intimate of ways you share all things, at least, if you are wise. But it is not Christian fellowship.
 - e. For the early church the fellowship, the sharing and partnership was seen in consistently gathering together to receive the teaching and to remember the Lord’s death and to pray.
 - f. This is why we do not each take the elements and then eat and drink on our own, but together. It is a corporate act where together we express our hope and faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

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- g. It makes fellowship not a vague experience but, instead grounds it in the saving work of Jesus. The prayers are built around the triune God. Praying to the Father, through the Son in the power of the Spirit.
 - h. This is key because the idea of fellowship is first a relationship and sharing between God and His children and then His children with one another.
2. Second, there is an intimacy of relationship with Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9)
- a. Start with context from vs 4.
 - b. In vs 9 “faithful” is in the emphatic position. How we came into fellowship is due to the faithfulness of God. How?
 - (1) God was faithful to His Old Testament promises.
 - (2) He was faithful to His Son, to raise Him from the grave.
 - (3) He was faithful to redeem us from our helpless condition.
 - (4) Paul describes it this way regarding Gentiles, “*But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*” (Ephesians 2:13)
 - (5) So though once you and I were far off, now we are brought near. So near that we are now called the “children of God.” Pure grace.
 - c. Now listen carefully here. The idea here with the term is not merely a shared experience. It is much more and much better. We become partakers, or as one commentator said (Thiselton, 104), “a share-holder as sons.”
 - (1) The reason is due to our union with Jesus Christ, “in Christ.”
 - (2) Because of this we now participate, we have *koinonia*, in **all** that is Christ’s. His death, life, inheritance, etc. We are safe, eternally safe because of this fellowship that flows from the utter, incredible, infinite faithfulness of the Father.
 - d. So this fellowship with Christ is a sharing in His life and death. This is something I will develop in the next point.

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3. Third, there is an intimacy of relationship with and through the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:13).
 - a. The grammar here indicates a fellowship or sharing that is brought about through the Holy Spirit. Notice also the triune statement here. How do we have fellowship through the Spirit?
 - b. The Spirit is given to us, this was seen earlier in Acts 2. He was promised by Jesus Christ in John 14-16. And it is with the Spirit that we are baptized into the Body of Christ, the Church.
 - c. It is through the Holy Spirit that we are regenerated, or as Paul says in Ephesians 2, “made alive together with Christ.” Or as Jesus said in John 3, “born of the Spirit.”
 - d. It is through the Holy Spirit then that we share life in Jesus Christ. It is through the Spirit that we have a new and living hope.
 - e. It is through the Holy Spirit that we are set apart, not as objects of God’s eternal wrath but rather as instruments for His glory. Through the Spirit our Father in heaven delights in us.
 - f. Notice how Romans 8:1 ff shows this sharing/fellowship with both Christ and the Spirit (1—in Christ; 2—Spirit of life in Christ; 3—condemned sin in the flesh; 4—we walk now according to the Spirit; 8-9--in the flesh vs in the Spirit, therefore we please God; 10--Christ is in you so you are alive; 11—Spirit is in you therefore you will be raised just as Jesus Christ was).
 - g. So we not only have fellowship/sharing in all that is Christ’s, but also we have this unique fellowship through the Holy Spirit.
4. Fourth, there is a intimacy of shared faith and hope **through** the gospel (1 John 1:3).
 - a. “We proclaim” is the main verb for vss 1-4. In other words, the Apostolic teaching and witness that began with Jesus Christ is what he is reminding them that they had been taught.
 - b. Now notice the “that” for it indicates the purpose. Why did the Apostles teach? Why do I teach? For this purpose, that you and I might together have fellowship.
 - c. But what kind of fellowship? What do we share or partner in? Notice it is the fellowship that the Apostles have with the Father and Son. And John wants to share that fellowship with us.

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- d. What we do as we gather is we share and participate in our common salvation. We all sing together, not solos. We take the bread and the cup together, not alone. We hear the word and read the word together. We learn together. And the bond is our common faith.
5. Fifth, this fellowship with God is **not** a mystical experience but a genuine sharing in mission and motive with God, **or it is not** true fellowship (1 John 1:6).
- a. We may say we have fellowship with God. People do it all the time. But true fellowship impacts our lives in a radical manner.
 - b. A new life but also a new Lord. Forgiveness of sin but also a new mission as well as a new motive for life.
 - c. An unchanged life is antithetical to a true, saving faith. This is because your faith finds its object and purpose in the person of Jesus Christ. You believe He is what He is, Lord. Therefore you follow Him.
 - d. But to instead have a life contrary to your Lord is to simply live a lie. You walk in darkness and not in the light of the gospel. Or to put it in John's manner, you do not practice the truth.
 - e. Truth is not just accepted, it is acted upon. And Jesus is not just accepted, He is acted upon, or there is no faith or fellowship/sharing in the life of Christ.
 - f. However...
6. Sixth, this fellowship, if truly embraced, brings us into practical fellowship with one another (1 John 1:7).
- a. When you or I walk in the truth we claim to believe then we come into a unique relationship and fellowship with one another.
 - b. Why? The reason given is rather simple so look down at vs 7.
 - (1) We are walking where?
 - (2) Who is there?
 - (3) And therefore everyone else who walks in the light of truth rather than the darkness of unbelief and disobedience is there too.

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- (4) In a vague way it is like going to some event and finding someone you only slightly knew there too. Instant connection and sharing.
 - c. But then, there are serious consequences to this new fellowship with God and one another.....
7. True fellowship rejects sharing or participating in anything contrary to the gospel (2 Corinthians 6:14).
 - a. Explain this passage.
 - b. Christians too often want a place at the table or the marketplace of ideas. But this is often because they have slipped into thinking that the Christian faith is one idea of many and we can sit and discuss or treat them equally.
 - c. You can't because they are not. The Christian faith claims exclusivity and superiority and utter ultimacy over every other thing.
 - d. Why do the elder reject CRT? Why do we reject SJ? Because they are alternatives to the hope and answer that is bound up only in the gospel.
8. Genuine fellowship is sharing or participating in the needs of the gospel and fellowship believers.
 - a. Acts 2:44-45—explain.
 - b. Philippians 1:5.
 - (1) Paul brings the Philippians into something deeper than mere friendship, no matter how good that might be. Their connection was one that operated around God's work in this world.
 - (2) Note the time frame ("from the first day until now"): So they bought into his work from the start, and did not lag after a period of time. Their support was constant.
 - (3) Also, there is no distinction between what he was doing and their work. Paul saw them in fellowship with him and his labors.

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- (a) This is good news: not everyone is good evangelizing, or being a traveling missionary/church planter.
 - (b) Yet, everyone can participate in the thrusting forth of the Gospel.
 - (4) So the point to understand, is that this “fellowship,” here, is something far more profound than enjoying each other's company. It involves a common work, or a common goal, in which there is partnership.
 - (5) And so, if you're to maintain a true fellowship (as Paul defines it), it is to be in view of that common cause of the Gospel going forward.
 - (6) And a simple way this is done is through giving. Through giving to the work of the gospel you are in fellowship with all who are on the front lines of that work.
 - (7) But not just for the work of the gospel, but for the needs of believers around the world.....
- c. Romans 15:26.
- (1) Our term, *koinonia*, is used twice here. The common translation of it in vs 26 is “contribution.”
 - (2) In vs 27 it is translated as “share” or “partake.”
 - (3) The idea is that you share/have fellowship in other's sufferings as you help relieve it.
 - (4) And it is focused on the suffering believer. The New Testament always starts there. Not some vague “help the poor” but help the poor who are in Christ. Because they share in our faith and fellowship with Christ.
- d. *Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all, 14 while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you. (2 Corinthians 9:13-14)*
- e. *And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. (Hebrews 13:16)*

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III. Conclusion.

- A. Such a simple sounding word that is so full of meaning.
 - 1. The gospel does things to those who believe and to those who reject.
 - 2. The gospel separates by simply because it changes the one who believes.
 - 3. The believer now finds a commonality with new ideas, convictions and relationships. And this necessarily creates a point of divide.
 - a. So we need grace and patience and kindness as we live out our faith.
 - b. But we also need courage and conviction to not hide our common faith so that we can all get along.
 - c. I believe we will see how this looks as we continue on in the book of Acts.

- B. One of the many lessons we can learn from COVID is how little professing believers actually value fellowship.
 - 1. One of the powerful things about the internet is the ease in which we can stream church services and such. This power is both good and bad depending how it is used.
 - 2. Many choose to stay home to watch a service than attend. They may have many excuses but usually it is because it is simplest.
 - 3. In the early part of 2000's we saw the rise of video campuses and it help set the stage for the exodus from attending church services.
 - 4. It is one thing to be prevented from gathering. This happens. But it is a whole other thing to willfully choose to not gather.

- C. This fellowship is unique and it ought to be the ultimate one for any believer. Nothing else is greater and nothing can replace it.
 - 1. The one who thinks that getting away from everyone is best is deceived.
 - 2. The one who chooses video over physical relationships with the brethren has something broken in their heart.
 - 3. The one who argues that we can worship just fine at home has no grasp of the nature and purpose of Christian worship and fellowship.

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- D. Missio Dei Fellowship built the term “fellowship” into the name on purpose. We share together in grace found in Jesus Christ and then together we go back into this world to fulfill the mission of God given to each of us.

Benediction

May our gracious Father in heaven cause us to be found in Christ, clothed on in His righteousness which comes through faith from the hand of God. May we know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings as we become conformed to His death. Amen.