



## KEY THOUGHTS

- What is the significance of fellowship and community in the life of a believer?
- Fellowship is more than just attending church on Sunday mornings. It's about doing life together every day. It's about sharing our joys and struggles, our victories and defeats. It's about being there for each other in times of need and celebrating with each other in times of joy. The early church gathered in the temple and in their homes, breaking bread and sharing their lives with one another. They found a place of safety and acceptance where they could enjoy God's presence and each other. And we can do the same today.
- The Greek phrase Luke used here, *apanta koina* ("everything in common")
- The fellowship and unity of the early believers, as described in Acts 2:44. The early believers were united and held all things in common. They emphasized oneness in theology and spiritual beliefs, but that did not mean they were all the same. Uniformity means remaining the same in all cases and at all times, whereas unity means being joined together as a whole. The early church was an excellent example of unity. They were unified around the Gospel of Jesus Christ and celebrated their diverse gifts, experiences, and backgrounds. They were a diverse group of people from different cultures and backgrounds, yet they came together as one in Christ.
- We were created in the image of God, which means that we reflect His relational nature. God the Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit are in perfect relationship with each other, and we, too, are meant to live in relationship with others. When God created everything, He looked at it and saw that it was good. Then, He created man in His very image. However, He saw that it was not good for man to be alone.
- Homes are now built with the intention of providing privacy and seclusion, rather than encouraging social connections. However, in old school times, when commutes were non-existent, houses were constructed with front porches. It was very common for people to take afternoon walks or drives and run into their neighbors sitting on their porches. Neighbors would invite each other to sit down and have a conversation, fostering a sense of community. Now, people retreat from the busyness and intensity of work life. We come home, close the garage door, and escape not to the outside or the front porch but inside to the TV in the living room. We don't want to see more people we want to get away from everyone. Our goal has become to avoid people.
- We found that more than 90% of young adults in the CCC life group feel lonely often, indicating increasing isolation over time.
- The cultures seem to be moving away from each other. John Locke's book, "The De-voicing of Society," explores this problem in depth. He says, "With the rise of individualism in America post World War II. Prior to this, societies did not even have a word for individualism as there was no concept of an individual who did not belong to a group and who could be considered absolutely alone. We have gradually become more independent and less reliant on social interaction. We have become solo sapiens."
- Sheep are never attacked in herds they are attacked when they are isolated from the flock
- John Ortberg, in his book "Everybody is Normal Till You Get to Know Them", mentions a study that tracked 7,000 individuals over a period of nine years. The findings of the study revealed that people who were highly isolated were three times more likely to die than those who had strong social connections. The study also revealed that people who had unhealthy habits such as smoking, poor eating habits, obesity, or alcohol abuse but had close relationships lived significantly longer than those who had great health habits but were isolated. In other words, it's better to eat Twinkies with good friends than to eat broccoli alone.

- What does God dream for His children?
- When facing His death for us, Jesus prayed that the disciples would experience a deep relationship with one another.
- During Jesus' final moments, He was most concerned about the depth of relationship that His disciples would experience with one another. These are the words of Jesus as he prayed for the men he had spent three years with - men who had let him down, but whom He still shared his life with. He prayed for the ones He loved that they would experience something truly amazing unity.
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- He prayed that they would experience the same quality of relationship with each other that Jesus had been enjoying as part of the Trinity since before time. This depth in the relationship means supporting, encouraging, and enjoying one another. Jesus prayed that we would all experience this kind of life-giving relationship with each other.
- The importance of our relationships with others goes beyond just our own health and happiness. In fact, Jesus himself said that the credibility of his life and message in the eyes of non-believers is dependent on the way we, as his followers, relate to one another. Our behavior and their belief seem to be connected.
- Randy Frazee says it like this, "The development of meaningful relationships where every member carries a significant sense of belonging is central to what it means to be the church. This is a God-ordained gathering of people that is so strong that even the gates of hell will not overcome it."

## SCRIPTURES

- Acts 2:42-47
- John 17:11
- John 17:20-23

## PRACTICAL & REFLECTION

### *Going Old School to New School*

- What does God dream for His children?
- What do you dream of for your children?