



# **Peninsula City Church**

**Together...**

**Oikos and Koinonia &  
(or Lost in Translation)**

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# Oikos and Koinonia (or Lost in Translation)

## Introduction

**Q.** How big is the idea of together, is it something that is bigger than us, I mean is it really big?

Have you ever been part of something that is bigger than you, I mean really big? We all can be part of something bigger than ourselves. As a matter of fact, we are part of the church of Jesus Christ, which is huge. It has existed for about 2000 years, and only God knows how many children He has grafted into His family. Today, in this season in which we live, we are part of something that is so much bigger than us. It is the Kingdom of God, of which the church of Jesus Christ is a part of, since; the church is not the Kingdom of God part of it.

As the church of Jesus Christ, we are 'together' in a common partnership with God and our brothers and sisters in Christ. Our purpose is too mutually and actively work towards God's common cause. This common cause is the expansion of the Kingdom of God here on earth. Christ-followers have been doing this in partnership with the Holy Spirit, for the advancement and extension of the kingdom of God for His glory since the coming of Jesus Christ. This was not because they have had to, or were paid to, or for any benefit of their own. The reason is simply because of common interest and activity (that is the will of God), benefited others and is for the glorifying of our heavenly Father.

There are two aspects that need to be looked at to understand better what this means. The first one is what is called *oikos*. The second one is that of *koinonia*. You may be thinking right about now, 'oik' what and 'koin' who? These are two words that are used in the New Testament that well let's just say we have real problems translating in a way that we know what they mean to be able to apply them properly. You may have heard the term, 'Lost in translation.' That is,

"Of a word or words, having lost or lacking the full subtlety of meaning or significance when translated from the original language to another, especially when done literally. (Usually formulated as 'be/get lost in translation')."¹

Well, this is what we have here, but we will do our best to see where we end up as we review this concept of together.

## 1. What is *Oikos*?

**Q.** So, what is meant by the idea of *oikos*?

The first of these words will only mention in passing is that of *oikos* οἶκος. It is used some 114 times in the New Testament and 55 of these in Luke-Acts.<sup>2</sup> A related word is that of *oikia*, which is used 94 times.<sup>3</sup> It has not always clear as to the actual meaning of the concept of *oikos*.<sup>4</sup> Although it is usually translated as household, it might also mean any or all of the following: home, dwelling place, or even a city.<sup>5</sup> The idea of *oikos* has been called "God's big word for a small planet."<sup>6</sup>

Following are four of the of the use of *oikos* in the New Testament,

<sup>1</sup> "Lost in translation." <https://idioms.thefreedictionary.com/lost+in+translation> (17<sup>th</sup> April 2018).

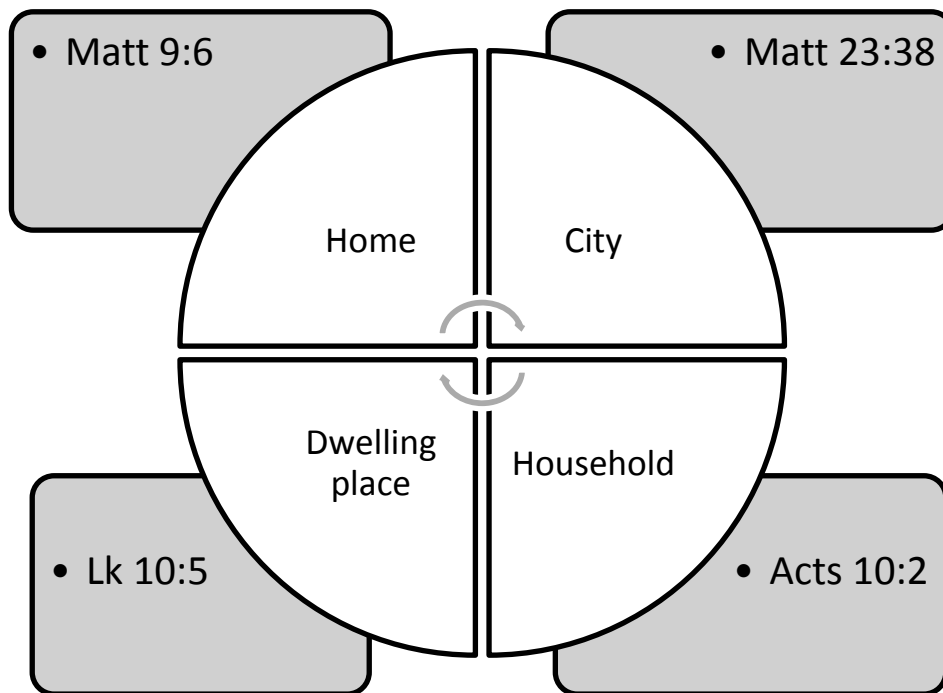
<sup>2</sup> Francis, Andrew. *Oikos: God's Big Word for a Small Planet: A Theology of Economy, Ecology, and Ecumeny*. (Eugene, OR, Cascade, 2017), 7

<sup>3</sup> Hendrickx, Herman. "The 'House Church' In Paul's Letters." *Theology Annual* vol. 12 1990-1991: 1.

<sup>4</sup> Nevett, Lisa C. *House and Society in the Ancient Greek World*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1999), 7.

<sup>5</sup> Zodhiates, Spiros. *The Complete Word Study: New Testament Dictionary*. (Iowa Falls, Iowa, Word, 1992), 1032-1033.

<sup>6</sup> Francis, *Oikos*, 6, 7.



In addition to what has been said, it is also the word from where we get the English words for ecology (habitat), and economics.<sup>7</sup> *Oikos* is in fact, a part of a group of words. For example, two other of these are “*oikonomia* originally meaning ‘household management,’ or ‘thrift,’ from *oikonomos* meaning ‘manager, steward, the word.”<sup>8</sup> So, in fact, the first real ecologists and economists were the men and women who oversaw the running of the household, e.g. Prov 31. Then later on about the 1650’s, it began to be used for the “wealth and resources of a country.”<sup>9</sup>

In light of the original way that it was used, more in the context of the running of the household and its related habitat we can get a better understanding of how we need to see it today. Subsequently, *oikos* being understood from the perspective economics and ecology gives an insight into the fact that,

“The household constituted the context for the sharing of resources among believers as well as with the wandering charismatics.”<sup>10</sup>

This was the case whether people were living in a solid building or a tent. What needs to be understood is it “focuses more on the function of the household rather than its form.”<sup>11</sup> In early Greek society, it was also the line of succession from a father to son from generation to generation.<sup>12</sup> It has also been claimed that it more than likely reflected,

“The private life of the public citizen... it was the closed space...associated with family life...it was hierarchical and dependant on the head of the *oikos*; the father.”<sup>13</sup>

As a result, the idea of the *oikos* seems to have had a connection with things of daily life, the family and city life. This is the observation from a human viewpoint. That is, it was taking care of

<sup>7</sup> Francis, *Oikos*, 5

<sup>8</sup> “Economy.” <https://www.etymonline.com/word/economy> (17<sup>th</sup> April 2018).

<sup>9</sup> “Economy.” <https://www.etymonline.com/word/economy> (17<sup>th</sup> April 2018).

<sup>10</sup> Hendrickx, “The ‘House Church,’” 1.

<sup>11</sup> Elwolde, John. “Language and Translation of the Old Testament.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies*. J.W. Rogerson & Judith M. Lieu. (eds). (Oxford: Oxford Press, 2006), 149.

<sup>12</sup> MacDowell, D.M. “The Oikos in Athenian Law.” *The Classical Quarterly*. 39. 1 (1989): 15.

<sup>13</sup> Goldhill, Simon. *Reading Greek Tragedy*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1986), 69-71.

the family (regardless of what that looked like) with the God-given gifts and talents. So, the first perspective of economy and economists and ecology ecologists was in the light of the *oikos*. It has been said that,

“From beginning to end, the first part to last part, the Bible is an ecological book.”<sup>14</sup>

For that reason, although the word *oikos* is not used in Genesis, the idea is there and laid out for Adam. Explicitly, in Genesis 2:15-17 he was placed in the Garden of Eden to tend and preserve it and could eat freely from what was raised. He was then to provide for the economics and ecology of his *oikos* from this garden. The problem is that the created order of things was ruptured. This was as a result of sin, which affected the economy and ecology (Gen 3:17-19). The *oikos* had been ruptured and remains so to this very day.

What needs to be remembered here is that the prominence, which *oikos* should have had on earth, stopped when sin entered the picture. Since then, the ruptured creation has functioned as a twisted and sin influenced misrepresentation of the true creation. So, regardless of how good things seem to be, things operate from a ruptured and distorted condition. Therefore, we cannot really know true *oikos* as it should be while here on earth. As a result, we need assistance to have some awareness of divine order and function. This has been given to us to some degree through the coming of Jesus Christ. Due to His coming, He has introduced what is known as *koinonia*. It is this that we will review within the frame of the context of ‘together’.

## 2. What is *Koinonia*?

Q. What is so noble about *koinonia*?

### A. So, what is meant by the idea of *koinonia*?

You may or may not have heard of this word, but it is often translated as ‘Fellowship.’ As Christ-followers, we tend to use the word fellowship continuously as a bit of an in-house cliché.

“‘Fellowship’ today is restricted almost exclusively in its meaning in church circles to the idea of companionship or social intercourse.”<sup>15</sup>

However, is this really what *koinonia* means? In its early democratic Greek setting, it was used to illustrate the fact of a socially “democratic exchange.”<sup>16</sup> This was within the framework of all citizens having the right to attend the assembly (*ekklesia*, ἐκκλησία from where we get the word church or called out or assembling ones), a place where people came together to hear and vote for the smartest speakers at public dialogues in Athens. This is seen in Acts chapter 17:16-34, where the elite have called Paul to come and explain his gospel. Up until this point, it was only the elite who could attend the assembly and not the common herd.<sup>17</sup> It has been said that, even though *koinonia* was an impersonal companionship while attending the assembly, it is still the opposite of public panic of not knowing the elite who attend the assembly.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, it originally meant,

“The atmosphere of impersonal fellowship rather than personal friendship, of spiritual-cum-human participation in which people can speak, hear, see, and think freely, a form of

<sup>14</sup> Zerbe, Gordon. “Ecology According to New Testament,” *Direction*, 21, no. 2 (1992): 15-26.

<http://www.directionjournal.org/21/2/ecology-according-to-new-testament.html> (19<sup>th</sup> April 2018).

<sup>15</sup> Wuest, Kenneth S. *The Practical use of the Greek New Testament*. Rev., by Donald L. Wise. (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1982), 63.

<sup>16</sup> De Maré, Patrick B. Piper, Robin & Thompson, Shelia. *Koinonia: From Hate, Through Dialogue, to Culture in the Large Group*. (New York, NY: Karnac, 1991), 2.

<sup>17</sup> De Maré, Piper, Thompson, *Koinonia*, 2.

<sup>18</sup> De Maré, Piper, Thompson, *Koinonia*, 18.

togetherness and amity that brings a pooling of resources. It was later used in the Acts of the Apostles (2:42; 4:32-35; 5:12-16).<sup>19</sup>

The first thing that needs to be said here is that, if we are honest, in our context today the word *koinonia* κοινωνία is virtually untranslatable, or else we struggle to find an acceptable English equivalent.<sup>20</sup> The word has often been taken out of its original historical setting and made to say something that it never meant, or we have lost its real meaning. For example, honestly, what do the words and concepts of 'communion' or 'fellowship' imply today away from the church community? What do we think that they mean within the communities that we live, work and play?

We have heard the phrase, 'It is lost in translation,' well this has been the case with *koinonia*. We have done a real number on this word. As a result, there have been a variety of words used to try to get an idea of its meaning. But possibly a better place to begin to try to some sort of understanding of what it is all about it to recognise that it is "both a word and a concept."<sup>21</sup> In the beginning, *koinonia* did not have any religious or Christian connotations. As was noted above, it was merely a Greek term that was used in everyday language for an impersonal socially democratic exchange.<sup>22</sup>

So, now that it is used in the Bible, how is it used? It is only used 19 in the New Testament these are all post the Gospels mainly in the letters: Acts 2:42; Rom 15:16; 1 Cor 1:9; 10:16; 2 Cor 6:14; 8:4; 9:13; 13:14; Gal 2:9; Eph 3:9; Phil 1:5; 2:1; 3:10; Phile 6; Heb 13:16; 1 Jn 1:3,6,7. It belongs to a family of *koinon-* terms and these are used some 64 times mainly in Paul's writings in its various forms.<sup>23</sup> The words used for *koinonia* in the New Testament, vary as the various interpreters into English have attempted to describe it. However, two common words or phrases have been used other than 'fellowship' and 'communion' are 'joint participation,' or 'association.' Yet, as *koinonia* is almost untranslatable into English, it may have the following meanings association, community, common table, citizenship, joint participation, solidarity, communication, intimacy, sharing a common property, contribution. It comes from the root adjective *koinos* κοινός, which basically means, having in common or communal and association.<sup>24</sup>

This is a Greek concept and word, which has no precise Hebrew equivalent.<sup>25</sup> Despite this, there is such richness with the word. As a result, translators need to be careful that they do not narrow its meaning to a selected favourite word or words to satisfy a theological bias. It needs to be remembered that,

"*Koinonia* is, therefore, more than human solidarity. It is, in the first place, the participation of the community in the life of the Father, and the Son, and in the Holy Spirit. It is *koinonia* or communion of believers with God, Jesus Christ, and their Holy Spirit, which constitutes the church."<sup>26</sup>

Consequently, we may need to revisit the idea of *koinonia* from another perspective. It is being suggested here that we attempt to relook at it from another perspective. This will need to be the

<sup>19</sup> De Maré, Piper, Thompson, *Koinonia*, 2.

<sup>20</sup> Jegen, Carol Frances. *Transformed by the Trinity: Living in the Fullness of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*. (Chicago IL: Loyola Press 2008), 80. Canlis, Julie. *Calvin's Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 7.

<sup>21</sup> Fuchs, Lorelei F. *Koinonia and the Quest for an Ecumenical Ecclesiology: From Foundations through Dialogue to Symbolic Competence for Communionality*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), xiv.

<sup>22</sup> Fuchs, *Koinonia and the Quest for an Ecumenical Ecclesiology*, 7.

<sup>23</sup> Fuchs, *Koinonia and the Quest for an Ecumenical Ecclesiology*, 9.

<sup>24</sup> Fuchs, *Koinonia and the Quest for an Ecumenical Ecclesiology*, 6.

<sup>25</sup> Fuchs, *Koinonia and the Quest for an Ecumenical Ecclesiology*, 9.

<sup>26</sup> Michiels, Robrect. "The 'Model of Church' in the First Christian Community of Jerusalem: Ideal and Reality." *Louvain Studies* 10:1 (1985): 309.

Kingdom of God perspective in the context of our current understanding that *koinonia* is almost untranslatable into English. The first thing that needs to be said is that the idea of *koinonia* is a far bigger word than we may have really acknowledged. It is pregnant with so much meaning. In trying to understand what God is saying, we have tended to drag His ideas and thoughts down to our level and lose the wonder and context of what is being expressed. But God is much bigger than we could ever imagine and what He is communicating with us is so much bigger. The problem is we have lost so much while attempting to box God and His ways into our ideas. This has been the case with *koinonia*.

## B. The *koinon* group

What stands out here is *koinonia* is part of a larger language group of words called the *koinon*-group. The *koinon*-group of words has been used in the New Testament. The usage of the word *koinonia* as part of this group that has been used within the various English translations is that it is usually translated into one of two words, either fellowship or communion. So, essentially, it describes the state of 'association' or 'joint participation.'<sup>27</sup> As seen above, in its original classical context it was also used in an informal association or partnership.<sup>28</sup> It has also been used in a "marriage contract where the husband and wife agree to a joint-participation in the necessities of life."<sup>29</sup> Other words within this group are:

- The verb *koinoneo*, *κοινωνέω*, meaning: 'to fellowship,' or "to be a partaker, to take part in."<sup>30</sup> It is used some eight times in the letters of the New Testament and is translated: once as 'contributing,' once as 'participates,' four times as 'share,' and twice as 'shared.'
- Then there is the noun *koinonos*, *κοινωνός*, which conveys the notion of: 'one who fellowships,' or 'having a share in,' 'participates in' or even "fellow associate."<sup>31</sup> It is used twice in the gospels and some eight times in the letters of the NT and is translated: four times as 'partaker,' three times as 'partner,' once as 'fellowship,' and once then as 'companion.'
- There is the adjective *koinonikos*, *κοινωνικός*, which describes: 'a willingness to fellowship or share in,' it is only used once in 1 Tim 6:18 and means to be 'willing to communicate' or 'a willingness to be social.'
- Finally, there is the adjective *koinos*, *κοινός*, which means: 'common,' 'communal' or 'mutual,' i.e. a common state of affairs. It is used some twelve times; it is used some seven times as 'common,' three times as 'unclean,' once as 'defiled,' and once as 'unholy.'<sup>32</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Barclay, William. *New Testament Words*. (Suffolk, UK: SCM, 1983), 173.

<sup>28</sup> Barclay, *New Testament Words*, 173.

<sup>29</sup> Wuest, Kenneth S. *Studies in the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 33.

<sup>30</sup> Liddell, Henry George. & Scott, Robert. *A Lexicon: Abridged from Liddell & Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*. (Oxford, London: Clarendon Press, 1935), 384

<sup>31</sup> Liddell, & Scott, *A Lexicon*, 384

<sup>32</sup> Schattenmann, J. "Fellowship: *κοινωνία*." In *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*. Vol. 1. Colin Brown. (ed.). (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency, 1975), 639-644. Pope, Kyle. "'Fellowship in the Gospel' A Study of the Greek Word Koinonia." <http://ancientroadpublications.com/Studies/BiblicalStudies/FellowshipintheGospel.html> (19<sup>th</sup> April 2018). Abbott-Smith, G. *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986), 250-251. From Pope, Kyle. "'Fellowship in the Gospel': A Study of the Greek Word Koinonia." *Biblical Insights* 4.7 (July 2004): 4-5. "Koinoneo." <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/koinoneo.html> (19<sup>th</sup> April 2018). "Koinonos." <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/kjv/koinonos.html> (19<sup>th</sup> April 2018). "Koinonikos." <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/kjv/koinonikos.html> (19<sup>th</sup> April 2018). "Koinos." (19<sup>th</sup> April 2018).

So, the word *koinonia* has such wealth of meaning that it cannot be translated into a single English word that could communicate its depth of meaning. Where there is *koinonia*, there is a noticeable attitude of generosity and servanthood. There is also another side to *koinonia*, and that is the idea of being a common companion, partner or joint-owner. That is there is a commonality or common unity of purpose and interests. When applied the matters of the kingdom of God, there needs to be a commonality of our purposes and interests. It is not them and us; it is simply us in common unity of “a joint-participation in a common interest and activity.”<sup>33</sup>

This was a shift away from its original classical context, to introduce the idea of,

“The spirit of generous sharing as contrasted with the spirit of selfish getting.”<sup>34</sup>

The concept of *koinonia* was also used as part of marriage and the bond where the husband and wife agree to a generous sharing of the essentials of married life.<sup>35</sup> So, where there is *koinonia*, there is a noticeable attitude of generosity and connection. The other side to *koinonia* is the idea of being a common companion, in partnership or joint-ownership of something held in common. This commonality and common unity of purpose and interests in effect become a joined life. When applied the matters of the kingdom of God, there needs to be a commonality of our purposes and interests that is a basis for sharing our life.

### 3. So it comes to this?

It is suggested here that there could be a more helpful way of seeing *koinonia* that is, “used especially used of the closest of all human relationships.”<sup>36</sup> The connection here is with the life of God and His Kingdom. So, the idea portrayed here by *koinonia* is that, there was once an impersonal relationship between God and those He now calls His children. We are now in a joint, common personal relationship with God. This now also extends to each other as we are those who mutually and actively have in common God’s life and things He has given. We are also working towards a common cause in the power of the Holy Spirit. This common cause is the advancement of the Kingdom of God through the preaching of the gospel, for God’s glory.

Consequently, we have a life that is divine in its origin. It is a Kingdom of God life, i.e. eternal life. This life is not merely quantity, but also quality here and now. It has been said that,

“The key truth of communion theology is that *koinonia* unites us with God the Holy Trinity and with our fellow Christians who are baptized into the Body of Christ.”<sup>37</sup>

From the moment we were born anew through the Holy Spirit we were, united into the life of God. This new life, which made us a new creation, is a reality now, every day and will continue forever.

#### A. A possible illustration

If I am honest, I have not found the surplus of words and phrases that we use helpful in attempting to explain what *koinonia* means. The reason for this is that they are either too narrow in their meaning or they have evolved to currently mean something that they never meant in their original setting. Or else the use that we now have is only relevant within church circles. So, I have come to a conclusion that, I am struggling to find an acceptable English equivalent or equivalents that do not violate the original and biblical meaning of *koinonia*. Therefore, I have had to look at this

<sup>33</sup> Wuest, *The Practical use of the Greek New Testament*, 63.

<sup>34</sup> Barclay, William. *New Testament Words*. (Suffolk, UK: SCM, 1983), 173.

<sup>35</sup> Wuest, Kenneth S. *Studies in the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 33.

<sup>36</sup> “Koinonia.” In *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament: Illustrations from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources*. James Hope Moulton & George Milligan. (eds). (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 351.

<sup>37</sup> Avis, Paul. *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology: The Church Made Whole?* (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2010), 151.



matter from another perspective to try to find a way to explain the meaning. This has led me to spend a considerable amount of time studying *koinonia* in its original context, in addition to its biblical usage. As a result, I have come to the conclusion that an illustration is perhaps a better way to approach the matter. Now there may be better illustrations, but I have settled on the following one at this time.

So, although the word *koinonia* is not used in the following section of Scripture, it may be a helpful illustration to bring about some underlying cultural clarification as for the meaning of *koinonia*. This is the illustration of the rootstock, the grafted tree and then the branches mentioned in Rom 11:16-36. This is especially if the branch was grafted onto rootstock. The reason is that it highlights the initial impersonal relationship between the rootstock and the branch being grafted into it. This then illustrates the mutual sharing and interaction of life as the grafted branch grows on the rootstock.<sup>38</sup> This illustration brings out that, although we are not initially related to God (the rootstock); we (the branch) have been grafted into Him. So, having been grafted into God and we are sharing His eternal life. Therefore,

“We do not consort with – or enter into the society of – Jesus. Rather we ‘participate’ – having a relationship of *koinonia* with Him.”<sup>39</sup>

If the illustration of *koinonia* being like the rootstock and the grafted branch (maybe not the best one), but it can help us to gain a higher understanding and perspective. That is, Christ-followers have been part of the process of grafting and interaction with God’s life. So, it is God’s eternal life that we have in common with Him and with each other due to this grafting into Him. Initially, we were not related to God we were enemies of God, (Eph 2:3: Col 1:21). Then because of the work of Jesus Christ, we grafted into God in an impersonal relationship. I have found that this illustration gives a helpful to understanding the fuller meaning of *koinonia*. So, having been grafted into God, we are sharing God’s life given to His body the church.



<sup>38</sup> Jegen, *Transformed by the Trinity*, 80.

<sup>39</sup> Canlis, *Calvin’s Ladder*, 13.

In light of what I have just said, I would like to deal some aspects of *koinonia*. These will be as follows:

It is only used 19 in the New Testament these are all post the gospels and mainly in the letters. For each of the various words that have been used in the English for *koinonia*, it is referring to the fact that all Christ-followers had been grafted into God and shared His eternal life and fruit with Him and each other. For example, Acts 2:42 would mean,

- Acts 2:42: “And they (the disciples) devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship (*koinonia* the fact that they had been grafted into God and shared His eternal life and fruit with Him and each other), to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (ESV).

According to Marvin Vincent, this continuing to devote themselves to fellowship is a “relation between individuals which involves a common interest and mutual, active participation in that interest and in each other.”<sup>40</sup>

Then *koinonia* is referring to the fact that all Christ-followers have been grafted into God and shared His eternal life and fruit with Him and each other, through the following verses.

- Rom 15:16: “For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution (*koinonia*) for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem” (ESV).
- 1 Cor 1:9: “God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship (*koinonia*) of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (ESV).
- 1 Cor 10:16: “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation (*koinonia*) in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break is it not a participation (*koinonia*) in the body of Christ?” (ESV).

The word ‘participation’ used here is the word communion that is in many Bible translations. It is a common association in regards to the holy object shared in this remembrance of Christ’s death until He returns.<sup>41</sup> So, Paul was encouraging the Corinthians in joint participation in the poured out blood and broken body of Christ, one thing that they had in common.<sup>42</sup>

- 2 Cor 6:14: “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership (this is a different word, which is *metoche* μετοχή and means sharing) has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship (*koinonia*) has light with darkness?” (ESV).
- 2 Cor 8:4: “begging us earnestly for the favour of taking part (*koinonia*) in the relief of the saints” (ESV).
- 2 Cor 9:13: “By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution (*koinonia*) for them and for all others” (ESV).
- 2 Cor 13:14: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship (*koinonia*) of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (ESV).

Here Paul in his closing words of blessing used the phrase “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.” As in Philippians 2:2, Paul uses this phrase in the same way, i.e. his usage here, is “joint participation in the necessities of life.”<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Vincent, Marvin R. “Word studies in the New Testament: Acts 2.” <http://www.godrules.net/library/vincent/vincentact2.htm> (24<sup>th</sup> April, 2018).

<sup>41</sup> Wuest, Kenneth S. *Untranslatable Riches from the Greek New Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968), 100.

<sup>42</sup> Wuest, *Studies in the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, 33.

<sup>43</sup> Wuest, *Untranslatable Riches from the Greek New Testament*, 97.

- Gal 2:9: “and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship (koinonia) to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised” (ESV).
- Eph 3:9: “and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan (koinonia) of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things” (ESV).
- Phil 1:5: “because of your partnership (koinonia) in the gospel from the first day until now” (ESV).

Vincent describes it as a “relation between individuals which involves a common interest and a mutual, active participation in that interest and in each other.”<sup>44</sup> He also points out that this word in the “secular Greek as a commercial term for a joint-partnership in a business venture in which all parties actively participate to ensure the success of the business.”<sup>45</sup>

What stands out here is that it is not just a social partnership, rather as Wuest highlights, that this was the Philippians’ joint-participation with Paul in a common interest and activity of preaching the Gospel. The preposition ‘in’ is a preposition of motion. This common interest and activity were in the advancement of the Gospel.<sup>46</sup> That is, it the motion and progress of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in which they are in joint-participation with Paul.<sup>47</sup>

- Phil 2:1: “So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation (koinonia) in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy” (ESV).

But what does Paul mean by this phrase? It is a “common interest and mutual and active participation in the things of God in which the believer and the Holy Spirit are joint-participants.”<sup>48</sup>

- Phil 3:10: “that I (Paul) may know Him (Jesus Christ) and the power of His resurrection, and may share (koinonia) His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death” (ESV).
- Phile 6: “and I pray that the sharing (koinonia) of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ” (1:6 ESV).
- Heb 13:16: “Do not neglect to do good and to share (koinonia) what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God” (ESV).
- 1 Jn 1:3,6,7: <sup>3</sup> “that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship (koinonia) with us; and indeed our fellowship (koinonia) is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ... <sup>6</sup> “If we say we have fellowship (koinonia) with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. <sup>7</sup> But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship (koinonia) with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin” (ESV).

<sup>44</sup> Vincent, “Word studies in the New Testament.” <http://www.godrules.net/library/vincent/vincentphi1.htm> (28<sup>th</sup> April 2018).

<sup>45</sup> Vincent, “Word studies in the New Testament.” <http://www.godrules.net/library/vincent/vincentphi1.htm> (28<sup>th</sup> April 2018).

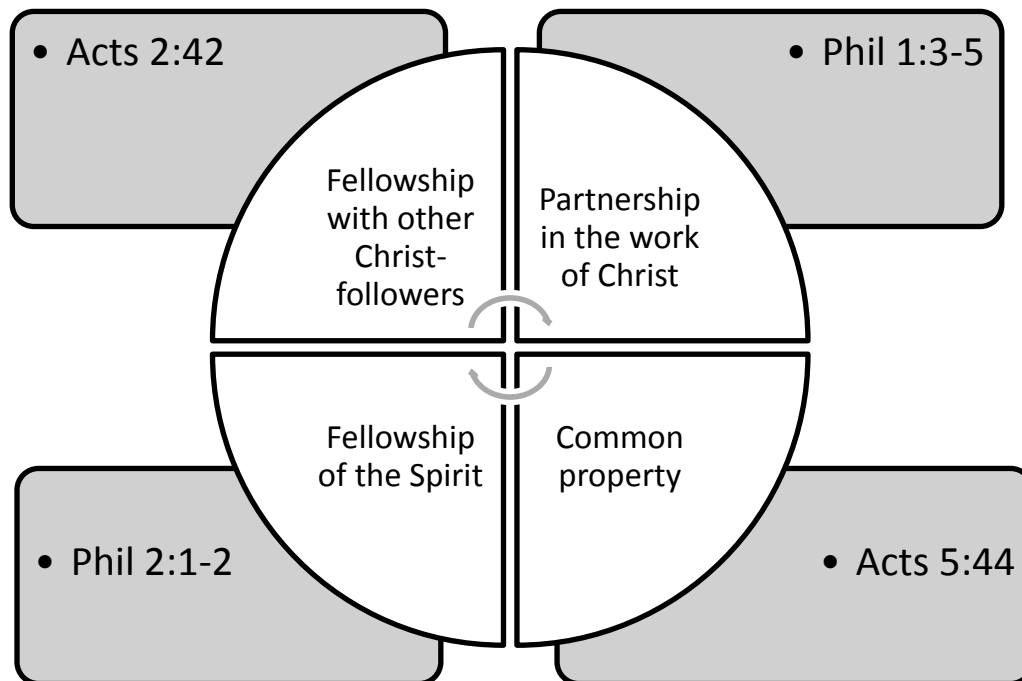
<sup>46</sup> Wuest, Kenneth S. *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Studies in the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*. Vol. Two. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1966), 31.

<sup>47</sup> Wuest, Kenneth S. *Treasures from the Greek New Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1966), 55 & 66.

Wuest, Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament, 57.

<sup>48</sup> Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament*, 57.

A representative of what has been said here can be seen as follows,



Therefore, the Kingdom of God truth here is that *koinonia* has firstly united us with God the Holy Trinity, as we are grafted in the stock root, which is God Himself. Then also we are in *koinonia* with our fellow Christ-followers. This makes up the body of Christ with God as the head of the body.

## Some Concluding Thoughts

**Q.** How big is the idea of together, is it something that is bigger than us, I mean is it really big?

So, the idea portrayed by *koinonia* is that was initially an impersonal relationship. However, now it is the fact that all Christ-followers have been grafted into God and shared His eternal life and fruit with Him and each other. It is the grafting into the life of the Father, and the Son, and in the Holy Spirit, but we still remain who we are and do not lose our identity. There is a life that flows from God into His children that bring about mutually and activity to possess all things in common. This needs to work towards a common cause in the power of the Holy Spirit, for the advancement of the Gospel, for the extension of the Kingdom of God and His glory.

There is the divine-human relationship, which was sealed and delivered (so to speak) in the blood of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit living in the church. As proof of this is that, God placed His down payment or seal in our heart in the divine person of His Holy Spirit as the guarantee of our inheritance.

<sup>13</sup> “In Whom, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also believed in Him, you were sealed in whom with the Holy Spirit of promise, <sup>14</sup> who is given as a pledge (down payment, quaranteeing the full payment of all) of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory” (Eph 1:13-14 NASB).

Like any group of people, most of the early Christ-followers would have understood this truth of being grafted into God. Most of them but not all would have lived with a common interest and mutual and active participation in the things of God in which the believer and the Holy Spirit are

joint-participants as indwelt with the Holy Spirit. This is why Paul had even to mention this issue over and over and from various angles. Since the problem was that, they were not all living life as ones who had been grafted into God by the Holy Spirit. In fact, the only way for there to be this kind of unity as if they all live Spirit influenced lives. Living in light of being like-minded that they had been grafted into God, and then and only then could they be 'together' living from the truth of *koinonia* with each other.<sup>49</sup>

Remember that this kind of 'togetherness' needs to be a vital and dynamic part of our life as Christ-followers everywhere, of which we are a part. It is living from the truth of being grafted into an intimate relationship with God and His will His kingdom's sake and each other.

- So, from God's point of view, why is it vital to see that we have been grafted into Him?
- Can you/we be in true *koinonia* with God, if you/we are out of true *koinonia* with each other?
- Can we truly be part of the Church at large without *koinonia*?
- What could be the effect on us if we all lived Spirit influenced lives, from the perspective of having been grafted into God and sharing His eternal life and fruit with Him and each other?
- What are some of the practical ways that you/we are able to express this with each other starting today?
- Then how do you intend to maintain it on Monday through Saturday?

Well, if we are not all living life as grafted into God by the Holy Spirit, then what are we doing? The only way for there to be this kind of 'togetherness,' to work is to recognise the truth that we are all grafted into God and live from that truth. Then and only then can we live together the way that God intended in a life influenced by the Holy Spirit. Only then can we see the advancement of the gospel, and the extension of the kingdom of God and His glory.

We would do well to remember that, we are not the whole centre of the universe; God is the centre of all things and there are also other people in the universe. This is not a partnership of one! It is a love lubricated joint *koinonia*. Is our togetherness expected to have problems? Of course, but we need to lift our eyes and see God our life and existence. Today, and Monday and Tuesday and so on, we all need to live Spirit influenced lives, in *koinonia* with Him and with each other. Therefore, remember that, *koinonia* it is referring to the fact that, all Christ-followers have been grafted into God and shared His eternal life and fruit with Him and each other.

<sup>49</sup> Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament*, 58.