

Stop Going to Church – Koinonia

2/19/23

Acts 2:42-47

Sunday AM

I read an article recently about the (7) reasons people choose not to attend church. Here's what I think!

- **The church is full of hypocrites**

You'd fit right in. NTL – it's better to go to church w/ a few hypocrites than to hell w/ all of them.

- **I'm against organized religion**

Me too – and if you show up here a few times you'll quickly learn we can be quite disorganized as well.

- **I don't believe in God**

That's okay – b/c God believes in you.

- **Church people are so judgmental**

Sometimes, but no one is perfect – at least most of the time we're forgiving too.

- **I need to get right w/ God before going to church**

Yeah... that's just backward! And the church is here to help you along the way.

- **I'm just not being fed**

What if the church wasn't here to feed you but to equip/encourage you to feed yourself and others?

- **Churches just want my money**

Not really. The church can make it w/out your money, but you can't make it w/out God.

In case you missed last Sunday, we started a series of lessons leading up to our 50th church anniversary entitled – **Stop Going to Church**. Yes. You heard me.

Last Sunday, I encouraged each/every one of us to stop going to church. Why? B/c **God never intended for us to go to church**. From the very beginning, He's only wanted us to BE the church.

SEE – God's highest calling on our lives was never for us to just walk into a church building, shake a few hands, sing a few songs, listen to a sermon, and leave. His calling is for us to be conformed to the image of Christ – *together*, to walk w/ the H.S. in an abiding life – *together*, and to **BE** His church by being His hands, feet, and voice to the world around us – *together*.

This has always been, and will forever be, God's purpose for His church no matter how conditioned we may've become to what too many churches have become... some watered-down, entertain-me, tickle-your-ears, consumer-focused gathering of people who profess to follow Jesus so long as He doesn't invade their lives. LWF... **Church is a verb – not a noun!**

So, it is w/ great confidence, compassion, and concern that I say – **Jesus started the church the way He wanted it, and now He wants it the way He started it.**

So, **how did God start the church?** For this insight, we have to go to the book of Acts.

Remind – 50 days after Jesus was crucified, on the day of Pentecost, the H.S. descended upon the disciples in an unmistakable way and all-heaven broke loose.

On that day, the H.S. revealed Himself w/ miraculous signs/wonders, Peter broke out in a sermon, and over 3,000 people believed in Jesus as their Messiah and were saved – **and the church was born.**

As a result of this miraculous moment – we discover what the church began doing in **Acts 2:42-47** – which I believe are the **essential qualities** Jesus wanted for His church at the beginning that He again wants today.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. Everyone was filled w/ awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together w/ 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 2:42-47

Notice again – ***they devoted themselves...***

It means these early believers were focused on what God was doing in/among them w/ an unwillingness to compromise or change anything that might hinder their faith or witness. They were **all-in** w/ God and w/ one another, striving together for the cause of Christ – ***all for one and one for all.***

And what were they devoted to – (1) the apostle's teachings, (2) to koinonia, (3) to the breaking of bread, (4) to prayer, and (5) to seeing what God was going to do next in, thru, and among them.

Last week – we focused on their devotion to the Apostle's teaching – today, I want us to focus on what it means to be devoted to the Biblical ***koinonia***. And I believe if we can get this truth – it'll change our lives, our church, and our community.

In my estimation, ***koinonia*** (*fellowship*) is one of the most mistranslated/misunderstood words in the N.T.

SEE – Most people think about *popcorn*, *parties*, and *picnics* w/ our church friends – or hanging out after church for *coffee*, *cakes*, and *cookies* in Jesus' name.

In fact, just for fun this week, I asked a random group of people to explain to me their view of church fellowship – and here are a few of their responses:

- Fellowship is getting together w/ church friends to hang out, watch a game, and eat food.
- Fellowship is getting church people together to play games, eat food, and gossip w/ about each other.
- Can you say... “I love me some – fried chicken!”
- One word – POTLUCK!

Let me assure you that Biblical ***koinonia*** is much, much more than hanging out over a bucket of KFC!

It reminds me of the 1st graders who were asked to bring a symbol of their faith to school for show-and-tell. The Catholic girl brought a rosary, the Muslim boy brought a prayer rug, the Jewish boy brought a Star of David, and the Baptist boy brought a casserole.

koinonia – *belonging* to one another or sharing life. It describes having close, personal relationships w/ others so as to commune and be in tune w/ them.

I love (2) ideas in this definition. (1) we belong to each other – meaning we have the responsibility to look out and care for each other. That is, we're to love/care for each other more than we care for ourselves. (2) We're also to be in tune w/ each other and w/ God – as in on the same page, seeking God's will in unison.

Adrian Rogers once spoke to this idea referring to how it's next to impossible to tune (2) pianos to each other. But if you tune each piano separately w/ a tuning fork – DYK what happens? They'll be tuned together. In **koinonia** – when you're in tune w/ Jesus, and I'm in tune w/ Jesus – then you're going to be in-tune w/ me, and I'm going to be in-tune w/ you – and together we will be in-tune w/ God.

Well... to help get us in-tune w/ God's word, I want to share some insights about koinonia from **Galatians 6:1-10**. In this text, Paul offers us (6) key ingredients to walking in *koinonia* together.

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass or sin, you who are spiritual should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself, lest you be tempted also. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each person examine their own work, and then they will have rejoicing in themselves alone, and not in another. For each one shall bear their own load. Let the person who is taught the Word share in all good things w/ the one who teaches. Do not be deceived, God will not be mocked; for whatever a person sows, they will also reap. For the one who sows to their flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but to the one who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. Galatians 6:1-10

I Koinonia **HELPS** Those Who've Stumbled

if a man is overtaken in any trespass or sin, you who are spiritual should restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself, lest you be tempted.

TRUTH – we're all going to (1) make mistakes, (2) operate in our flesh, and (3) sometimes choose a way that seems right to us – b/c none of us is perfect.

But in true koinonia – when we stumble, we have others to help pick us up. Face it – *in a world that kicks a man when he's down, in the church, we're to pick each other up and help one another out.*

This doesn't mean we turn a blind eye to sin or give each other a free pass to live in opposition w/ God – quite to the contrary... we're to deal openly/honestly w/ our human frailties and fleshly tendencies to help each other to overcome the *wiles* of the devil, the *will* of the flesh, and the *ways* of the world.

II Koinonia **BEARS** Each Other's Burdens

Bear one another's burdens to fulfill the law of Christ

Just as we're to *cast our cares upon the Lord* – we're also to cast our cares upon one another. Sometimes for Godly counsel/encouragement, sometimes for prayer, and sometimes, just to lend a hand. Yet in all things – we're to be personally engaged w/ each other meeting one another at the point of our need in Jesus' name.

LOOK – Life is hard. It's full of ups-and-downs and ends-and-outs – and NO one gets thru life unscathed or w/out having to handle a burden or two.

In true koinonia, we don't leave each other on a deserted island to fend for ourselves, we come alongside them to help shoulder the load and see each other thru to the other side.

So, if a brother needs financial help, we give support to them. If they need a shoulder to cry on, we lend our arms. If they need counsel, we offer godly advice – and in all of these things... we pray w/ and for them.

III Koinonia **KEEPS** One Another Humble

For if anyone thinks they are something, when they are really nothing, they deceive themselves

If we're being honest, we all suffer w/ thinking more highly/lowly of ourselves than we should. We're more focused on our earthly wants, whims, and needs 1st – and others 2nd. Frankly, ***we're consumed w/ ourselves***. But in koinonia, we're to keep each other on the level.

For I say to everyone who is among you, thru the grace given to me, don't think more of yourself than you ought to think – but to think honestly of yourselves, as God has given to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all the members don't have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and members of one another. Romans 12:3-5

Paul said – God has brought us together to help us to think rightly of ourselves and to help us to be a part of something greater and more important than ourselves. And since the greatest hindrance to God moving in and thru our lives is our own arrogance/self-reliance, we have one another to help us think rightly of ourselves.

IV Koinonia **INVESTS** God's Truth to Each Other

Let the person who is taught the Word share in all good things w/ the one who teaches

Let me make this simple – God wants us to help each other to live out His Word/Truths in our lives.

Now, I'm not referring to the idea of a verse a day to keep the devil away – but actually spending time in His Word to influence each other to know/obey it.

This is why LIFE Groups/GROW Groups are so important. They're purpose is to get us into the Word, so we can get the Word into one another. But it's more than a Bible study to increase our head knowledge – it's a shared journey to speak truth into one another's lives so God's precepts can be lived out in our lives.

V Koinonia **SPURS** Each Other Along

Do not be deceived, God will not be mocked; for whatever a person sows, they will also reap. For the one who sows to their flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but to the one who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

Holding each other accountable begins w/ wanting the best for each other. And understanding that we will all reap what we sow – if we want each other to be blessed, then we have to spur each other along in faith.

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another... Hebrews 10:19-24

This means in Biblical koinonia, ***I'm your biggest fan and you're my biggest fan***. We're cheering each other along in the faith. I'm looking out for you and you're looking out for me. If I see you going in the wrong direction – I speak up to encourage you; and if you see me going in the wrong direction, you encourage me. Why? B/c we want God's best for each other.

VI Koinonia **SERVES** Each Other

And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart..., especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Isn't this what Jesus modeled for us in the Upper Room when He washed the disciple's feet – when He washed the feet of a pious Peter, a doubting Thomas, and a betraying Judas. **Consider His final words...**

When He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher/Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, then you also ought to serve one another. John 13:12-14

Jesus was teaching his followers that to serve another person requires putting that person above yourself by making their agenda more important than your own.

It's giving your *time, talents, and treasures* – along w/ your *energy, effort, and enthusiasm* to meet someone else at the point of their need to help them out and to better their life. **It's putting others before yourself!**

This is koinonia.

- Serving each other
- Spurring one another along in the journey
- Investing God's Word
- Keeping each other thinking rightly of ourselves
- Bearing each other's burdens
- Picking one another up when we've blown it

Meaning – Biblical koinonia is invasive/personal – and it requires a willingness to get fully engaged in one another's business – being patiently willing to stick your hands into the goop of someone else's life b/c you want God's best for them.

Who do you have in your life who fits that bill? Who cares more about you than you do for yourself? In biblical koinonia – we should all be so fortunate to have such a friend in our lives.

The question this AM is are we willing to open our lives up to BE such a church?