
The Communion of the Saints

Part 10:

The Fellowship of the Church



Introduction

- “No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bells tolls; it tolls for thee.”

--John Donne


Introduction

- Scripture: Corporate Christianity
 - America: Rugged Individualism
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- **The Doctrine of the Church:**

- What is the Church?
- The Mission of the Church
- The Case for Church Membership
- Equipping the Church
- The Ordinance of Baptism
- The Ordinance of the Lord's Supper
- Understanding the Lord's Day
- The Corporate Worship of the Church
- The Government of the Church

- **The Practice of the Church:**

-  □ The Fellowship of the Church
 - The Unity and Diversity of the Church
 - The Purity of the Church
 - Use of Spiritual Gifts in the Church
 - Tithing and Giving to the Church
 - When the Church Disappoints: Dealing with Church Hurt
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Fellowship is Defined by Participation in Christ

- **John Piper:** “the mutual bond that Christians have with Christ that unites us in a profound and eternal relationship of love that should express itself in joyful and affectionate service for each other’s good.”
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Fellowship is Defined by Participation in Christ

- **Acts 2:42** “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”
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Fellowship is Defined by Participation in Christ

- Fellowship = “Koinonia”
 - From root word “koine” meaning **common**
 - The main idea of koinonia is **sharing**
 - Various translated as:
 - participation, partnership, union communion, communication
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Fellowship is Defined by Participation in Christ

- What makes our fellowship distinctly Christian is Christ
 - **1 John 1:3:** “That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have *fellowship with us*; and indeed our *fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.*”
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Fellowship is Defined by Participation in Christ

- We must never **subtract** from the meaning of fellowship
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Fellowship is Defined by Participation in Christ

- We must never **add** to the meaning of fellowship
 - We should not make peripheral issues central



Fellowship is Reflective of the Trinity

- When true Christians engage in fellowship they reflect the **Triune God** Himself
 - The first fellowship occurred in eternity past
 - **John 17:21**: “that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”
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Fellowship is Reflective of the Trinity

- **Baker Evangelical Dictionary:** “koinonia has its origin in a movement out of the internal, eternal relation, relatedness, and communion of the Godhead of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Koinonia for believers is thus a participation within human experience of the communion of the living God himself.”
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Fellowship is Reflective of the Trinity

- **John 17:21** again: “that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”
 - **John 13:35:** “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”
 - Fellowship has the power to **evangelize**
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Fellowship is Representative of New Life

- **Acts 2:44:** “And all those who had believed were together.”
 - **Then Acts 2:46:** “Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart.”
 - Being a Christian is not just about doing things that are new, it is about **becoming someone** who is new
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Fellowship is Representative of New Life

- A sign of new life is **seeking fellowship**
 - **1 John 3:14:** “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.”



Fellowship is Representative of New Life

- “I suddenly realized I would rather talk about the Lord all day with the humblest old fisherwoman than to sit in a club with my social peers in the company of the highest circles who don’t know Him. I feel a oneness with people who are not from my class at all.”

--Lloyd-Jones

Fellowship is Representative of New Life

- Love of the brethren is one of the indications of our **spiritual health**
 - If you do not seek fellowship, this may indicate spiritual decline
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Fellowship is Marked by Mutual Investment

- **Acts 2:44-46:** And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; **45** and they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. **46** Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart.”
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Fellowship is Marked by Mutual Investment

- There is a **reciprocal** nature to Christian fellowship
 - 59 “one anothers or each others” in the New Testament
 - 40 verses with a “one another or an each other”
 - **Romans 1:12**: “that I may be encouraged together with you *while* among you, each of us by the other’s faith, both yours and mine.”
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Fellowship is Marked by Mutual Investment

- **Jl Packer:** “Christian fellowship is an expression of both love and humility. It springs from a desire to bring benefit to others coupled with a sense of personal weakness and need. It has a double motive: the wish to help and to be helped, to edify and to be edified. It has a double aim: to do and to receive good.”
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Fellowship is Marked by Mutual Investment

- To have true koinonia, you must have a desire both to **give** and to **receive**
 - If you only have desire to receive, then this is a consumer attitude
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Fellowship is Marked by Mutual Investment

- If you only desire to give then this may reflect an attitude of **self sufficiency** or elitism
 - True fellowship is being humble enough to receive and being loving enough to give
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Fellowship is Marked by Mutual Investment

- Congregation

- **Acts 6:2:** calls the church “the congregation of the disciples.”



Fellowship is Marked by Mutual Investment

| Aggregation | Congregation |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| collection of separate parts | collection of interconnected parts |



Fellowship is Sustained by Sacrificial Love

- **Acts 2:45:** “they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.”
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Fellowship is Sustained by Sacrificial Love

- **Selfishness** brings death to the community
 - **James 4:1-2:** “What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? **2** You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel.”
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Fellowship is Sustained by Sacrificial Love

- **John 13:34:** “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”
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Fellowship is Sustained by Sacrificial Love

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



Fellowship is Sustained by Sacrificial Love

- **Self Sacrificial** love brings life to the community
 - Jesus experienced **loneliness** so that we could experience togetherness
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Fellowship is Sustained by Sacrificial Love

- **Thomas Howard:** “No child has ever received life except through the laying down of the mother’s life in bearing and nourishing him. And somebody has to lay down his or her life to care for and train and provide for children year after year after year. We live only because someone else has lived by this principle of the laying down of a life. This laying down of life always entails a death. The ‘my life for yours’ principle is the only one in which any life at all is possible. To embrace it is to live but to refuse it is to spiritually die and spread death. There it is: heaven or hell lurking in your living room.”
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Fellowship is Sustained by Sacrificial Love

- **1 John 3:16:** “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.”



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- “Of all the confounded nuisances you are the worst, Sam!” Frodo said.
 - “Oh, Mr. Frodo, that’s hard!” said Sam shivering. “That’s hard, trying to go without me and all. If I hadn’t guessed right, where would you be now?”
 - “Safely on my way.”
 - “Safely!” said Sam. “All alone and without me to help you? I couldn’t have borne it, it’d have been the death of me.”
 - “It would be the death of you to come with me, Sam,” said Frodo, “and I could not have borne that. I am going to Mordor.”
 - “I know that well enough, Mr. Frodo. Of course you are. And I’m coming with you.”
 - Frodo actually laughed. A sudden warmth and gladness touched his heart. “So my plan is spoilt!” said Frodo. “It is no good trying to escape you. But I’m glad, Sam. I cannot tell you how glad. Come along! It is plain that were meant to go together.”
 - So Frodo and Sam set off on the last stage of the Quest together.
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