**Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church** **2080 West Grand Blvd.**

**Detroit, Michigan 48208**

**Nathan Johnson, D.D., Senior Pastor**

**“True Community - The Biblical Practice of Koinonia”[[1]](#footnote-1)**

**Lesson 4: Fellowship and Community**

**Goal**: To learn what true community is and to practice Biblical Koinonia

**Objective:** To experience the spiritual community where members share a common life in Jesus Christ.

**Scripture:** “*so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.” (Roman 12:5 ESV)*

True fellowship (Koinonia) is vital for the growth and maturity of the church today. As believers we share a common life together in Christ and that places us in community with each other. This relationship is known as koinonia. However, our Christian community is not restricted to location or membership of a particular congregation, every follower of Christ regardless of race, culture, or socio-economic status has been baptized into one body; the body of Christ. Therefore, koinonia expresses the partnership and spiritual organic relationship we have with Christ and fellow believers in the entire universe[[2]](#footnote-2) (Bridges, Jerry. *True Community*).

Our Christian fellowship, which is our biblical application of koinonia should motivate us to share the personal testimonies and experiences we have with God with one another. This helps to strengthen the faith of our brothers and sisters as well as deepen our relationship with God. All Christians are part of the body of Christ. The church body as a whole has a diverse membership with different gifts and different ways of serving in church. As such, we must seek to maintain spiritual unity that will bring honor to God. Just as the human body has many different parts (e.g. eye, ear, hand and foot and etc.), so does the body of Christ when exercising their spiritual gifts and methods of service. We should all work together synergistically. One part cannot function effectively without the other.

*For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it* is *with Christ (1 Corinthian 12:12, ESV)*

This month’s lesson emphasizes the biblical practice of *koinonia* through spiritual fellowship with people who share a common life in Jesus Christ. We often encounter many people in our day-to-day activities without acknowledging that we share a common life in Jesus Christ. Our personal relationships with the Lord ought to be valued and seen by others as light in a dark world rather than something we cherish in privacy and keep hidden.

**14**“*You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.* ***15****Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.* ***16****In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven*. Matthew 5: 15-16, KJV

We must distinguish ourselves from the world and exhibit among the people of God Christlikeness expressed through our own personalities with a willingness to be recognizable because of Christ’s death for us and our common relationship with Christ. This requires a degree of assurance of who we are in Christ and courageousness, especially when we venture to share a testimony, the gospel, or the Word of God with someone. Jesus tells us, *“You are the light of the world…. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, which is in heaven. (Matthew 5:14, 16 NKLV)* Our lights get brighter as we join with other lights.

# Love and Care for One Another

When we as a Christ-centered community of believers truly apply the principles of Koinonia; loving one another, maintaining spiritual unity, and living in harmony with each other, we should feel compelled to love and care for one another. As we seek to care for one another this often involves being a helper sensitive to the needs of others and an encourager. Paul states that all parts of the body should have equal concern for each other[[3]](#footnote-3). This means paying attention to our sick and shut-in lists, the bereaved, and prayer requests.

“*that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. (1 Corinthian 12:25 ESV)*

# Honor One Another

Yes, our fellowship should be characterized by concern and care instead of condemnation and criticism, but we should go even a step further.[[4]](#footnote-4) It is not only what we should not do, but what we ought to *do* proactively as we join with others in our endeavors to fulfill God’s will in relationship to other believers. Paul teaches us that we must learn to “honor one another above ourselves.” *(Romans 12:10).* This means showing respect, genuine appreciation and admiration for our Christian brothers and sisters by putting them first.

“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor

 preferring one another;” (Romans 12:10, KJV)

*Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.*

*(Roman 12:10, ESV)*

# Reprove One Another

We may experience the need and have the occasion to reprove, or reprimand, one another. As we do so, we ought to seriously pray for guidance, wisdom, and discretion from God along with an ability to express genuine concern in a loving caring manner rather than expressing self- righteousness or a tone of criticism and condemnation. Paul instructs us in Ephesians 4:15 to *speak the truth in love*. Even when one may have fallen into a sin trap, we must be careful not to criticize or condemn, but ask God to move us with compassion to help restore our brother.

“*Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness…..” (Galatians 6:1)*

# Pray for One Another

Finally, we are exhorted to pray constantly without ceasing (1Thessalonians 5:17). We know that prayer changes things. However, our prayers should not always be focused solely on ourselves, but our prayers should include the entire church body, the unsaved, and their particular concerns. As the church body grows and matures, we will have a stronger spiritual community where members can support, disciple, and edify one another as well as evangelize the unsaved.

“*Confess* your *trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16)*

**Discussion Question #1:**

What is your response to the idea of rejoicing in the growth of another believer?

**Discussion Question #2:**

As we share a common life in Jesus Christ what are a few biblical models that can help us experience fellowship through a Christ- centered spiritual community?

**Point to Ponder:**

What does it mean to you to use the metaphor, *the* *body of Christ,* in reference to fellow believers?

**Helpful Scripture Passages:**

1 Corinthian 12: Romans 12: Ephesians 4:

**Closing Prayer:**

Father, as we seek to grow in the true meaning of biblical fellowship help us to experience Your blessings as we share our common life with You among other believers. Enable us to grow in patience, love, and longsuffering instead of criticism and condemnation. Lord we pray that we cooperate with and honor each other. May we always seek to pray for and restore those who may be offensive or whose actions are of concern. Lord we submit ourselves to the guidance of Your Holy Spirit for Your glory. In Jesus Name we pray! Amen!

1. Bridges, Jerry. True Community - The Biblical Practice of Koinonia. Colorado Springs, CO, NavPress (2012) Print. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Bridges, Jerry. True Community - The Biblical Practice of Koinonia. Colorado Springs, CO, NavPress (2012) Print. Pg .50

 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Bridges, Jerry. True Community - The Biblical Practice of Koinonia. Colorado Springs, CO, NavPress (2012) Print. Pg. 51

 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-4)