

Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church
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Introduction – “The Biblical Practice of Koinonia”¹

Introduction Objective: To introduce the true meaning of Christian fellowship (Koinonia) and its biblical practices.

Scripture: Acts 2:42...*“And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”*

This winter, we are embarking on a new study entitled “True Community -The Biblical Practice of Koinonia” written by Jerry Bridges. Looking at Acts 2:42, we find a wonderful response to Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost: *“And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”* It is hoped and expected that new converts would devote themselves to the teaching of the Word of God, but here we observe that they took it three steps further; they committed to fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. In this context, it is more than a social activity practiced by Christians. The word *fellowship* appears for the first time in the New Testament in this passage. In the original language, the word *fellowship* is *Koinonia*, meaning *participation, communion, and fellowship*. These newly converted believers felt the necessity to connect with one another in fraternal fellowship and to firmly establish themselves in the truth of God’s Word by practicing communion, the Lord’s Supper, and prayer.

Our perspective of fellowship or *Koinonia* is enlarged when we examine 1 John 2:3; *“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.”* First of all, we note that it is freely extended to believers. This fellowship or *Koinonia* extends not only to one another, but also to the Father and the Son. This suggests that God wants a relationship with us. As believers in Christ, we share the very life of God by virtue of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Due to our salvation in Jesus Christ, we all share a common life in Christ. When we received Christ as our Savior, we were placed in Christ. We were given this new identity by the indwelling by the Holy Spirit.

In addition to relationship, (**Relationship** – sharing together the very life of God), three other dimensions of *Koinonia* can be uncovered:

- **Partnership** – a community of believers in action for Christ.

¹ Bridges, Jerry. True Community - The Biblical Practice of Koinonia. Colorado Springs, CO, NavPress (2012) Print.

Paul and Silas were missionary partners. When we join together to further the mission of the church or to expand the kingdom of God through evangelism or discipleship, we are working together for a purpose in Christian partnership.

- **Communion With Others** - revealing to other Christians what God has done in our lives.

Even though, we share the Lord's Supper during the communion service with fellow believers, communion with others can take on another level of meaning. *It may be the mutual sharing of what one learned or was taught from God's Word.* [Jerry Bridges, *True Community*, p.12] How often are we sharing with our family, friends, and acquaintances what God revealed to us or what He has done on behalf of someone? These faith building opportunities can connect us together on a deeper spiritual level causing us to grow and mature in Christ.

- **Sharing Material Possessions** – sharing your belongings with others in need.

Many churches readily demonstrate this element of *koinonia*, *sharing with others*. When we care for the needs of others in the body of Christ and in the surrounding community, by our benevolent giving of items or finances, we have fellowship with others we don't know who may or may not be believers yet.

Summary

The Greek word *koinonia* means true spiritual fellowship as practiced by the New Testament church. It can further be defined as close association involving mutual interests and sharing, association, communion, fellowship, and close relationship.² This definition may also include 'an attitude of good will that manifests an interest in a close relationship, generosity, fellow-feeling, altruism. We found that it requires sharing God's word versus simply carrying out the usual social activities such as drinking coffee or eating together while joyfully laughing and discussing personal or current events, etc. These latter events can be construed as Christian fellowship, but in essence are not much different than everyday social fellowship. We learned from Acts 2:42, that a steadfast level of Christian devotion in several areas is involved. "And, they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:42) As a result of this study, it is hoped that Christian fellowship will grow to include the biblical practice of fellowship, *Koinonia*.

Discussion Question #1: What are the benefits of Christian fellowship in the body of Christ?

Discussion Question #2: What are some ways that we can engage in Christian fellowship that will have lasting value?

Points to Ponder: Ask the Lord to show you some persons to reach out to in the body of Christ during the next church gatherings.

Helpful Scripture Passages: Philippians 2: 1-4 Hebrews 13: 16 I Timothy 6:18

² Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000). A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Prayer: Dear God help us to be more Christ-like each day. Grant us hearts of genuine love, concern, and care for one another in Christ. Show us ways to encourage, strengthen, and support one another. Amen.