

Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church
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Detroit, Michigan 48208
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“True Community - The Biblical Practice of Koinonia”¹

Lesson 2: Union with God

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

Objective: To experience the Union of God through His Son Jesus Christ

Scripture “*God, who has called you into fellowship with his son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.*” (1 Corinthians 1:9)

This month we will further explore the meaning of *koinōnia*, the Greek word in Scripture, which is commonly translated **fellowship, sharing, partnership, and participation**. First of all, we note in 1 Corinthians 1:9, that God has called us into fellowship with His Son. This fellowship with Jesus is freely accessible to believers. Last month, we learned that our perspective of fellowship or *Koinonia* is enlarged when we examine 1 John 1: 2-3. 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.* This **fellowship or Koinonia extends not only to one another, believers, but also to the Father and the Son**. Apart from Jesus Christ who makes it possible for us to share a common spiritual life with Him and one another, no one can have fellowship, participation, or communion with the Father and the Son.

In both Acts 2:42 and 1 John 1:3, the New English Bible translates *koinōnia* as sharing a common life. On every first Sunday we take communion, just as in Acts 2:42, when the Christians ‘devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, the fellowship to the breaking of bread and prayer’, it was not a social activity for them and neither is it for us. It is **a relationship** where we **share together** the very life of God and Jesus Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. As we **participate** in communion with God, we are also in communion with one another on a close personal and spiritual level. Each first Sunday, we **share from our possessions** when we contribute to the benevolence fund. In addition, *koinōnia* can consist of **sharing great truths** with other believers what we have learned from Scriptures or when we share words of encouragement with others. At Tabernacle, we certainly want to **participate** in fellowship and sharing with our new members of the church. Our sharing should be from a pure

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

heart. Christ Jesus willingly gave of Himself with nothing expected in return. With that in mind, how ought we to share with each other?

Through faith in Christ, we are saved and are in union with God, intimately and inseparably connected to Him [Romans 8:9, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Colossians 1:27, 1John 5:20, 1John 2:24, John 17:21, 1Corinthians 1:30, Ephesians 5:30]. We are formed into a spiritually organic or living community.² [Jerry Bridges, *True Community*, pg. 12] Now, we can begin to understand **true community**. We cannot have true community unless we practice true fellowship [Bridges, pgs. 15-16].³

While **our relationship in Christ** describes us as believers in community, **partnership** describes us as **a community of believers in action**. Luke used a form of *koinōnia* to refer to the partnership of Peter with James and John in the fishing business (see Luke 5:10). At Tabernacle, when we join or **partner** with the Evangelism, Health, Missionaries, Autumn Fellowship, and Benevolence Ministries to “claim” and provide for our “Jerusalem”, we are sharing and demonstrating **active partnership**, *koinōnia*, to save lost souls, to reclaim those who have slipped away, or to share with others.

We must be united to Christ by our saving faith before we can have fellowship with Him on a daily basis.⁴ By virtue of the acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we already have (an objective) relationship with Him. As believers in Christ Jesus, we must make it our daily mission to spend time in **active fellowship or koinōnia with God**. This (subjective) experience may include practice of spiritual disciplines such as quiet time alone in His Word along with meditation and time spent listening for what God has to say to us through His Word.

Both aspects of our faith—that is, the objective (*our acceptance of Christ by faith as the basis of fellowship with believers*) and the subjective (*the consistent and active fellowship with God as we commune with Him in prayer, meditating on His Word, seeking His guidance, etc.*) are significant to the life of the church. The richness, power and effectiveness of the church are nourished by both aspects. As we deepen our understanding of ‘who’ we are in Christ Jesus and maintain our active fellowship or *koinonia* with God, our community of faith, the church, its purpose and work are strengthened. Both aspects contribute to the transformation of the believer’s life (individually, and corporately) and facilitates our maturity as Christians. Therefore, God’s work for the church is effectively advanced. As we mature in our personal walk, deepen our fellowship with God, and hold in common our acceptance of Jesus Christ as the Lord of our lives, we become more effective in ministry and better able to carry out God’s plan.

² Bridges, Jerry. *True Community - The Biblical Practice of Koinōnia*. Colorado Springs, CO, NavPress (2012) pg. 12.

³ Ibid, pgs. 15-16

⁴ Ibid, 20.

How wonderful it is for us as Christians to have the assurance of being united with Christ through faith. Therefore, we experience the very life of Christ living in us. We as believers are already partakers in the common life of Christ through spiritual fellowship with one another. However, **we cannot have true fellowship with one another without first and foremost having fellowship with Christ.** We must be intimately joined with Christ just as the branch is connected to the vine and the head is connected to the members of the body (John 15: 1-11). This is where you receive sustenance that enables us to experience or be partakers of the divine nature and virtue of the person of Jesus Christ (1Peter 1:4). This union with Christ allows us to participate and share in the very life of Him. As we continue to abide and depend on Him, then he will sustain us and give us strength for our Christian journey. Our sovereign God is faithful and He has called us into fellowship with His Son and we are sure of his grace for the past, present and future.⁵ We look forward to Christ's glorious appearance. Hallelujah!!

"What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may also have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete."
(1 John 1:3-4)

Discussion Question #1:

As you reflect on your personal walk with the Lord, what are some ways in which you actively pursue fellowship with God? What spiritual disciplines do you practice? *[For example; meditation on His Word, prayer, fasting, bible study, solitude, etc.]* What do you notice about your relationship with Him as a result of your active pursuit?

Discussion Question #2:

As you reflect on the body of Christ—the church, what is becoming clearer about how God wants the relationships of the members of the family of faith to grow. Read Ephesians 4: 11-16 to gain some insight.

Points to Ponder:

- True koinonia (fellowship) has its foundation in our shared life and belief in Christ Jesus.
- Believers grow stronger and mature as they deepen their life in Christ and maintain active fellowship with God through practice of the spiritual disciplines.
- God has a purpose for the fellowship of believers.

Helpful Scripture Passages:

Eph. 4: 11-16, Eph. 4: 32; 1 Corinthians 13; Psalms 133; John 13:34; Acts 4:32; Philippians 1:4-6; 2:1-11; 1 John 3.

⁵ John MacArthur Study Bible. Thomas Nelson. 2006, pg. 2367.