

Basics... Why Our Church Exists!

Part 2 - Connecting... Authentic Biblical Fellowship

September 20, 2009

This morning we come to the second Biblical purpose for the local church... fellowship. Not only do we reach the world but we need to connect with each other. Every human being has a basic need to connect with other people. Whether you are an introvert or an extrovert, as a part of God's family we need to be in community. Why does God stress the need for fellowship so much?

I. The desire for fellowship... Why is fellowship (connecting) so important?

A. We need each other

1. Life is meant to be shared. God intends for us to experience life together. The Bible calls this fellowship. Real fellowship is much more than just showing up at services. It is experiencing life together. It includes unselfish loving, honest sharing, practical serving, sacrificial giving, sympathetic comforting, and doing life together. That's why we encourage you to get into a Life Group.

"For where two or three have gathered together in my name, I am there in their midst" (Matthew 18:20 NIV).

2. The Illustration: Coals in a fire cease to glow, when taken out and isolated from the fire. In the same way we need each other as Christians if we are to burn brightly. We need the support.
3. The Pattern:
 - Acts 2:42 – Continually devoting to fellowship.
 - 2:44 – Believers were together

- 2:46 – Day by day continued with one mind.
- 4:32 – All the believers were with one heart and mind.
- Acts 11:26 – First called Christians in Antioch
- Acts 12:12 – many had gathered and were praying.

B. **Not gathering together isn't optional.** There are no “lone rangers” in the Body of Christ. We cannot show we care if we are not around the body to do so.

1. “If absence makes the heart grow fonder then some people really love church.”
2. In wanted section of St. Charles, Minnesota press – “Wanted Men, Women and Children to sit in slightly used pews” – Saratoga Congregation Church.

and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (Heb. 10:24-25)

3. The writer quickly is illustrating in a negative fashion how not to consider one another. God call us to involvement not isolation.
 - “*Give up Meeting*” Lit. “Deserting, abandoning, withdrawing, not forsaking”;
 - Possibly some had withdrawn from the assembly out of fear of persecution. Others may have caused factions and left the fellowship. Some believe this could refer to a group of teachers who considered themselves more intelligent than the rest. Some may have thought they could secure the blessings of Christianity and then withdraw whatever the reason: fear, ignorance, self-centeredness, laziness, fear of recognition, weariness or superiority... God condemns it! He doesn't like it. In fact, He gives a severe warning in the following section. (v. 26-31) regarding “sinning willfully”.

4. “*Assembling*”: Lit. “Coming together of ourselves.” The English word is “synagogue”. Occurs only 2 times in the N. T. (Here and in II Thess. 2). Wasn’t just casual, sporadic attendance. The word is too strong for that. To withdraw was to court spiritual defeat.
 5. Connecting through authentic, Biblical relationships is true fellowship. Key Words: Fellowship, Assimilation, Belonging, accountability.
- C. We are a **family**, not an educational institution. You **BELONG** to the family of God. You were **formed** for God’s Family... We are members one of another (You are part of something bigger than yourself)

So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. (Rom. 12:5)

“God’s unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure” (Ephesians 1:5 NLT).

II. The description of fellowship... What does Biblical fellowship look like? (Acts 2:42-47)

Fellowship and relationship were a part of the DNA of the early church. It was built into the very fabric of their lives. The very word “koinonia” means sharing or partnership

⁴²They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. ⁴⁴And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. ⁴⁶Day 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, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. “devoted to the fellowship...all the believers were together...they ate together

A. The components

1. **Apostles’ teaching:** The Bible ought to be a part of every gathering whether it is taught formally or informally.

Otherwise we are just pooling our wisdom not seeking God's wisdom.

2. **Communion** (I Cor. 11:24-25)

- *Breaking of Bread*
- Life Groups can do communion
- We do communion the first Sunday of each month

3. **Prayer:** Both individual and corporate

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. (James 5:16)

Luke 18:1 Pray and not lose heart

Lord's Prayer: Teach us to pray

4. **Food/Good cooking!** *Taking their meals together:*

- This was the love feast that accompanied communion. These were the first church potlucks
- Having people into your homes; show hospitality. It doesn't have to be a fancy meal. Watch the football game together.

5. **Spiritual unity:** *One mind*

- Unanimity doesn't mean unilateral conformity.
- They did have the same mission and passion

6. **Together and had all things in common...** Sharing with those in need.

- Sharing and caring was not a primitive form of communism. It was family, not a commune.
- Such sharing and mutual meeting of the needs of pilgrims was a longstanding tradition in Israel during the great religious feasts. The inns could not accommodate the vast influx of people to Jerusalem during those feast times. As a result, the common

people opened their homes and shared their resources with the visitors. Many members of the early church were such pilgrims, saved while visiting Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. They now stayed to be a part of the new work of God. It was only basic Christian love for those who lived in the city to share with them. Additionally, some in the fellowship had no doubt lost their livelihoods due to their profession of faith in Christ. The rest of the fellowship met their needs. And others were just the poor believers who always needed help. (MacArthur)

B. The results

1. **Sense of Awe:** God is at work. You recognize He is doing something special; Gr. Word *Phobos* “terror”.
2. When you gather with other believers in your life group is there a pervading sense of His presence? If not, maybe you have taken your relationships for granted and out of familiarity you have allowed yourselves to become passive because you are so comfortable with each other.

III. The demonstration of fellowship... The One Another’s... How is Community described?

We live in a selfish world... society tells us to think of ourselves, do whatever it takes to win. God has another plan. It is described in the one another’s of Scripture. **Look at the list below and evaluate the depth of your connection and community here at Moorpark Ev Free.**

✓ **Accept one another**

(No matter who we are or what we do)

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. (Rom. 15:7)

✓ **Admonish one another**

(Build our faith up, not tear down)

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. (Col. 3:16)

- ✓ **Bear one another's burdens**
(Compassion, helping each other)
Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. (Gal. 6:2)
- ✓ **Bear with one another**
(Putting up with difficult people)
Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. (Eph. 4:2)
- ✓ **Build up one another**
(Put ups not put downs. No negative kidding, sarcasm)
Let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. (Rom. 14:19) I Thes. 5:11
- ✓ **Care for one another**
(REALLY care, not false sensitivity)
but the members should have the same care for one (1 Cor. 12:25)
- ✓ **Comfort one another**
(Go through the tough times together)
Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1Thess. 4:18)
- ✓ **Devoted to one another**
(Devotion takes time and personal sacrifice)
Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. (Rom. 12:10a)
- ✓ **Encourage one another**
Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. (1 Thess. 5:11); Heb. 10:25
- ✓ **Forgive one another**
(So God CAN forgive you... we all need it)
Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Eph. 4:32); Rom. 12:10
- ✓ **Greet one another**
Greet one another with a holy kiss. (Rom. 16:16) (4x)
- ✓ **Honor one another**
(Humbly look after other's interests)
Honor one another above yourselves. (Rom. 12:10b)
- ✓ **Be hospitable to one another**
(Don't complain about cleaning your house!)
Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. (1 Pet. 4:9)

- ✓ **Be kind to one another**
(Kindness comes in various love languages)
Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Eph. 4:32)
- ✓ **Love one another**
(The rest of real love is when you don't like someone!)
*Love one another, just as Christ Loved you (John 13:34-35)
Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another... (Rom. 13:8)*
- ✓ **Be of the same mind with one another**
(You can disagree without being disagreeable)
May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves (original=same mind among each other) as you follow Christ Jesus... (Rom. 15:5)
- ✓ **Serve one another**
(Selfless or selfish?)
You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. (Gal. 5:13)
- ✓ **Submit to one another**
Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. (Eph. 5:21)

IV. The decision of fellowship (Connecting)

- A. **Why do we avoid it?** What keeps us from pursuing these relationships?
1. **Fear:** Will they like me if they really know me?
 - They have never seen it modeled in a small group or in a mentoring relationship. Lack of transparency.
 - They have been burned by a broken confidence. What was shared got out!
 - Their sin is embarrassing! They fear being rejected once the truth comes out.
 2. **Busyness:** I am too busy to get connected. You don't understand! My schedule is; It is too hard to get together.

3. **Pride:** I don't need anyone else. I am doing fine without you.

B. What will you do about it?

1. Choose involvement over isolation.
2. Choose connection over busyness, fear or pride!

Table Talk

1. Why is being connected so important to your spiritual growth?
2. Which one of the one another's do you practice regularly?
Which ones do you avoid?
3. What do you need most from your Life Group?
4. Whom do you confide in and are accountable to?
5. What changes do you need to make in your life to experience genuine Biblical fellowship?