

Commitment to one another - Fellowship [Sermon Notes]

Review of the series

Worship - Committed to God
Fellowship - Committed to one another
Discipleship - Committed to learn
Service - Committed to serve
Evangelism - Committed to share

This week we examine fellowship - committed to one another. After Worship it is listed as the second item in verse 42:

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

The greek word for fellowship is one you may have heard of before: koinonia: common, having in common, sharing. It's a common word in the NT. When Paul in 1 Cor 10 says "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ" he uses the word koinonia. It's a sharing in the body - we all participate, share, in it. This is the idea in Acts 2:42. The fellowship, fellowship was sharing. They shared their lives together. This is amplified in 44-45

All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.

as the unpacking of "fellowship" in verse 42. Because verse 44 speaks of having possessions "in common", and the word "common" (koina) is the same root as "fellowship" (koinonia) in verse 42.

In verse 42 some translations are uncertain whether it should be "the fellowship" (NIV) or just "fellowship" (AV). Actually the meaning is not much different if you translate it in either way. They devoted themselves to sharing with one another.

Fellowship pervades this passage because these people did everything together. They worked in unity, they functioned in unity. They DEVOTED themselves to it. Why?

Several years ago studies were conducted among former American prisoners of war to determine what methods used by the enemy had been most effective in breaking their spirit.

The findings revealed that they did not break down from physical deprivation and torture as quickly as they did from solitary confinement or from disrupted friendships caused by frequent changing of personnel.

Attempts to get the prisoners divided in their attitudes toward one another proved to be the most successful method of discouraging them. It was further learned that the soldiers were not sustained primarily by faith in their country or by the rightness of the cause for which they fought.

They drew their greatest strength from the close attachments they had formed to the small military units to which they belonged.

This is an example from the world but it shows us the way in which both as created beings and as new- created beings that we not only need one another - it is essential for life in Christ.

Why is much made of this - because we can't do without one another in Christ.

I NEED YOU - YOU NEED ME

What's more, throughout the NT we are told to love one another as we have been loved. And what was the love of Christ - agape. And what was the consequence of agape - Jesus suffered and died for us.

Heb 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Says Paul in Rom 12:10 *"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves"*

Or better still Jesus in

"A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another"

We are a family: a close family and we are called to share in one another's lives. Christianity is not a sole occupation. It is a shared experience and that sharing together builds us up. It's a sharing based on love. That is the nature of what God has brought us into. As we found in the first chapter of Ephesians, we are now members of God's family. We are brothers and sisters. And God expects the same standard of love in His family that He has shown us.

So what can we learn about the nature of fellowship in Acts 2?

1. They were committed to it - they did it all the time - commitment

46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts

Fellowship was so important to them that they met all the time. Last week I said they were meeting daily to worship. Now I say they were enjoying fellowship together. Make up your mind Mark! What were they up to? They were up to both. They were healthy Christians. They were desiring together to commune, have fellowship - to worship God. But to do that they needed fellowship with one another.

The question I want to ask you is - do you see the Church, do you see fellowship with your brothers and sisters in Christ as THE place to develop and mature your commitment to Christ.

The trouble is that so many Christians simply don't. What/ You mean have fellowship with HIM, have fellowship with HER.

Do you want to grow as a Christian - then commit yourself to learn from one another. You grow as part of a fellowship. The idea of fellowship so filled their lives that they were meeting together

The basic aim of fellowship is to be in an environment where sincere love can be expressed. In the interaction of true fellowship believers have the opportunity to share God's grace - to be the means by which God can impart faith, encouragement, comfort, healing and instruction to one another

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" Colossians 3:16

Heb 10:25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Christianity is not a sole occupation. It isn't for hermits and loners. We commit to Christ, we commit to one another. We are in God's family. We are God's children.

2. They shared their lives together -solidarity

44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts

By sharing lives I mean literally. That is the meaning of koinonia. Sharing. They belonged together so they shared their resources. Some people have used this for models of socialism or even communism. Some Christians believe that this is a model for communal living. There seems to have been a great deal of it here. But solidarity was very important for the infant church in a world that was very hostile to it. As the gospel spread there was a less of a need for solidarity of this sort. And if you drop your eye to verse 46 we see that they hadn't sold their homes so it wasn't communal living in that sense anyway.

Solidarity - a very socialist kind of word but important. How can those who are privileged see those with whom they have fellowship suffer. The question of whether we should help or not doesn't come into it. We have immediate solidarity.

This selling and giving I would suggest was love-giving. The story of the John's commentary. They saw their possessions as a resource that could be used to help someone else. I could easily pull a sermon on giving out of this. But fellowship means helping one another where we perceive need.

But this lies at the heart of fellowship and we must sort out our minds before God and not make excuses for ourselves. God has blessed us with much - now we can use what we have to be a blessing to others in the household of faith. And that is the challenge of fellowship in a society where self-gain, personal wealth and selfishness is the order of the day. As we learn of our brothers and sisters in Christ in need what's our reaction.

3. They continued to meet together - unity

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts.

They met daily in the in the temple courts so it was a worship. As we have seen it was to worship. Witnessing was probably significant here because it was a public place full of unbelievers. The desire was to be together. Why - because unity is a vital part of our walk and witness. The challenge was different last week. How great is our desire to meet together to worship? How great is our desire to worship together? These people grew because they worshipped in unity and daily and we saw how the Lord added daily those that were being saved.

Do you want to see a growing Church. In the past the mark of an active church was all the things it did. If you had lots of activities, people would think you were a thriving church. The truth of it is that a church that grows is one that desires the presence of God and enjoys the presence of one another.

4. They met in one another's homes - hospitality

They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts

Finally, their fellowship was not a professional one. Fellowship, sharing together is borne out of love. It's friendship. And

these friends could not help meeting one another. Love one another. Oh that God would teach us more of this. We will grow as the people of God as we love God and love one another. As are lives are bound up with one another we will mature into the people of God.

I NEED YOU, YOU NEED ME.

Lets so love one another than people in Swaffham are envious of the stability and commitment of our relationships. And are drawn to us, and drawn to Christ, like moths to a flame - and find Christ!

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