

# Fellowship

Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:24-25



## Bearing Fruit

- ❑ Jesus says, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit.” (*John 15:5, NIV*) He also says, “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you” (*15:12*). Jesus’ words apply to the *community* of believers.

## Church & Fellowship

- ❑ The *church* refers to the *people* belonging to Christ.<sup>1</sup> “Fellowship” (*koinōnia*) means “having in common, sharing, participating together, partnership.” There is fellowship in the church.
  - 📖 “God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” (*1 Corinthians 1:9, NIV*)
  - 📖 “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard [concerning Jesus Christ], so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.” (*1 John 1:3, NIV*)
- 1. Based on the above verses, who are the persons involved in “Christian fellowship?”<sup>2</sup> When is this fellowship experienced?<sup>3</sup>

## Some Images of the Church<sup>4</sup>

- ❑ The Body of Christ<sup>5</sup> This metaphor emphasizes the church’s unity in diversity, interdependence of members, and vital relationship to the body’s Head – Jesus Christ.
- ❑ God’s Building or Temple<sup>6</sup> God dwells in and among His people who are the “living stones” in His building. As His dwelling place, the church is holy – set apart to glorify Him.
- ❑ God’s Household or Family<sup>7</sup> Christians have been adopted into God’s family. As His family, God is “Father,” and Christians are brothers and sisters in Christ.
- ❑ The Flock of Christ<sup>8</sup> The church is like a flock of sheep. Church leaders are to watch over the flock, but Jesus Christ is the “Chief Shepherd” who guides and cares for the flock.

<sup>1</sup> The English word ‘church’ is derived from the Greek word *kyriakos*, meaning ‘belonging to the Lord.’ The New Testament word translated ‘church’ is *ekklēsia*, originally denoting a ‘called out’ assembly of people. Thus the church refers to the people ‘called out’ by God as belonging to Christ. In a broader corporate sense, the ‘church’ may include people who call themselves ‘Christians’ but are not genuine believers. However, the *true* church consists of genuine believers (see Matthew 7:21-23). Of course, non-Christians (inquirers and seekers) may also attend church meetings. The Blacksburg Christian Fellowship (BCF) statement of faith says, “We believe in ... The Church in its universal form, composed of all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Its visible form is the body of believers organized locally for worship, prayer, teaching, edification, service, and evangelism.”

<sup>2</sup> The persons mentioned are God the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and those who have entered into fellowship with them through faith in Jesus Christ. Of course, the Holy Spirit is also included (2 Corinthians 13:14). At its core, ICF is a fellowship of believers united in Christ. ICF also welcomes inquirers and seekers to experience our community.

<sup>3</sup> *Koinōnia* with other believers is typically experienced when we are together. Meeting together is very important (Hebrews 10:24-25). However, we can also share (*koinōnian poiēsasthai*) with distant believers (Romans 15:26).

<sup>4</sup> This list of images is partial. There are other images and descriptions of the church.

<sup>5</sup> Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 27; Ephesians 3:6; Colossians 1:18; 2:19; 3:15

<sup>6</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 6:16-18; Ephesians 2:21-22; Hebrews 3:6; 1 Peter 2:5

<sup>7</sup> Ephesians 2:19; 3:14-15; John 1:12; Galatians 6:10; 1 Timothy 3:15

<sup>8</sup> John 10:14-16; Acts 20:28-29; 1 Peter 5:2-4

## Coming Together as the Church

- ❑ A primary purpose of the church meeting is to edify (build up) the church.<sup>9</sup> The church is edified through singing, praise, thanksgiving, prayer, teaching, preaching, exhortation, and mutual encouragement.<sup>10</sup> As the church is built up, God is glorified.
- ❑ The early Christian church provided a good example for us today.
  - 📖 “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread<sup>11</sup> and the prayers.” (*Acts 2:42, ESV*)
- ❑ The apostles’ teaching is the authoritative teaching of Christ communicated through the apostles in the power of the Spirit. It is preserved in the New Testament Scriptures.<sup>12</sup>
  2. Why was devotion to the apostles’ teaching essential for the early church? Why is it essential today? Why is Bible teaching important to fellowship? (*Ephesians 4:11-16*)



## Continuing in Fellowship

- ❑ “They devoted themselves to ... the fellowship” (*Acts 2:42*).<sup>13</sup> Fellowship is realized in our regular church meetings, but fellowship is not limited to Sunday mornings.
  3. In general, why is fellowship important? (e.g., see John 13:34-35; Hebrews 10:24-25)
- 📖 “... encourage one another and build each other up ...” (*1 Thessalonians 5:11*)
  4. How can we strengthen and deepen our fellowship? How can we grow in fellowship?

## Growing in Fellowship

- ❑ Realize that the *basis* of our fellowship is our relationship with Jesus Christ. (*1 John 1:3*)
- ❑ Understand that *each* believer is an important part of the body of Christ. (*1 Cor.12:12-27*)
- ❑ Understand what we ought to be and do (e.g., reflect on the “one another” commands.<sup>14</sup>)
- ❑ Pray that God would fill us with his love & empower us to love one another. (*1 John 4:7-21*)
- ❑ Admit & share your needs & struggles with trusted brothers/sisters, & respond appropriately.
- ❑ Devote yourself to the fellowship – sharing and participating together for God’s glory.

## Reflection/Application

- Do you desire fellowship? True fellowship in the Christian community begins when you enter into fellowship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. Do you need to receive him?
- As a believer, are you regularly participating in Christian fellowship? Are you growing in fellowship? Review this lesson and make a specific commitment to grow in fellowship.

<sup>9</sup> The focus here is the body of Christ. Of course, non-Christians also attend church meetings, and evangelism is also a primary function of the church. Nevertheless, edification is an essential part of the regular church meeting.

<sup>10</sup> God has given gifts to the church for edification purposes. For example, Christ has given us church leaders ‘to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up’ (*Ephesians 4:11-12, NIV*).

<sup>11</sup> The phrase ‘breaking bread’ generally meant ‘eating together.’ In this context, it could refer to a shared meal though many Bible scholars believe it refers to the Lord’s Supper, which was typically practiced with a shared meal. The Lord’s Supper was instituted by Jesus. He said, ‘Do this in remembrance of me’ (*Luke 22:19*). In the Lord’s Supper, we (as believers) remember Jesus’ sacrificial death for our sins, and realize our fellowship with him.

<sup>12</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988). 73.

<sup>13</sup> In the context of Acts 2:42, ‘fellowship’ probably refers to spiritual, relational *and* material sharing (2:44-47).

<sup>14</sup> Go to BibleGateway.com and search for the exact phrases ‘one another’ and ‘each other’ in the New Testament.