

Why fellowship matters.

4/23/2017

Acts 2:40-47

⁴⁰ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴¹ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

(What day was this? What comes next?)

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

So what were the earliest Christians doing,
the very first disciples to respond to the good news
of the proclamation about Jesus,
there on that Pentecost Sunday?

It says they “devoted themselves to”-

The basic meaning of the word translated “be devoted to”-
“to stay by,” “to persist at,” “to remain with.”

1. In connection with persons it means
“to be loyal to someone”
2. In connection with objects it means
“to occupy oneself diligently with something,”
“to pay persistent attention to”: ...¹

“Devoted” is an awesome word.

¹ Grundmann, W. (1964–). [ΚΑΡΤΕΡΕΩ, ΠΡΟΣΚΑΡΤΕΡΕΩ, ΠΡΟΣΚΑΡΤΕΡΗΣΙΣ](#). G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, & G. Friedrich (Eds.), *Theological dictionary of the New Testament* (electronic ed., Vol. 3, p. 618). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

1. We want people to work for us
that are devoted to their work.
2. I want Nancy to know that I am devoted to her,
and her to me.
3. I want God to know that I am devoted to Him,
because Scripture tells me that He is devoted to me...
and to you, too.

Hebrews 13:5 reads

Keep your life free from love of money,
and be content with what you have,
(But what comes next is the reason why...)

for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

God is devoted to us-

1. He is going to stick by us,
2. Remain with us,
3. Be loyal to us.

So what does it say

those earliest Christians devoted themselves to?

1. To the apostles teaching-
to the testimony of the eyewitnesses
of the resurrection.
2. To the fellowship.
3. To the breaking of bread, and
4. To prayer.

Breaking of bread- two ways that phrase is used in Scripture-

1. Celebration of the Lord's Supper,
usually during a meal together
that comes to be known as the Agape Feast.
(Probably the meaning intended here.)

**2. Just having meals together,
not necessarily in a worship or remembrance context.
(Same phrase in the same passage, vv. 46-47)**

**And day by day,
attending the temple together
and breaking bread in their homes,
they received their food with glad and generous hearts,
praising God and having favor with all the people.**

**We have already studied
the importance of the apostles' witness,
of devotion to the Word of God
as how we learn the truth about Jesus.**

**Over the next many Sundays,
we are going to look at why Communion matters,
and devotion to prayer.**

**Somehow we “get,”
we understand and naturally emphasize
the devotion to Bible study and prayer,
and we place high value on Communion, as we should.**

**But those early Christians were ALSO
“devoted to”... the fellowship.**

**Now when I first memorized this passage,
Here's how I learned it-
Now those who received his message were baptized,
and there were added that day about 3,000 souls.**

**And they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching
and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.**

They were devoted to fellowship.

To an activity, to hanging out together,
to eating pot lucks and doing progressive dinners.

Now that's not half bad, and I think that THAT is part of it,
a good part, a yummy part of it.

But the word "fellowship" here is a noun, not a verb.

These folks were devoted to THE fellowship,
and that is an important distinction.

I think we do a pretty good job on the verb part,
the pizza parties and hanging out
and watching the Super Bowl together.

But I think sometimes,
we have missed the noun part of fellowship,
being devoted to THE fellowship.

So what is- "THE fellowship?"

It is from the Greek word koinonos, meaning

1. a participation in something together,
2. sharing something in common,
3. having a shared relationship.

SOMETHING ties these people together,
something bigger than either one of them by themselves.

To the ancient Greeks,

Marriage was the ultimate expression of human
fellowship, followed closely by deep friendship.

1. People who played on the same team share a bond.
2. The movie "Band of Brothers"
captures that sense of those who went through
combat together in WW II.

3. That's one of the main points of boot camp,
to create a bond between people in the same unit.
4. Mothers who have had children share a bond.
5. Women who have miscarried share a bond of suffering.
6. Cancer survivors share a bond, a fellowship.

Everything else in their lives might be different.

There may be no other point of connection between them,

but because of that something,
that shared experience between all of them,
they are "a fellowship."

These people in Acts 2 were from all over the Roman world.

They shared the bond of coming to Jerusalem to worship
during Passover and Pentecost,

but

1. they spoke different languages,
2. they had different customs,
3. they held different political views,
4. They looked different, sounded different, acted different.

And then they heard Peter preach on the day of Pentecost.

1. They heard the rushing of a violent wind,
2. They heard all the apostles
proclaiming the gospel in their native languages,
3. They heard the truth about Jesus the Messiah,
raised from the dead...
and 3,000 of them were baptized into Christ.
4. They all received forgiveness of sins
and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

**THOSE elements were the basis of their shared experience.
It is what they shared in common.**

**And despite their substantial differences,
it led to an incredible commitment to each other.**

Acts 2:44-47

**⁴⁴ And all who believed were together
and had all things in common.**

**⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings
and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.**

**⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together
and breaking bread in their homes,
they received their food with glad and generous hearts,**

⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people.

**Being "devoted to the fellowship"
meant breaking down walls that might have divided them,
because of the work of God in their lives
that so powerfully united them.**

Their commitment to each other was heavy duty...significant.

THE fellowship matters, because it is our new family.

**It is how God reaches out into the world,
and in many ways, it is how God cares for each of us.**

- 1. We share the same forgiveness.**
- 2. We share the same Holy Spirit.**
- 3. We share the same hope of glory.**

4. We share the same Heavenly Father,
and the same elder brother.
5. Despite all our differences,
we are family because of what and who we share.

And if we LIKE the use of the phrase "being devoted"
to our marriages and to our children
and to our hobbies and our passions,

HOW MUCH MORE

does GOD want us to be devoted to THE fellowship,
his family?

How can we reflect our devotion to His family,
the Fellowship?

And so we bump into this passage in the book of Hebrews
that we try to legalistically use
to beat people into coming to church.

But we need to understand that from God's point of view,
there is so much more going on here in this passage.

Hebrews 10:19-25

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence
to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus,
²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us
through the curtain, that is, his body,
²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God,
²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart
in full assurance of faith,
having our hearts sprinkled
to cleanse us from a guilty conscience
and having our bodies washed with pure water.

²³ Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess,
for he who promised is faithful.

1. LOOK at what God has given us.
2. Look at our shared experience.
3. Look at what we have in common.

²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on
toward love and good deeds.

GREAT juxta position of images and concepts-

Spur one another on- (To what?)

1. Love... (What kind?) AGAPE.
2. Good works, that come from love.

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.

First- what NOT to do, then, what to do instead.

Don't give up...meeting together-

for worship, in homes, in small groups...

Meeting together,

like those early Christians did... is important!

They met daily.

Later, we find a pattern of weekly for "together worship,"

but there was no indication

that their informal time together was any less.

The sinful, secular world is way too with us all the time.

Every time we check Facebook,
the value system of the world is there-
the advertising, the consumerism, the immorality.

The world does not want to release its grip on us,
but we are to be “in the world, but not of the world.”
What can help us to counteract its influence?

²⁵ Let us not give up meeting together,
as some are in the habit of doing,
but let us encourage one another—
Let us “put courage in,”
instead of allowing dis-couragement to gain a foothold.

What was true in the 1st Century, is still true today.

We need the beneficial,
encouraging influence of each other today,
every bit as much as THEY did,
and for all the same reasons.

So this morning, THE fellowship matters.
What binds us together in Christ
should far outweigh our differences,
though they be many and real.

Our devotion to Christ is reflected in
our devotion to His Body, the church.

What concrete change can you make
to enhance your devotion to the fellowship?

1. Is it in the area of forgiveness?
2. In the area of service?
3. How about in the area of active participation
in the life of the church?
4. How about in inviting those
who don't yet share in the blessings of Christ
to "Come and see?"

The earliest Christians
devoted themselves to the Fellowship.

And 2,000 years later,
we are called to do exactly the same thing,
for all the same reasons.

The main element in κοινωνός is that of fellowship. Hence the word is esp. adapted to express inner relationship...

κοινωνία, an abstract term from κοινωνός and κοινωνέω, denotes “participation,” “fellowship,” esp. with a close bond. It expresses a two-sided relation (κοινωνία πρὸς ἀλλήλους, Epict. Diss., II, 20, 6; Plat. Resp., V, 426b: οὐκοῦν ἢ μὲν ἡδονῆς τε καὶ λύπης κοινωνία συνδεῖ). As with κοινωνέω, emphasis may be on either the giving or the receiving. It thus means 1. “participation,” 2. “impartation,” 3. “fellowship.”²

κοινων- == “to share with someone in something.”³

Paul uses κοινωνία for the religious fellowship (participation) of the believer in Christ and Christian blessings, and for the mutual fellowship of believers. According to 1 C. 1:9 Christians are called to fellowship (participation) with the Son (ἐκλήθητε εἰς κοινωνίαν τοῦ υἱοῦ, constr. 4. → 798). They are lifted up to be His fellows. They enter into a spiritual communion with the risen Lord.⁴

f. Fellowship with Christ necessarily leads to fellowship with Christians, to the mutual fellowship of members of the community. For this Paul uses κοινωνέω in various connections, and in accordance with the meaning the idea of “having a share” may often pass over into that of “giving a share.” In Phlm. 17 Paul appeals to the close link between Philemon and himself, and on this ground he asks him to show mercy to the delinquent slave, now a newly won brother in the faith. The κοινωνέω here can hardly refer to the mere bond of friendship; at the very least it includes spiritual union in the same faith. Similarly Titus, who in 2 C. 8:23 is called κοινωνὸς ἐμός as Paul’s fellow-worker in the work of Christ, especially in relation to the Corinthians (καὶ εἰς ὑμᾶς συνεργός), has a claim to be honourably received by the congregation. According to Paul there is a particularly close bond of union between Jewish and Gentile Christians, since Gentile Christians have acquired a share in the spiritual blessings of the original community (R. 15:27: τοῖς πνευματικοῖς αὐτῶν ἐκοινωνήσαν) and are thus under obligation to help the latter with material goods (15:26, → 808).⁵

² Hauck, F. (1964–). [κοινός, κοινωνός, κοινωνέω, κοινωνία, συγκοινωνός, συγκοινωνέω, κοινωνικός, κοινώω](#). G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, & G. Friedrich (Eds.), *Theological dictionary of the New Testament* (electronic ed., Vol. 3, p. 798). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

³ Hauck, F. (1964–). [κοινός, κοινωνός, κοινωνέω, κοινωνία, συγκοινωνός, συγκοινωνέω, κοινωνικός, κοινώω](#). G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, & G. Friedrich (Eds.), *Theological dictionary of the New Testament* (electronic ed., Vol. 3, p. 804). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

⁴ Hauck, F. (1964–). [κοινός, κοινωνός, κοινωνέω, κοινωνία, συγκοινωνός, συγκοινωνέω, κοινωνικός, κοινώω](#). G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, & G. Friedrich (Eds.), *Theological dictionary of the New Testament* (electronic ed., Vol. 3, p. 804). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

⁵ Hauck, F. (1964–). [κοινός, κοινωνός, κοινωνέω, κοινωνία, συγκοινωνός, συγκοινωνέω, κοινωνικός, κοινώω](#). G. Kittel, G. W. Bromiley, & G. Friedrich (Eds.), *Theological dictionary of the New Testament* (electronic ed., Vol. 3, p. 807). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

From κοινός, *common*. A relation between individuals which involves a common interest and a mutual, active participation in that interest and in each other.⁶

in fellowship; not meaning the apostles' fellowship, but *the fellowship* of the Church—that common life of close brotherhood in which all that they did was done in common, and all that they possessed was possessed in common, so that there seemed to be but one heart and one mind amongst them all.⁷

⁶ Vincent, M. R. (1887). [Word studies in the New Testament](#) (Vol. 1, p. 456). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

⁷ Spence-Jones, H. D. M. (Ed.). (1909). [Acts of the Apostles](#) (Vol. 1, p. 55). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.