

Look at this picture [a group of people meeting in the snow-covered woods]. What do you see? It was taken in Russia some twenty years ago, at a time when Christians were hunted down and put in prison. This is a *church*.

You say, “It doesn’t look like a church. There’s no building, no steeple, no pews.” The fact that it doesn’t *look like* a church to us speaks volumes about the faulty notions we hold. Oh, it’s a church all right.

For the past month and a half we’ve been celebrating the church by exploring what the Bible teaches about it. Let me ask you this vital question...

What does it take to have a church, a church as God intended it to be? Buildings—they’re optional. Bulletins—handy, but also optional. Sunday School classes, stain glass windows, pulpit furniture—helpful, yes, but not mandatory. According to God’s design, the church is *people*, the people of Christ.

But doing what? The church is healthy when its people participate in three corporate activities. In other words, we have three congregational responsibilities (things we do together as a church) that ought to be priority in our weekly schedules...

The Church as the Lord Intended: Three congregational responsibilities...

1. *We are to **worship** together (Heb 10:25).*

It’s our privilege to gather to declare the worth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. God expects His people to assemble on the Lord’s Day to worship Him.

2. *We are to **fellowship** together (Acts 2:42).*

We must make *koinonia* a priority in our weekly schedule. Specifically, we need to develop relationships in the church for accountability and encouragement.

3. *We are to **serve** together (1 Peter 4:10-11).*

Indeed, we are saved to serve, using our Spirit-given gifts for the good of the church and the glory of the One who rescued us. Every member is to be a minister in the church. Are you involved in the ministry? Are you investing your time and energy as a part of a ministry team? I repeat. Every member of this church should be a part of a ministry team. Your church needs you, and you need your church.

[Intro Ministry Team Leaders...]

That’s what makes a church a healthy church. Its people make these three congregational activities priority in their lives: Worship. Fellowship. Service.

In previous weeks we’ve focused on the third item, *service*. We’ve done previous series on the first responsibility of *worship*. This morning I’d like to focus on the one in the middle, *fellowship*. This evening we will be moving from the church building to have Home *Fellowships*. This will be a very important night for our church. Our aim isn’t simply to try something new. Our aim is to make *fellowship* a greater reality at WBC.

What exactly is fellowship and why is it so important? We’ve studied it before, but one study here and there isn’t enough. My aim this morning is to survey the Bible in a topical study of fellowship. This evening, in our small group meetings in homes

** Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

we'll discuss what we've heard and the difference it should make. There are three things the Bible makes clear about fellowship, *three realities*.

I. Fellowship is a fact.

We're living in a fragmented society. Last year one of our neighbors lost his wife suddenly to fast-spreading cancer. I didn't even hear about it for two months and yet I can see his house out our back window.

What's true in the world shouldn't be true in the church. Sadly, it often is, and if that's to change we need to value *fellowship*. The first step to valuing fellowship is to recognize reality #1. Fellowship is a *fact*. It's something we have.

Specifically, if we're in Christ we have two types of fellowship.

A. In Christ, we have fellowship with God (1 Cor 1:9; 2 Pet 1:3-4).

Paul describes this in the following passage...

1 Corinthians 1:9 "God, who has called you into *fellowship with his Son* Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful."

Note that God initiated this relationship. He *called* us. Note also that the fellowship mentioned here is specifically with the second person of the triune godhead—He called us into *fellowship with His Son*.¹

Indeed, the Scriptures teach that we have fellowship with all three persons of the Trinity. 1 John 1:3 states that we have fellowship with the Father and with His Son. 2 Corinthians 13:14 indicates we may enjoy fellowship with the Holy Spirit.²

Let this sink in. The infinite God of the universe took the initiative so that finite creatures like us could enjoy a relationship with Him! Peter explains this in 2 Peter...

2 Peter 1:3-4 "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may *participate in the divine nature* and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires."

In Christ, then, we have fellowship with God. The key words, of course, are *in Christ*. If you are not in Christ, you have no access to God. You are under His wrath. To be reconciled to God you must come to know the Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

B. In Christ, we have fellowship with one another.

Again, I emphasize that we *have* it. Granted, as we'll see in a moment, we must maintain it, but it is a fact. Those who are in Christ *have* fellowship with one another. I know so because of three divine actions.

1. *Jesus prayed for it (John 17:11, 20-21).*

¹ In Philippians 3:10 Paul shares about his desire to appropriate what the Father provided, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the *fellowship of sharing in his sufferings*, becoming like him in his death."

² 2 Cor 13:14 "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."

Listen to the request the Lord brought to His Father the night before His crucifixion in John 17:

John 17:11 “I will remain in the world no longer, but they [the disciples] are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—*so that they may be one* as we are one.”

Jesus prayed for the unity of His disciples, that they would experience the very same oneness that He Himself enjoyed with His Father. But that’s not all. Jesus took His request a step further in verses 20-21...

John 17:20-21 “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, *that all of them may be one*, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”

Jesus prayed that His people would experience oneness. Was His prayer answered? Absolutely. Here’s how...

2. *Jesus’ death accomplished it (Eph 2:11-22).*

Adam’s sin in the garden did something terrible to the human race. In a word, it’s called *alienation*. Because of sin we enter this world alienated from God and alienated from each other.

But the death of the Last Adam, Jesus the Christ, reversed the curse. At the cross God formed a new humanity, a new people called the church. The apostle Paul explains this in Ephesians 2:

Verses 11-12—“Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (that done in the body by the hands of men)—remember that at that time you were *separate* from Christ, *excluded* from citizenship in Israel and *foreigners* to the covenants of the promise, without hope and *without God* in the world.”

Note what we *used to be*: separate, excluded, foreigners, without God. In a word again, *alienated*. But a change occurred.

Verse 13—“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.”

Because of Christ’s death on the cross, we who are His people were *brought near*. Near to whom? To God. But that’s not all.

Verse 14—“For he himself is our peace, *who has made the two one* [referring to Jews and Gentiles] and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.”

But why?

Verses 15-16—“...His purpose was to create in himself *one new man out of the two*, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which *he put to death their hostility*.”

Let this sink in. At the cross Christ not only died so you as an individual person could go to heaven. Christ died in order to form a new people, made up of people who were once enemies and cut off from each other. On the cross He put to death the former enmity. On the cross He died to make a new humanity. What's more, divine action #3...

3. *The Holy Spirit's baptism made it a reality (1 Cor 12:12-13).*

You say, “Where is this new humanity?” You're looking at it. It's the *church*.³ The church is the *ecclesia*, which means “called out ones.” By means of the cross, the Spirit of God is calling out a people from the world and making them one.

Indeed, what Jesus prayed for in the upper room and accomplished on the cross, the Holy Spirit made a reality when He came to the world on the Day of Pentecost and baptized the church into existence. 1 Corinthians 12:13 explains...

1 Corinthians 12:13 “For we were all *baptized by one Spirit into one body*—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”

What did the Spirit form? One body, the church.

So in one sense, fellowship is a fact. We who know Christ are already one. In God's eyes we are knit together as one body. This union is symbolized in the Communion service.⁴ It's also why we extend the right hand of fellowship (Gal 2:9). Now answer this...

Question: Can Christians experience true fellowship with non-Christians?
The answer is no.

Why not? The basis for fellowship is the atonement of Christ and the baptism of the Spirit. No text makes this point clearer than 2 Corinthians 6:14, “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what *fellowship* can light have with darkness?”

Young people, take note. Here is why the Bible forbids you as a believer to marry a non-believer. The Lord knows you will never experience true oneness with another person unless you have Him in common.

Reality #1—fellowship is a fact. But what we have we must *value*. So...

II. Fellowship is an act.

³ Eph 2:19-22 “Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but *fellow citizens* with God's people and *members* of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is *joined together* and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being *built together* to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”

⁴ See 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:27ff.

Frankly, fellowship is one of the most misunderstood, misused terms in the church. The following occurs in pulpit after pulpit. The pastor announces, “We’ll be having a time of fellowship in the gym after the evening service. Everyone’s welcome.” And what happens? Members of the congregation mingle around food tables and chat. They talk about the weather, work, how their favorite ball team is doing, perhaps share a few criticisms of the president is handling the economy. Then they shake hands and go home, with these parting words, “What a great time of fellowship! We should do it more often.”

But is that biblical fellowship? No. It’s not that what I just described is wrong. It’s just not true fellowship. Biblically defined, fellowship involves three characteristics.⁵

A. It involves *sharing* (Acts 2:42, 44).

That’s what the Greek term means, in essence...

Koinonia = “to share,” “to have in common with”

Concerning the early church Acts 2:42 says...

Acts 2:42 “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and *to the fellowship*, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

In the word *koinonia*⁶ the root term *koinos* means “common” (in the sense of “common ownership”). *Koine* Greek refers to the language spoken by the people in Jesus’ day (the Greek language was common to all). The term *koinonos* refers to a “partner” (as in Luke 5:10 where James and John are referred to as “Simon’s partners”).⁷ Titus 1:4 speaks of a “common faith” and Jude 3 of a “common salvation.” Acts 2:44 (and 4:32) indicates the early disciples lived a “common life,” stating...

Acts 2:44 “All the believers were together and had everything in common.”

Note two characteristics of the believers in Acts 2:44. They *were together*—they spent time together; they lived life together; they weren’t lone ranger Christians, they were connected. And they *had everything in common*—they pooled their resources; they didn’t live with a “what’s mine is mine” mentality, but a “what’s mine is available to you if you need it” mentality, realizing it all belonged to the Lord anyway.

Hebrews 13:16 exhorts us, “And do not forget to do good and to *share with others*, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.” Fellowship is sharing. That’s characteristic #1.

B. In involves sharing *something* (1 John 1:1-4).

What is it we share? We see the answer in 1 John 1...

⁵ I’m indebted to Carl B. Hoch, Jr. for this definition, in “What Is Biblical Fellowship?” *Chapel Time*, Sept 1976.

⁶ The word *koinonia* translates into English most commonly as “fellowship” or “communion.” Associated terms include “association,” “joint participation,” “community,” and “partnership.”

⁷ Also in Philemon 17 where Paul says, “So if you consider me a *partner*, welcome him [the runaway slave Onesimus] as you would welcome me.”

1 John 1:1-4 “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have *fellowship with us*. And *our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ*. We write this to make our joy complete.”

Don't miss this. There's a content to fellowship. John says that what we share is what he as an apostle had seen and heard, that is, the person and work of Christ.

Granted, we share other things as believers. For instance, according to Philippians 4:14-15 we share our troubles and even our resources.⁸ But we share these things because fundamentally *we share Christ*. Let me be specific...

****You must share more than a coffee pot and a box of donuts to constitute genuine fellowship. Fellowship involves sharing the Lord Jesus Christ.**

I'll share a concern. I'm concerned about churchgoers who seldom talk about Christ. Before and after worship services they talk about work, last night's ballgame, and everything else (so I know they know how to talk), but these words are absent, “Let's talk about the Lord and what He is doing in our lives.”

C. It involves sharing something with *someone* (Rom 12:4-5, 13).

As the story goes, a man was answering questions for a national poll. When asked for his church preference, he responded, "Red brick."⁹

****God never intended church merely to be a place we *go*. It's who we *are*.**

If you view church simply as a building that offers services—like a grocery store—you misunderstand God's intent for the church. The church isn't a place. It's a people, a *fellowship* of people. My favorite definition of fellowship is “two fellows in a ship.” We're in this together. We are connected.

Romans 12:4-5 “Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and *each member belongs to all the others*.”

I am not my own. I need you and you need me. That's why Romans 12:13 emphasizes...

Romans 12:13 “Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.”

You can have the potential for fellowship and still not experience fellowship. Think of it this way. Fellowship is a verb as well as a noun. We have fellowship (the noun), that is, we are in a relationship with one another because of Christ. But we must choose to fellowship with each other (the verb).

⁸ We see this as well in 2 Corinthians 8:3-4 and in 2 Cor 9:13.”

⁹ [Source Unknown](#).

Amos 3:3 asks a vital question, “Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?”

Perhaps it goes without saying, but you cannot have fellowship *by yourself*. You must have a relationship. Strangers do not fellowship. Enemies certainly do not fellowship. There must be a bond. Fellowship involves sharing something with *someone*.

Which raises the question, “If fellowship is an act, what kind of action does it take?” The answer is found in the “one another” commandments in the New Testament.

**The one another commands are the fuel that makes the Good-Ship-Fellowship run.

There are over forty such commands in the New Testament. I’ll mention nine found in Romans.

1. *We are to be devoted to one another (Rom 12:10a)*. “Be devoted [KJV ‘be kindly affectioned’] to one another in brotherly love...”

2. *We are to honor one another (Rom 12:10b)*. Above ourselves, in fact.

3. *We are to live in harmony with one another (Rom 12:16)*. This takes work.

By the way, please realize that past fellowship is no guarantee of future fellowship. For instance, in Psalm 55 David describes a friend who turned from the Lord and turned against him [Ps 55:12-14], “If an enemy were insulting me, I could endure it; if a foe were raising himself against me, I could hide from him. But it is you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, with whom *I once enjoyed sweet fellowship* as we walked with the throng at the house of God.”

4. *We are to love one another (Rom 13:8)*.

5. *We are to stop judging one another (Rom 14:13)*.

“Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother’s way.” This instruction is given in the context of Christian liberties.

**John Newton once said: “When people are right with God, they are apt to be hard on themselves and easy on other people. But when they are not right with God, they are easy on themselves and hard on others.”

6. *We are to do what edifies one another (Rom 14:19)*. In other words, do what will help you brother and your church grow to spiritual maturity.

7. *We are to accept one another (Rom 15:7)*.

Romans 15:7 “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.”

There are to be no cold shoulder treatments in the church, and certainly no cliques. Rather, we're to reach out to each other just like Christ did with us. But accepting one another doesn't mean we are to tolerate sin...

8. *We are to admonish one another (Rom 15:14).* "I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct [*noutheteo*—can mean "to warn, counsel, or admonish"] one another." Paul says we are competent to engage in this kind of interaction.

9. *We are to greet one another (Rom 16:16).* "Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings."

Now ponder what we've just seen and answer this. Does this happen on Sunday morning at 10:30? Yes, the Sunday morning worship service is important, but most of what I've just described doesn't occur very well in a Sunday morning worship service. It's hard to show love to someone, or admonish someone, or greet someone, etc. while sitting in a pew looking at the back of people's heads. The problem isn't with what's happening on Sunday at 10:30, for the goal of the Sunday worship service is *worship*. The question is, when does fellowship best occur? It's not Sunday at 10:30. Fellowship occurs best in a context of meaningful interaction, that is, in the context of a small group.

Remember, fellowship involves *sharing* (i.e. having in common) *something* (namely Christ) *with someone* (that is, our brothers and sisters in Christ). Fellowship is seen when we take seriously the 40+ one another commands God gave us in the NT.

Is corporate worship important? Yes, that's why we need to participate in the church's worship service on the Lord's day. Is fellowship important? God's Word says it is. How do we show that we believe it's important? One way and perhaps where we should start is by putting ourselves in a context where meaningful interaction occurs, namely, by plugging into and participating in a small group in the church.

I believe that every follower of Christ needs to follow Christ while *meaningfully connected* to other followers of Christ. We are called to follow Christ *together*. That means, at least in part, that we ought to participate faithfully in a small group in the church where meaningful fellowship occurs. You say, "Can you give me an example?" Sure. Sunday School is small group context where meaningful fellowship can occur. So is a Sunday evening Home Fellowship or our Sunday evening Growth Groups which will resume in the Fall, and so on.

Let me reiterate. Fellowship is a fact—we have it in Christ. But fellowship is also an act—it takes obedient effort on our part to experience what we have. One more reality.

III. Fellowship is under attack.

There are many barriers to fellowship, such as personal sin (1 John 1:6), self-centeredness and pride (Phil 2:3-4). The attitude, "I don't need anyone," will restrict fellowship. So will, "My time is too important to get involved in my church."

And remember, the Evil One is real. He hates the Lord, and to get at Him Satan assaults His people. Fellowship, which is so precious to the Lord, is under attack.

That's one of the reasons the Lord gave His church instructions concerning church discipline...

****Fellowship makes church discipline essential.**

The New Testament calls for action against three types of sin in particular, sins that undermine the fellowship of the church.

A. We must deal with sins against the doctrine of the church (1 Tim 6:3-5).

1 Timothy 6:3-5 “If anyone *teaches false doctrines* and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction...”

Note that false doctrine undermines the fellowship of the church. There’s a powerful movement in religious circles called ecumenism. The thinking that drives the ecumenical movement is, “God is one, so we should be one. We need to get everybody together. We can’t let little things (like doctrine) keep us apart.”

It sounds right, at least at first. But think about it. What we believe [doctrine] does matter. In fact, what did we learn is the basis for true fellowship? It’s the person and work of Christ. In Philippians 1:5 Paul referred to the “fellowship [NIV partnership]of the gospel.” It’s the gospel makes true fellowship possible. If a person or church doesn’t believe the gospel, we can’t fellowship together.

That doesn’t mean another church has to cross every “t” and dot every “i” the same way we do. We can differ over personal preferences (such as Bible versions, music styles in church, etc) and still have fellowship. But if we differ over the gospel, there’s no basis for fellowship.

“But all churches believe the gospel, don’t they” you ask. No, they don’t. Some believe it—at least on a doctrinal statement—but they don’t preach it. Others simply no longer believe it.

Let me illustrate. In some “churches” Jesus Christ is presented merely as our example, not as our redeemer. If you listen to their sermons you’ll hear that Jesus came to show good men how to live, not to save depraved men from their sins. In other “churches” Christ is presented as Savior, yes, but they suggest we receive His salvation by means of the sacraments rather than by grace through faith alone.

Should we partner with them? The apostle John offers this counsel in 2 John...

2 John 9-11 “Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him *shares* in his wicked work.”

B. We must deal with sins against the purity of the church (1 Cor 5:1ff.).

That’s what Paul told the church in Corinth. Notice 1 Corinthians 5...

1 Corinthians 5:1-2 “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father’s wife. And you are proud! Shouldn’t you rather have been filled with grief and have *put out of your fellowship* the man who did this?”

What should happen when a member of a church refuses to repent of and forsake personal sin that's harming the testimony of the church? Paul says the church is to exercise church discipline to the point of putting him *out of the fellowship*. Sounds harsh. Why such drastic measures?

1 Corinthians 5:6-7 “Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.”

Sin spreads. Sin corrupts the fellowship of the church. Is a church supposed to discipline everyone? No...

1 Corinthians 5:11 “But now I am writing you that you *must not associate* with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.”

There is a condition to fellowship. It's called *walking in the light* in 1 John 1:7, “But *if we walk in the light*, as he is in the light, *we have fellowship* with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” What happens if we *don't* walk in the light? We don't have fellowship.¹⁰

C. We must deal with sins against the unity of the church (Rom 16:17-18).

Romans 16:17-18 “I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.”

It's a serious thing to divide what Christ died to reconcile. When a person does that, Paul says to stay away from him. Don't fellowship with those who attack our unity. Realize this...

**A person can hurt the unity of the church in more than one way. You can do it by attacking it, for sure. You can also do it by doing *nothing*.

That's right. *Neglect* will kill fellowship, not to mention jeopardize your own spiritual health (Heb 10:24-25).

Friends, it's supposed to mean something to be a part of a New Testament local church. To have your name on a church roll doesn't impress the Lord one iota. But to make priority in your life what the Lord died to redeem pleases Him greatly.

That's why we seek to keep an active membership roll at WBC. On a regular basis we remove the names of people who say by their actions that the church is not important to them. I'm not talking about missing a service once in awhile due to sickness or travel. But if a person fails to fulfill their church covenant

¹⁰ Ephesians 5:11 “Have nothing to do with [KJV ‘Have no fellowship with’] the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.”

responsibilities, our by-laws indicate that person is to removed from active membership.

Yes, fellowship is a fact. Fellowship is an act. And fellowship is under attack.

Make It Personal: In order for fellowship to occur...

Three things must occur. I'll use the first person pronoun to make it personal...

1. I must love Christ.

In order to have fellowship with God and then with God's people, I must be *in Christ*. Only Christ can remove the barrier that separates me, a sinner, from my holy Creator. Likewise, only Christ can bring down the barriers that separate me from other human beings. If I want to experience true fellowship, I must *love Christ*.

When two people are zealously pursuing Christ, the by-product will be their own fellowship. That's true in broken marriages as in soured friendships. If the two people will pursue Christ, something will happen to their relationship.

Yes, I must *love Christ*.

2. I must love what Christ loves, namely His church.

Beloved, Christ loves His church. He sacrificed His life to bring it into existence. The church is at the center of His plan in this age. That's why Martin Luther could say...

Martin Luther: "Apart from the church, salvation is impossible."

It's not that the church saves people, for only Christ can do that. But once saved a person can't experience all that God intends apart from belonging to a local church. Which is why Calvin said in such strong language...

John Calvin: "So highly does the Lord esteem the communion of His church that He considers everyone a traitor and apostate from religion who perversely withdraws himself from any Christian society which preserves the true ministry of the word and sacraments."

So do you love Christ? And do you love His church? For fellowship to occur, both are essential. As is this...

3. I must make the people of Christ a priority in my life.

You say, "How do I do that in practical terms?" Let me ask you five questions. If you can answer "yes" to these questions, it's evidence that Christ's people are priority to you. If you can't it will show you how to change.

⇒Are you accountable to anyone?

If you missed church for a month, would anyone notice? Granted, if that happened, shame on us, the church is responsible—we're supposed to look out for each other (Gal 6:1). But if it happened, it may also indicate a lack on your part. It may indicate you've never made yourself accountable to anyone that *could* and *would* miss you. Are you committed to a Sunday School class?

Take it a step further. Do you have a brother or sister in Christ to whom you have given permission to ask you the “hard questions”? Is there anyone with whom you are really transparent when you are struggling or hurting?

⇒Have you prayed with anyone recently?

If fellowship occurs when we share Christ together, then it’s vital that we pray together for when we pray we are sharing time with our Savior. Beloved, this is one reason why the church’s prayer meetings are essential (on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 and Sunday mornings at 8:15).

But don’t limit it to structured prayer services. Praying together should be as natural to us as talking about the weather. Do you have someone with whom you pray regularly? Your family, for sure, but anyone else?

⇒Have you encouraged someone with a burden recently?

This week some ladies took meals to the home of a sister who had surgery. Some men did a work project together. One person spent time with another who’s struggling with depression. A couple visited the hospital to encourage a church member.

Did you intentionally this week do something to lift a burden that a brother or sister in Christ is bearing? This is our calling, beloved, to encourage one another.

⇒Have you invited anyone to your home recently?

Our culture says our home is our *castle*. God’s Word indicates our home can be a *church ministry tool*.

1 Corinthians 16:19 “...Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that *meets at their house*.”

Romans 16:5 “Greet also the church that *meets at their house* [Priscilla and Aquila]...”

Colossians 4:15 “Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the *church in her house*.”

Philemon 2 “...to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier and to the *church that meets in your home*.”

The Bible calls us to use what God has entrusted to us for the good of His people.

Romans 12:13 “Practice hospitality.”

1 Peter 4:9 “Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.”

⇒Are you willing to share your life with someone this week?

That’s what fellowship is all about, *sharing*, sharing our Beloved Savior with each other.