



There Are Four Important Growth-disciplines To Strengthen Every Fisher:
Prayer, Bible, *Fellowship* and Witnessing

3.) Fishers Need to Find Fellowship with Growing Believers.

Fishers are called to take part in vibrant Bible-based fellowship, but they also need to commit themselves in a healthy balanced Christ-magnifying church that encourages fellowship (as well as the other three disciplines listed above)!

What is happening in America today is that many people are claiming to be Christians (and many of them really are regenerated inside), but they have not committed themselves to being active in ...or aren't yet faithful to a local church fellowship in their area. Such a thing was unheard of in the New Testament fellowships!

In New Testament times, to be a Christian meant that you were involved and faithful in a local expression of the body of Christ that was fishing for souls. One of the purposes for a Christian doing this was so that they could be built up in the faith and so they could enjoy real Koinonia Fellowship. The First Century Christians attended God-honoring Bible teaching fellowship meetings regularly where their committed friends all gathered together in the Name of Jesus. Doing this encouraged them as they would worship the Lord, learn truth, share each other's struggles and pray for each other. Back then, if a person stopped attending, loving people in the church would begin to feel concerned about them and would check in on them to see if they were safe, troubled, apostate or lost.

Koinonia is a Greek word that occurs 20 times in the Bible. *Koinonia's* primary meaning is "fellowship, sharing in common, communion" first upwards with God and then outwards with other growing Christians. We see the first occurrence of *koinonia* in Acts 2:42, "***They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.***" *Koinonia* fellowship with other fishers of men and women is a key aspect of the Christian life. God expects true believers in Christ to serve alongside each other and come together in love, faith, and encouragement. Yup, that kind of constructive unity is the essence of *koinonia*.

I just love how Bill Bright talked with other red-hot Christians about this. He always explained it this way: "*Several logs burn brightly together; but put one aside on the cold hearth and the fire goes out. So it is with your relationship with other Christians. If you do not belong to a church, do not wait to be invited. Take the initiative; call the pastor of a nearby church where Christ is honored and His Word is preached. Start this week, and make plans to attend regularly.*"

Paul (in Philippians 2:1-2) also talked about fellowship saying, "***If you have any***

encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Koinonia is being in agreement with other Christians about the essentials, no matter the label they might wear—it's being harmonious in an upreaching and outreaching purpose. Yes we edify others so they'll each be healthy, blessed and better prepared for evangelistic endeavors. And our koinonia with each other is first based on our common koinonia with Jesus Christ, because praising Him—that's our first ministry priority (See [Eph. 1:5-6](#) and 12)!

The Bible says, ***"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin"*** (1 Jn. 1:6-7).

Do a study of koinonia and what it should look like—check out the phrase ***"one another"*** all through [the Bible](#). God tells us to be devoted to one another (Rom. 12:10), to honor one another (Rom. 12:10), to live in harmony with one another (Rom. 12:16; 1 Pet. 3:8), to accept one another (Rom. 15:7), to serve one another in love (Galatians 5:13), to be kind and compassionate to one another (Eph. 4:32), to admonish one another (Col. 3:16), to encourage one another (1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 3:13), to spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24), to freely offer hospitality (1 Pet. 4:9), and to really love one another (1 Pet. 1:22; 1 Jn. 3:11; 3:23; 4:7; 4:11-12). After that, you won't have to wonder how koinonia should look.

"Without wavering, let us hold tightly to the hope we say we have, for God can be trusted to keep his promise. Think of ways to encourage one another to outbursts of love and good deeds. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other..." (Heb. 10:23-25).

Church could be such a drag ...if you insist upon going to an unloving, stiffly-religious or unbiblical one. And I can certainly empathize with people who have been mowed-down and hurt by strange leadership in a church and I also pray for those who live far away from a warm-hearted sound church. I understand when work shifts conflict with Bible study fellowship meetings, even though you've submitted your schedule request several times to your boss. Pray about it and don't give up looking for a way to make it work. God will show you how to deal with all this. We can't allow our work, well-intentioned friends or hobbies etc... to permanently or incessantly get in the way of much needed fellowship. We must not backslide spiritually! If your location remains a problem for you, then pray about relocating—it's that vital and significant a discipline for you.

Allow me to ask you...what do you currently participate in, that is more important than being a part of the blood-bought body of the Lord Jesus Christ? Of course we are to love God more than His Church or His church leadership ...and never compromise by sinning for them ...or for anyone. But can you think of anything that would be more important than taking part in what God is doing to rescue, to save, to heal, and to restore people with the local visible expression of His body?

Christians should expect to receive biblically-sound teaching instead of entertainment primarily. We should be there taking part in opportunities for the genuine worship of God through Christ instead of listening to psychobabble. We can enjoy a fresh atmosphere in which Christians are able to use their God-given gifts and abilities to help others instead of just flaunting them for applause. We should expect godly spiritual leadership that won't always tell us what we want to hear, leadership that will help keep the believers accountable without showing preferential treatment to any one group.

You might run into those who say, *"I don't need to go to church. I like to spend my free time alone with God on the golf course singing 'Holy in one, holy in one, holy in one!'"* or *"I don't need to be around other Christians."* But the reality is that no Christian can endure or prosper long if they live in isolation from the body. No matter how many Christian books, video games, music CDs, and DVD movies you have, all that stuff might be good, but it can't replace the experience and fellowship you get from attending church and being close with other Christians.

In the book of Hebrews, it says, ***"Let us not neglect our meeting together, as some do, but encourage each other, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near"*** (Heb. 10:24-25).

In the book of Acts we clearly see a pattern for the church today. It describes the early days and what went on with the Church. The first-century Church turned the world upside down (which was already upside down because of sin and Satan, but that would then make it right side up), as they boldly went fishing for souls—spreading the Gospel around the then known Lands.

Have you ever measured the vitality of your church by comparing its qualities to the characteristics of the first-century church (see [Acts 2:42](#), 44-47)?

A healthy church meets together regularly, places a high priority on Bible study and develops caring people who concern themselves with the well-being and spiritual development of each member. It recognizes the power of corporate prayer and worship and demonstrates Christ's love in meaningful ways. Its members desire to minister to others and seek to share God's good news with others.

In any Biblically-sound, Christ-centered church, the following beliefs should be obvious:

- The Bible is held as the inspired and only infallible authoritative Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16).
- God is eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit (John 14:26, Matthew 28:18, 19).
- Salvation is the free gift of God to all who will repent of their sins and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is the only way to come into a relationship with God (John 14:6, Ephesians 2:8-9).

A healthy church is also a growing church. But growth alone should not necessarily be viewed as proof of God's blessing. The first disciples had a "gladness and a singleness of heart" about the early church. Your church home should be a place you look forward to attending not only on Sundays, but throughout the week.

Conversely, if you feel uncomfortable about your church, it may be the Holy Spirit telling you that church is unscriptural. As you grow in your understanding of the Scriptures and seek God's will through prayer, you will be able to discern truth from error.

Avoid any group that teaches doctrines, beliefs, or rituals that deviate from the Bible. Many false teachers speak only parts of the truth and their messages have been aptly described as the "skin of the truth stuffed with a lie." Most cults are identifiable because they refuse to:

- Adhere solely to the 66 books of the Bible. Instead, they add their "special revelations."
- Accept that our relationship to Jesus Christ has been provided by God through His grace and is received through faith alone. Instead they practice salvation by works.
- Acknowledge Jesus Christ as the divine Son of God and give Him the full recognition He merits.

Commonly known cultists are Jehovah's Witnesses, Latter-Day Saints or Mormons, Unification Church, New Agers, Unitarians, Spiritists, and Scientologists.

Find Your Place

It has been wisely said, ***"The church is a hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints."*** Regular fellowship and participation in the church for a disciple cannot be overemphasized. As you come to church and find your place in it, you will then be in a position to give to others what God has given to us.

The church that is right for you will be a place where you can grow in your love for the Lord and serve Him by contributing to the life of the church. Remember, we are all sinners doing our best to follow God's teaching. Rely on Him to show you the way.

Remember that the model for a God-honoring church is in the Scriptures. Study God's design and pray to be led to the place He has prepared for you. God bless you as you grow in your faithfulness. **Please be and show yourself faithful in a fishing fellowship!**