



Faithful in a Fishing Fellowship

“...not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some” (Heb. 10:24).

Winston Churchill once described how he personally related to the local church. His relationship was, “*a lot like a flying buttress,*” he said. He “*supported it from the outside*” (You know what a flying buttress is... it’s an external support that reinforces the vertical walls of old cathedrals).

Man, Churchill said many things that still make me laugh and I’ve seen what goes on in some of those old cathedrals too, so I don’t blame him. Some of it is not good. But what is happening in America today isn’t quite as funny and not even as supportive as he described. 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 fellowship in their area. Such a thing was unheard of in the New Testament church 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 active in their community fishing for souls. The believers back then knew that the church wasn’t to be an exclusive country club for saints; rather it was to be more like a hospital and a rescue center for the perishing. They participated in that effort and so should we!

One of the purposes for a Christian’s involvement back then was so that they could first be built up in the faith and so they could also 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 significantly encouraged them as they would worship the Lord, learn truth, share each other’s struggles and pray for sinners as well as for each other. Back then, if a person stopped attending, loving people in the church would begin to feel concerned for them and would go 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 still a key aspect of the Christian life—God uses it to equip Christians and make them want to fish more. Why let others miss out on the blessing we’ve free

received, when they don't have to? The Lord expects true believers in Christ to serve alongside of each other and come together in love, faith, and support ...on multiple levels as He leads. 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 become 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 Peter 3:8), to accept one another (Rom. 15:7), to serve one another in love (Gal. 5:13), to be kind and compassionate to one another (Eph. 4:32), to admonish one another (Colo. 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 for a second 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..."

— Hebrews 10:23-25

And so, my journeys away from church have always circled back to the church.

— Philip Yancey

*We join our hearts and hands together, faithful to the Lord's command;
We hold each other to God's standards—all that truth and love demand.*

—Dennis DeHaan

Having a strong [union with Christ](#) and walking in His humility—that's what will make fellowship work! We care because He does. Jesus helps us bear one another's burdens and defer to others. Church *could* be such a drag ...if you insist upon having

your own way, or insist upon attending an unloving, stiffly-religious or unbiblical church. But why do that when your whole family can be hugely benefited by going to a decent one?

Hey gang, I can certainly empathize with earnest people who have been hurt in churches or who live far away from a warm-hearted fellowship that is sound. Work schedules can be so frustrating at times too... especially after you have been respectfully appealing to your boss with schedule requests weekly to no avail. We need to pray about this a lot! Don't give up looking for the place where you will fit—where you can contribute. Expect the Lord to guide you. You belong in God's house all your days! We can't allow our work, well-meaning friends or hobbies etc... to permanently or incessantly get in the way of much needed fellowship.

Show me your best friends and I will tell you who you are. It's impossible to not be influenced or affected by your close friends. He who walks with wise men WILL WITHOUT A DOUBT GROW WISE, but a companion of fools will unfortunately suffer harm. If your location remains a problem for you, then pray, fast, appeal. Seek the Lord about relocating ...it's that vital! Remember that God can make a way for you, where there is no way.

We're not to isolate ourselves hiding away in some Christian bubble, never to associate with those in need. We are to shine brightly in the darkness rather than grow darker. We are to infiltrate and permeate our society in a salty way! But some people reach out so much that they forget to reach up when they are alone, or to reach in at church to minister and be ministered to.

Come on, even the Lone Ranger had Tonto—we all need strong buddies too! Christianity is not a purely intellectual, internal faith. It can be lived well only in on-fire cross-eyed-community. Again, church fellowship is not a select circle for a few people that become inverted, but a spiritual center for many where they can grow both spiritually and numerically—one that's open to all!

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. Jesus, when He left earth, didn't leave behind a chain of weight loss clubs trying to gain more memberships or sell their frozen foods. No, He left His Church here ...with a job to do. What's better than taking part in what God is doing to rescue people, to save people, to heal people, and to restore them in connection with the local visible expression of Christ's body?

Remember, fisher's fish much better when the salty seasoned ones teach them the ropes and hone their skills with hands on learning.

Do you [know Jesus personally](#), or merely about Him? Have Kurt's fishing devos blessed you? Tell him what God is doing in your life—yes, [let him know](#) today!