



Enriching Christian Community

Fellowship

Introduction

From the earliest days of the Christian Church, Christians have lived a common life that is remarkable in its quality. In Acts 2 the very first Christians devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Watching on, the residents of Jerusalem were filled with awe. All the Christians were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people (Acts 2:42-46).

The reason for this remarkable quality of life was the Christians' common unity. They all shared in something greater than themselves. Actually, it was *someone* greater; who was the centre of their society. Jesus was their common unity. And so they lived as community.

It is this common life, this shared community, that we will consider in this series of studies. Our studies will lead us to consider the scriptures afresh as well as stretch us all practically with some 'assignments'. You might like to pray for your group as you begin.

What have been your best experiences of Christian Community?

What made these experiences so good?

Read 1 John 1:1-7

1. To what is John referring in verses 1-2?
What does John seem to be emphasizing about the gospel message?
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2. In verses 3-4, what is the result of John's testimony to the gospel?
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3. What do you understand by the word 'fellowship' in verse 3?
What are some other words that you might substitute for 'fellowship'?
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John uses the Greek word koinonia, which we translate as 'fellowship'.

4. The crowd at the football share a kind of fellowship. The partners of a company share another kind of fellowship. The members of a rowing eight share still another kind of fellowship. What do you think is the difference between these kinds of fellowship and Christian fellowship?
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5. What more do verses 5-7 tell us about Christian fellowship?
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6. What do you think it means to 'walk in the light' and to 'walk in the darkness'? Illustrate your answers with examples?
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7. At it's heart, the word 'fellowship' means that we participate in something held in common. What exactly is it that Christians share in common?
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8. How do you think 'fellowship' shared with God and with one another impacts the way that we live? Give practical examples.

Throughout John's gospel and letters "light" is closely associated with life—that is, the life of God, which is eternal life. See John 1:4-9; 3:19-21; 8:12; 12:35-46; 1 John 2:9-10.

Practical Assignment

Each week of this series will involve some kind of practical 'homework', either individually or as a group.

Take some time now as a group to plan an occasion for your group to get to know one another better. You likely already know each other's basic life situation and may have worked together earlier this year in preparing a brief testimony ready to be shared with someone inquiring about your Christian faith. The purpose of this occasion is to take time to get to know each other a little better—at a deeper level.

The occasion you plan might be a meal, a coffee and dessert night, an afternoon tea, a weekend away—it's really up to your group. Put the date and details into your diaries now!

During this occasion you will need to plan some time for each member of the group to take 15 mins or so to share their thoughts on the this question: 'What have been the most significant turning points in your life?' In answering this question, describe why these moments where significant, what changed for you, how it felt then and how you feel about these events now.

At the end of 15 minutes or so, the group may ask some questions for clarification. The speaker may choose whether or not to answer those questions. As each person is speaking, each member of the group should listen very carefully so that they are able to pray for the person sharing. The group should pray for each speaker before moving on to the next speaker.

Remember that the purpose of this occasion is to enrich your understanding of those with whom you share fellowship. Remember also that, as members of a Home Group, you are responsible to keep confidentiality and trust in place.

Someone in your group might do some research on the art of 'active listening' and share that with members at the beginning of your event.