

Fellowship

Q3/Session 4

Introduction

So far in this quarter, we've explored tools that help us build strong lives in God. Today, we'll look at another essential tool, one that not only strengthens our individual walk but also contributes to building up the Church. Remember, God is interested in two houses: our personal lives and His Church. And the truth is, we can't build one well without the other. Our lives become stronger when they're joined with others in community and purpose, just as God designed.

The session today is about fellowship: what it means, why it matters, and how it strengthens both our walk with God and our relationships with others.

We'll examine how the early church practiced fellowship, how Scripture encourages us to do the same, and how we can practically live it out in our church today. So, let's dive in.

Diving In

Biblical fellowship is defined as partnership and participation. It encompasses unity, community, sharing life, mutual encouragement, and spiritual partnership with other believers and with God.

In our "Relationship with God" classes, we discussed how to connect with God and stay close to Him. Really, we were talking about what it means to have fellowship with Him.

1 Corinthians 1:9 (ESV) *God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Fellowship involves an intentional intertwining of our lives with God, walking in partnership with Him and engaging in ongoing communion through prayer and devotion. Yet this fellowship is not limited to our relationship with God; we are also called to live in meaningful fellowship with one another.

1 John 1:3, 7 (NASB95) *what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. ... but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

Acts 2:42 (NASB95) *They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

The early church didn't just value fellowship; they devoted themselves to it. What did that kind of devotion to fellowship look like in practice?



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They Regularly Met Together

Hebrews 10:24–25 (NIV) *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

Acts 2:46–47 (NIV) *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 favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

True fellowship requires regularly meeting together. The early believers didn't just see each other briefly once a week; they shared meals, worshiped together, and spent meaningful time in both the temple (the church) and their homes. Acts 2 tells us they did this with glad and sincere hearts. It wasn't out of obligation; they genuinely wanted to be together.

Motivate, Encourage, Build Up

When the believers came together, they weren't just hanging out; they had a purpose. Their gatherings were centered around:

- Motivating Toward Love and Good Deeds
 - **Hebrews 10:24–25 (NLT)** *Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.*
- Encouragement
 - **Romans 1:12 (NLT)** *When we get together, I want to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours.*
- Building Up
 - Means to be a house-builder, to construct
 - **1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NLT)** *So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.*
 - **Ephesians 4:29 (NIV)** *Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs...*

When these become the intentions behind our gatherings, we experience authentic fellowship. Through it, we form strong bonds with one another, relationships that strengthen the body of Christ and build up His Church.



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Our Church

While our culture and daily lives in America may differ significantly from those of the early church, true fellowship is still possible today. We don't have to settle for surface-level relationships within the body of Christ. Instead, we can choose to be intentional, cultivating meaningful partnerships with fellow believers in our church community.

Discussion Questions: *What could fellowship look like in our church? What are the things we can do to incorporate the types of fellowship that we found in the early church in our church?*

Imagine our church reflecting the early church in Acts, where believers shared life in meaningful, intentional ways. Imagine us purposefully building one another up and willingly receiving encouragement in return. What if our community witnessed that kind of authentic love and care and were drawn to Jesus because of it?

This isn't just a dream; it's precisely what Jesus intended His Church to be.

How Fellowship Builds the Church

Now that we understand what fellowship entails, let's explore its role in building up the church.

- **Fellowship strengthens relationships within the Body of Christ.** Fellowship fosters genuine connection and trust among believers. As we share life, pray for one another, and walk through challenges together, we develop deep, lasting bonds that reflect the unity Christ prayed for (**John 17:20–23**).

John 13:35 (NIV) *By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.*

Ephesians 2:22 (AMP) *In Him [and in fellowship with one another] you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.*

- **Fellowship encourages spiritual growth and accountability.** When believers meet together, they challenge and encourage one another to grow in faith, character, and obedience to Christ. This kind of sharpening helps individuals mature, which in turn strengthens the church as a whole.

Proverbs 27:17 (NIV) *As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.*

- **Fellowship fuels unity and purpose.** A united church is a powerful witness. When fellowship is characterized by humility, love, and mutual support, the church becomes a tangible representation of God's kingdom on earth.

Acts 4:32 (NIV) *All the believers were one in heart and mind.*



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Ephesians 4:3 (NIV) *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*

- **Fellowship allows the gifts of the Spirit to be expressed.** When believers gather in fellowship, they have the opportunity to use their spiritual gifts to serve one another. This leads to mutual edification and a fully functioning body.

1 Corinthians 12:7 (ESV) *To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*

- **Fellowship strengthens the church's witness to the world.** A loving, connected, joy-filled church community is attractive and powerful. Fellowship shows the world what the love of Christ looks like in action.

Acts 2:46–47 (NIV) *They broke bread in their homes and ate together... praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily...*

Fellowship builds the church by fostering relational strength, promoting spiritual growth, cultivating mutual care, promoting unity, utilizing spiritual gifts, and presenting a compelling witness to the world. It's essential for a healthy, growing body of believers.

Wrap-Up / Challenge

Let's remember, fellowship is far more than simply spending time together; it is the intentional sharing of life with God and with one another. As we've seen through Scripture, it involves regularly meeting together, motivating, encouraging, and building each other up. It was a core value in the early church, and it remains essential for the church today.

We were never meant to follow Jesus in isolation. God designed His Church to thrive through meaningful relationships. When we devote ourselves to true fellowship, the result is a strengthened body, spiritual growth, unity and purpose, and a witness to the world that reflects the love and unity of Christ.

Our culture may differ from that of the early believers, but our calling remains the same. Let's not settle for shallow connections or passive church attendance. Instead, let's choose to live in genuine fellowship; meeting together, encouraging one another, building each other up, and walking closely with God and His people.

This week, be intentional about creating opportunities for fellowship. Step outside your usual circle and take time to connect with someone in your church you don't know well. It could be a meaningful conversation after a service, an invitation to coffee, or even opening your home for a meal. You might be the encouragement someone else needs, and they might be the encouragement you need!

