

## **Session 3 - The Essential Practices of Fellowship and Care Found in Community**

Session 1 taught us that the church is not a building but involves God's people living in relationship with God and each other. Relationships are not always easy, nor is life. As we live in our homes, villages, cities, countries, and world, one quickly discovers that we need other people. In his wisdom, the Lord established his church in such a way that the sharing of life together in Christ must be a priority. God wants us to affirm that *"We are in this together!"*



In this Session, we will consider two main words – “Fellowship” and “Care”. These words describe relationships built by God's hand at work in God's people. Let's consider “fellowship” first by answering the following question.

What is fellowship?

### **Fellowship involves Community — Koinonia**

The Greek New Testament word for fellowship is *koinonia*. The essential meaning of Koinonia embraces English words like community, communion, sharing, mutual participation, and intimacy. The first usage of the word in the New Testament is found in *Acts 2:42-47*.



*“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their numbers those who were being saved.”*

**As you read these verses, what do you observe about the way early Christians practiced fellowship in their community?**

**What do Christ-followers share with other Christ-followers?**

**Fellowship involves who we are in Christ!** As part of God’s global family, we can connect together as brothers and sisters in Christ. In summary, there is “something” we share together (our common faith in Christ), there is “somehow” we work together (our common service in Christ) and there is “somehow” we live together (our common life in Christ).

***Scripture of Study*** - “Koinonia” in Philippians includes idea of partnership and fellowship. Find a partner and study the following passages looking for those ideas. Be ready to share your insights with the larger group.

Philippians 1:4-6

Philippians 2:1-4

Philippians 2:25- 30

Philippians 3:10-11

Philippians 3:17 - 4:3

### ***Let’s Think Together***



In what ways does the church where you serve practice fellowship?

How do you practice fellowship?

In what ways can you and the church improve a sense of community and fellowship?

## ***Care Involves A Missional Agenda*** **Reaching IN and Reaching OUT**

An important characteristic of Christian community is serving those in need of care and compassion by reaching inside and outside the church.

### **What is care and what does it look like?**



Care has been described as the provision of what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance, and protection of someone or something. A caring person shows kindness and concern for others.

### **What Can We Learn from Scripture?**

How does Jesus show love and care in the following Scripture passages?

John 11:1-5 and 11:32-44

John 19:26-27

Mark 10:13-16

Matthew 14:14

Jesus not only cared for the physical and emotional needs of individuals, he cared about their spiritual condition. Find a partner, read the following verses and discover his heart for the lost. Be ready to share your findings with the large group.

Mark 2:1-12

Mark 5: 1-20

John 9:1-12 and 9:35-41

As we learned from Acts 2:42-47, early Christians showed love and care for one another. In Acts 20:28 Paul says, “*Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to **care** for the church of God...*” Peter also tells the elders to “***shepherd the flock of God** that is among you, exercising oversight... being examples to the flock*” (1 Pet. 5:2-3).

**Find a partner, read the following verses, and answer the questions.**

Read Acts 6:1-6. What was happening here? What do we learn about caring for others?

In this text, people were selected for what is often called “deacons” in the church. These were the ones who were called to oversee and serve the needs in the church community. Their ministry was intended to aid the apostles by taking care of some of the physical needs of the congregation. We must remember that this is something that everyone in the church can help to do.

How do these verses inform how we care for others?

Ephesians 4:32

Philippians 2:4

Colossians 3:12-14

Galatians 6:9-10

James 2:14-17

1 John 3:17-18

How does the fruit of the Spirit equip you to care for others in your community? (See Galatians 5:22-26)

## ***Let's Think Together***

In what ways does the church where you serve practice care?



***Some thoughts:*** It may include: visiting the sick, counselling those seeking to end their marriage, praying with a family whose child has just died, helping when a baby comes, feeding those who are hungry, providing clothing and sometimes shelter when lacking, helping someone to learn to manage their finances, sharing a meal, befriending the lonely, helping people with their problems, giving a ride... The list can go on and on.

How can you practice care?

***Some thoughts:*** Know the people around you. Be ready to be there for them if they need help. Encourage others to join with you.

How can the church reach out to the larger community in which you live?



***Application:*** There are many complex issues where you live. Identify the issues and ask who or what organization is seeking to help meet those needs. Now ask the Lord to help you identify one or two specific actions the church can do to address the issues in your area. Ask the Lord to provide the people and resources needed to engage the community for the glory of God.