

## Sharing in Fellowship

Based on a Characteristics of a healthy church by Bob Deffinbaugh online at [https://bible.org/seriespage/6-characteristics-healthy-church-acts-241-47#P44\\_12260](https://bible.org/seriespage/6-characteristics-healthy-church-acts-241-47#P44_12260)

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers 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. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. ( Act 2:42-47 NIV)

Over the last few months we have looked at the early church described in the book of acts written by Luke, we have seen how Jesus ascended into heaven, the coming of the Holy spirit at Pentecost and the teaching of the apostles – particularly Peter. Today I want to continue this theme looking at fellowship.

The term Luke uses for “fellowship” (koinonia) in our text means “joint participation” or “close social interaction and relationships” and “sharing something in common.” In [Philippians 2:1](#), the term is used of a common sharing in the Holy Spirit. In [Philippians 3:10](#) and [1 Peter 4:13](#), it is used of sharing in Christ’s sufferings. In [Galatians 2:9](#), it is sharing in the work of ministry of the gospel.

This fellowship was therefore more than just getting together, certainly more than just a religious meeting. It involved sharing goods, having meals together, and praying together and working together with a shared purpose and sharing processions.

Fellowship included outward actions with each other, including worship together, prayer and, sharing the act of the Lords Supper or communion, it also included acts of mutual kindness and benevolence and hospitality.

Another week I want to look at “Communion” and hospitality, now I want to look at sharing in common.

The most common expression of “fellowship” in the New Testament is that of sharing financial resources – giving: Paul in his letter to the church in Rome tells them to “Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality”. ( Rom 12:13 NIV)

He also gives an example of the Church in Macedonia and Achaia, saying “Now, however, I am on my way to Jerusalem in the service of the saints there. For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings”. ( Rom 15:25-27 NIV)

So when we give to the needs of others its not just optional, when we are feeling generous – its a requirement of our Faith; those who do not give (when they have the means to do so), need to question what they believe.

You can “fellowship” with fellow believers in a number of ways, including the partaking of meals and engaging in prayer (both of which are important), but Luke's book of Acts tells us about the early church: “All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need”. ( Act 2:44-45 NIV).

Our collection for the hardship fund when we take communion helps to address this need – and this scripture shows there is no shame in accepting help if you have need – its what the true church is about. Nothing we like to think as our possessions belongs to us – it belongs to our Father in heaven and is to serve His purposes.

The selling of all one’s possessions was was the practice of the early church, and sounds a lot like

our Lord's teaching on the use of money:

Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." ( Mat 19:21 NIV) and

"Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys". ( Luk 12:33 NIV) and

"In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple". ( Luk 14:33 NIV).

I am not suggesting that every Christian should give up everything they 'possess', but what ever we hold, we should always be looking to how we use these things for the Lord (they belong to Him), and we should always seek to see how we can help those in need. It is not foolish to share as the early church did, it is foolish to put our own desires above the needs of others.

The church sometimes has activities we call "fellowship." As we can see from scripture, what is depicted in the *koinōnia* of Acts 2:42, is much more than a bring and share lunch or a men's Saturday morning gathering. What made the fellowship of the early church so powerful was that it was built around Christ. Paul's letter to the church in Corinth says: "God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful". ( 1Co 1:9 NIV).

We should each examine our own heart and see if we, like the early church, are devoted ... not to times of fellowship but to THE fellowship ...the shared identity we have in Christ that unites us in thought, purpose, and mission.