

## Koinonia - Fellowship

16072023 Sermon by Bijoy

Koinonia is a term commonly used today to describe fellowship opportunities offered through church services or events. However, in scripture, the term Koinonia, explains the supernatural bond shared among those who are in the body of Christ. Therefore, Koinonia/fellowship is essential for spiritual growth and life in general for those who follow Christ while here in this world. Consequently, Koinonia is not something shared by all of mankind, as it is exclusive to those who are born again and having personal relationship with Jesus. It is the common faith that makes this fellowship different and divine. Therefore, Koinonia is not just simply some form of events but instead it is the spiritual gift from God for those who are in Christ.

Fellowship/koinonia is a mutual bond that Christians have with Christ that puts us in a deep, eternal relationship with one another.

The reason for fellowship is of such pressing importance is because in the early church, their communal life was one of the great attractions to the pagan world. The pagan world was not so much attracted by the preaching; it was attracted by the commonality of these people, part of which commonality was their common belief and their fellowship with one another.

Furthermore, it was the very fulfilment of the words of Jesus in the life of his people that “by this will all men know that you’re my disciples: because of the self-giving love which is characteristic of your gatherings.” And it was in the fulfilment of that, expressed in the developing church, that the pagan world was attracted to consider what it was that united these diverse people—barbarian, slaves, free people, people from a Jewish background, people from gentile backgrounds and so on—and they had no real explanation for the commonality of their existence except their common love for the Lord. And so it was that God’s people devoted themselves, not only here in the early days but throughout the developing church, to the commonality of their lives.

Now, let’s look into the different aspects of this communion/commonality or this *koinonia*/fellowship and partnership.

Primarily our common life is related to a common *faith*. 1 John chapter 1 verses 3 and 4: “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> We write this to make our joy complete.”

**So, when you share with us in the realities we have seen and heard, namely the realities of Jesus, then you share not only with us, but you share with us in our sharing in the Father and the Son. Just imagine the depths of Christian fellowship.** So, the most important aspect of Koinonia/fellowship is that the common existence of God's people is on account of their **shared faith**. That's why Acts 2:41 is so crucial: it was "those who accepted" the Word who were baptized. And it was in accepting the truth of who Jesus is and what he has done and their declared commitment to his kingship and lordship in their lives that not only were they baptized in profession of that faith, but they were then gathered into the communion of God's people. It wasn't that they were gathered together on the basis of ethnicity, or on the basis of the schools that they went to, or a common interest in a certain musical style, or anything like that at all. They brought all of the diversity of their lives and were united in a common faith. And this, of course, our common faith brings us all together as one family.

The picture of the Lord's Supper is a wonderful expression of this communion. And 1 Corinthians 10:16, Paul says, "Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation—a communion "in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf." And when the bread is passed in our Communion services and we take that to ourselves, we do so as individuals, but we do so within the expression of a common meal, although it is symbolic. And in taking the bread, as in taking the cup, we are identifying the fact that we have come to embrace Christ in all of his fullness, he is the very Bread of Life to us, and it is that which unites us. United in common faith.

So, when we talk about Christian *koinonia* — fellowship or sharing or participation that is unique to our relationship with other believers — what we are referring to is the shared union, the shared participation that we have together with Christ.

#### Common family

John 1: 11–13: "He came to his own, his own received him not. But as many as received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or of a husband's will, but born of God." When we look around at all these people that make up this church (Mairangi bay community church), and we say to ourselves, "How in the world did this group get put together in this way? The fact of the matter is that we've been born again of the same Spirit, and we have been united by the same Father. Therefore, we all belong to same family.

Therefore, we do have issues and challenges like any other family. We all bring different flavours, which also means different opinions and sometimes frictions as well. So, our fellowship is not a superficial handshakes and holy kiss. It sometimes involves putting aside our differences and choosing to love and work with the person for the glory of God. Sometimes fellowship is just having a cup of coffee with your fellow brethren and praying with him/her. Or maybe a fishing trip or having barbeque together. Our young adults ministry at this church consists of people from different backgrounds yet each week we come together as one family. We laugh together, eat together and correct each other. And over a period of time, we all can say that God has used us to sharpen each other and build each other.

Koinonia – we carry each other.

In 1 Samuel 23, David's life is hanging in the balance.

The Lord revealed to David that the people are going to hand him over to Saul so he must flee. And again, later in the chapter you can clearly see that people betrayed him and Saul came to know his whereabouts and came after him. Oh David narrowly escaped Saul. He saw death right in front of his eyes. Imagine the pain and pressure David is going through. An anointed servant of God, chosen to be the king of Israel is all alone, going through the loneliest phase of his life.

Between those two heart breaking events — the betrayal of Keilah and the treachery of the Ziphites — God gives us a glimpse of how David persevered. “And Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God” (1 Samuel 23:16)

Our Faith journey is never meant to be alone, but we do it together. We are an eternal family, yes eternal. Our relationships go beyond this life to eternity. And that alone is a great reason for us to love one another and serve each other, isn't it?

Questions for life groups.

How does Koinonia/ Christian fellowship should look like? (E.g., sacrificial ...)

Is Christian fellowship integral part of Christian discipleship and growth? if so, then how?

How can we (Mbcc) grow in our Christian fellowship?