

# Disciples Together (1): In One Place

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(Acts 2:42-47)

## I. Introduction

- A. **Old Joke:** Kindergarten class was asked to bring symbol of their religious faith
1. The first child came in and said, “*I’m Catholic and this is a crucifix*”
    - a. The second child said, “*Well, I’m Jewish and this is a menorah*”
    - b. The third child said, “*I’m from Church of Christ; this is a casserole dish!*”
  2. But we do like potlucks (next Sunday night ice cream and next is potluck)
    - a. When I was a kid, we didn’t call them potlucks; they were “*fellowships*”
    - b. Fellowship was pimento cheese sandwiches w/ no crust cut into triangles
  3. When I was a youth minister, we had visitation teams that met each week
    - a. They would meet somewhere to eat, and then get their visit assignment
    - b. Announcement: “*Team will meet for assignments, there is no fellowship*”
    - c. We all knew what that meant— there would be no food... or people!
- B. Of course, the Bible word “*fellowship*” means much more than eating together
1. Fellowship (κοινωνία) means “*association, community, partnership, sharing*”
    - a. The word appears in 17 verses in the NT (1 in Acts, rest in the epistles)
    - b. Plato’s κοινωνία was utopian society free of oppression of aristocracy
  2. The New Testament uses the word κοινωνία in several different ways—
    - a. Our relationship with God described as a ***fellowship*** (**1 Cor 1:9**)
    - b. It is used for a financial ***contribution*** for the poor (**Rom 15:26**)
    - c. It is used for communion as ***participation*** in Christ (**1 Cor 10:16**)
    - d. We aren’t to fellowship (NCV- “*share with*”) wickedness (**2 Cor 6:14**)
    - e. Paul talks to Philippi about their ***partnership*** in the gospel (**Phil 1:5**)
    - f. Paul speaks of ***fellowship of sharing*** in Christ’s suffering (**Phil 3:10**)
    - g. Paul speaks of evangelism as “*sharing your faith*” (**Philemon 6**)
    - h. When we show hospitality, we “*share with others*” (**Heb 13:16**)
  3. This idea of “*fellowship sharing*” is extremely important in the NT.
    - a. It is the relationship we have with God and each other (**1 John 1:3**)

<sup>3</sup> 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.
    - b. Because we have relationship with God, we also share lives with others

## II. Fellowship: Then and Now

A. **Question:** Have we lost this emphasis on church as a fellowship sharing?

1. “*Personal relationship with Jesus*” is a popular phrase among evangelicals.
  - a. The phrase isn’t found in the Bible, but it does stress a Bible idea.
  - b. We aren’t Christians because of our parents—we made a decision.
  - c. We pray, read scripture, live for God—a personal relationship.
2. But sometimes that “*personal relationship*” sounds a lot like “*private.*”
  - a. Church is where we for worship and study “*at the appointed time*”
  - b. But that might having very little to do with others who come to worship
  - c. Others are important (singing is better), but real point is me and God
3. So church become like going to a movie theater—the show is down front
  - a. The last thing you want is for other people in theater to ask questions
  - b. I went with my sister to a matinee in 1969 of *2001: A Space Odyssey*
    - 1) That movie is a bit obtuse, but I read the book and knew the plot.
    - 2) I answered her questions— soon everyone in theater was asking me.
    - 3) So we had a small group going... not usually how we watch movies!
  - c. Usually at movies, you want to watch and have others leave you alone.
  - d. The point of church (ἐκκλησία or “*assembly*”) is assembly of others.
    - 1) Wait a minute, isn’t the point of coming church to worship God?
    - 2) No... the point of coming to church is worshipping God together.

B. Notice how Luke sums up the life of that very first church in [Acts 2:42](#).

1. He says, “*All the believers were together and had everything in common*” ([2:44](#))
  - a. The word “*common*” (κοινός) here is the root word of κοινωνία.
  - b. In both English and Greek, the word common can be used in two ways
    - 1) It can mean “*to share in common*” (“*common salvation*” in [Jude 3](#))
    - 2) It can also mean “*unholy or impure*” (“*unclean food*” in [Acts 10:14](#))
2. Luke tells us what “*all things in common*” meant for the Jerusalem church
  - a. They **shared** their possessions to meet one another’s needs ([2:45](#))
  - b. They **met together** on a daily basis; they shared their time/space ([2:46](#))
  - c. And yes, they also **ate together** in each other’s homes ([2:46](#))
3. These early Christians were together in common. *Notice the result?* ([2:47](#))

### III. Fellowship Today Is Not Natural

A. **First**, we aren't as **socially isolated** today by as were the early Christians.

1. Many of the first believers gave up their family and friends for the faith.
  - a. Jesus, "*a man's enemies will be the members of his own house*" (**Matt 10:36**).
  - b. Many lost **their family** and **community standing** when they believed.
  - c. This isolation tended to drive the church closer together in fellowship.
2. I'm not suggesting we should only church friends—must impact the world.
  - a. If we have multiple relationships out of church, don't focus as much in.
  - b. We still need Christian fellowship, but we aren't necessarily driven to it!

B. **Second**, we have **resources** that the early Christians simply did not have.

1. We mentioned in our Wednesday class (shameless plug) some of these—
  - a. **Medical**: When we are sick, we call doctor, not the elders (**Jam 5:14**)
  - b. **Mediation**: With legal problem, don't go to church mediator (**1 Cor 6:4**)
  - c. **Money**: When needing money, we go to banks, not brothers (**Rom 12:13**)
2. James uses a brother or sister in need to illustrate our faith (**James 2:15-16**)  
*Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?*
  - a. **Problem**: Failure to meet needs OR not knowing **when** a need exists?
    - 1) We can spend energy pretending we have no problems—"just fine"
    - 2) Is there any wonder others don't know how much we are struggling?
  - b. It intentionally keep relationships artificial, and suffer because they are.

C. **Third**, our *fast-paced* and *far-flung* lifestyles are barriers. *2 different things*

1. **Fast-Paced**; I had a "*Where did summer go*" conversations with mechanic
  - a. He got said that times passes so fast because we are so terribly busy
  - b. We have created an artificially busy life and can't seem to slow it down
  - c. He was there at 7 a.m. when I dropped car off and 7 p.m. when picked up
2. **Far-Flung**: Churches are much more cosmopolitan than community based.
  - a. People drive in from all over; only time we're together is at church.
  - b. For example, the **Barker's** and **Bankhead's** are side-by-each in directory.
    - 1) But according to Google, they live **36 miles** and **48 minutes** apart.
    - 2) I doubt they often **accidentally** bump into one another and get coffee.
3. Relationships **take time**, and time is something that we have less and less.

## IV. Conclusion

- A. At the risk of being a bit cliché, the sermon has had **three points** this morning
1. **First**, fellowship was an important part of what it meant to be Christian
    - a. What called the early believers to God also called them to one another
    - b. Early church wasn't a **building** or **place of worship**—it was **community**
    - c. “*The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved*” (**Acts 2:47**)
  2. **Second**, NT fellowship was inclusive; it wraps lives around one another
    - a. Early Christians didn't just go to same church; **met needs** and **spent time**
    - b. They were together, not just **ideologically**, but **geographically** together
      - 1) Luke says believers met together at Temple and in homes (**Acts 2:46**)
      - 2) Fellowship brought them together in formal and informal settings
  3. **Third**, this fellowship-sharing today does not come **easily** or **naturally**.
    - a. The fast-paced, far-flung life we mentioned makes real fellowship hard
      - 1) I have a friend that got out of youth ministry because of band.
      - 2) He didn't dislike music; kids were too busy to have time for church.
    - b. Fellowship is not going to happen on its own; life won't let it happen
- B. That means we **must decide** to take the time and make the effort to fellowship.
1. Today is a “Sign-Up Sunday” as we kick off our Body Life small groups
    - a. This is just one of the ways that we focus on our need for fellowship
    - b. Small groups are Bible discussions, service projects, meals and fun.
      - 1) There is a Bible study each week—we'll try something a bit different
      - 2) Most groups will be a discussion of the Sunday sermon (*Jeremiah*)
    - c. Emphasis isn't only on learning Bible... really on learning each other.
    - d. The emphasis is also on spending time in focused prayer together
  2. The real business of church isn't done in the neat and tidy auditoriums
    - a. It is too easy to put on your church face and pretend that all is just fine
    - b. No, the business of church is done within messy, relentless relationships
    - c. The call to involvement in each other is **not optional** (**Rom 12:10-13**)  
*<sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. <sup>11</sup> Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.*
  3. Fellowship will not happen by accident—it will take a decision and work
  4. Small groups are no final solution in quest for fellowship—they are a start!