

## Acts 2:42-47 “Fellowship”

One of the most ironic aspects of the digital age is how we are both more connected than ever and lonelier than ever. Our kids mention that a teacher said they’re going to make their students step out of their comfort zone. I jokingly asked, “does that mean they’re going to make the students learn to make eye contact?” Since the Pandemic of 2020, Americans have drastically shifted from Tables to Takeaway. That is, to say, Americans are choosing to eat alone at home more than in public. In 2023, 74% of all restaurant traffic came from “off premises” customers which is up 61% before COVID. Eating with family or friends has declined in this same period by 30%. In fact, even customers dining in are doing so alone at an increase rate of 29%.

This is where the Christian idea of fellowship speaks directly to our overconnected, lonely culture. Let’s begin with **The Meaning**. The word means “partnership, sharing in common, or communion” (see Luke 5:10). It carries with it the idea of partnership in agreement of purpose.

We must begin with its theological meaning. It is worth noting that the Trinity itself has enjoyed eternal fellowship within the Godhead. Scripture hints at this repeatedly (see, for example, Matthew 11:27, 1 Corinthians 2:11; John 5:19-20, 17:26). Salvation, then, is the story of how our Triune God draws us into fellowship with him. Scripture is the story of Alienation and Reconciliation. The gospel draws us back into fellowship with God (Colossians 1:21-22). The New Testament frequently speaks of being drawn back into fellowship with our Triune God (1 Corinthians 1:9; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 John 1:3). All of this lies as the theological foundation for the biblical exhortation for us to be in fellowship with one another. If the gospel reconciles us with God, it ought to do the same with one another. That is the key to fellowship.

This leads to **The Message** of fellowship. Two aspects are critical to healthy, gospel fellowship. The first is the concept of *Community*. This should be an obvious point, but fellowship is inherently communal. The most powerful idol of our society is The Self. Nothing matters more than The Self. The gospel does not allow that. We are saved as individuals, yes, but we are saved into a community of believers. This is why claims that we can be good Christians from the comfort of our couch is a lie.

Scripture is clear we both need each other. One frequent way it makes this point is through the subtle use of “one another.” A full list goes beyond our study but consider some of the highlights. We are told to love one another (John 13:34-35; Romans 12:10a, 13:8; 1 Peter 4:8 for starters), forgive one another (Colossians 3:13b), comfort one another (2 Corinthians 13:11a), pray for one another (James 5:16b), encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18, 5:11a; Hebrews 10:25), and

serve one another (Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 4:10). These positive commands are critical to healthy fellowship. Community can only function when we love, serve, and encourage one another.

The New Testament also uses “one another” language to warn us against what harms fellowship. For example, we are told not to speak against one another (James 4:11, 5:9) and not to provoke one another (Galatians 5:26a). Obviously more could be listed, but the point is made. Behavior shapes the health of a community. If we spend more time encouraging than criticizing, fellowship becomes sweet and the benefit of a community will be experienced.

The second aspect of biblical fellowship is *Faith*. Any community, whether secular or religious, must be fastened together by some common cause, purpose, or identity. There must be something that binds a community. Throughout history, nations were bound by racial and ethnic identity as well as a common national myth. It was not until the rise of America that such sources of identity could be successfully called into question. What unites America traditionally is the idea of America, not the ethnicity of Americans.

The same is true for Christian fellowship. What unites us is the gospel of Jesus – not race, ethnicity, gender, politics, or any other manmade boundaries. On Christmas of 1914, German and British soldiers, hiding in the trenches, ceased firing upon each other to celebrate Christmas. They came together across No Man’s Land, and sang Christmas carols like “Silent Night,” played soccer, and even exchanged gifts.

What binds us is faith. This means that contending for the faith from theological pollution is a priority of believers. Scripture is littered with countless warnings against false teachings which must be rejected. Without the gospel, there can be no Christian fellowship. Amos rightly asked, “can two walk together unless they are agreed?” Notice in Acts 2, the scene depicting the practices of the first church is preceded by Peter’s sermons at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-41) climaxing in Peter’s exhortation that all would repent and believe the gospel (Acts 2:37-38). This is the binding glue of Christian fellowship.

Therefore, our fellowship is with Christ and citizens of his Kingdom, not the world. We don’t have anything in common with them. John writes, “If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. <sup>7</sup> But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:6-7).

We don’t know much about Enoch other than the two facts we are given in a single verse. He walked with God, we are told, and he did not die “for God took him” (Genesis 5:24). The idea of “walking with God” was not new even by the fifth chapter of Genesis. It is taken from the story of Adam and Eve who enjoyed such fellowship with the Lord in the Garden (see Genesis 3:8). Perhaps a better translation is that both Adam and Enoch “walked in close fellowship with God” (see the NLT translation of Genesis 5:24). At the end of the day, that ought to be our highest aim. We will walk with others in close fellowship when we walk with God in close fellowship. Let us aim for that.