

**Meanings of Fellowship, Pt. 1**  
**Selected Scriptures, 2016-12-04A, # 47**

**Introduction:** We have been focusing on ways to feed our faith. The believers in the early church fed their faith with four continuing activities: the Word of God, fellowship, the Lord's Supper, and prayers (Acts 2:42).

In our last study, we looked at feeding faith with friendships. Today we are going to begin to look at feeding our faith with fellowship.

"Fellowship" is a translation of the Greek noun *koinōnia* (κοινωνία), which occurs 20 times in the Greek New Testament. The Authorized Version uses six different English words to translate *koinōnia*: (1) *Fellowship* 12 times (Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 2 Corinthians 8:4; Galatians 2:9; Ephesians 3:9; Philippians 1:5; 2:1; 3:10; 1 John 1:3, 6, 7); (2) *Communion* 4 times (1 Corinthians 10:16; 2 Corinthians 6:14; 13:14); (3) *Contribution* once (Romans 15:26); (4) *Communicate* once (Hebrews 13:16); (5) *Communication* once (Philemon 1:6); and (6) *Distribution* once (2 Corinthians 9:13).

**I. Fellowship Means the Sharing of Resources to Meet Human Needs.**

**A. Translations of *koinōnia* in relation to the sharing of financial resources in the Authorized Version:**

- 1. Contribution (Romans 15:26) – "For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem."**
  - a. Most translations have "contribution."**
  - b. The New Century Version: "The believers in Macedonia and Southern Greece were happy to give their money to help the poor among God's people at Jerusalem."**
- 2. Distribution (2 Corinthians 9:13) – "Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men."**
  - a. The New American Standard Bible translates *koinōnia* "contribution."**
  - b. The New King James Version: "For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men" (2 Corinthians 9:12-13).**
- 3. Communicate (Hebrews 13:16) – "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."**
  - a. Other translations in The Contemporary Parallel New Testament are "share" and "sharing."**
  - b. The New Living Translation: "Don't forget to do good and to share what you have with those in need, for such sacrifices are very pleasing to God."**

**B. The verb form of *koinōnia* is *koinōneō* (κοινωνέω).**

- 1. *Koinōneō* occurs eight times in the Greek New Testament.**

2. *Koinōneō* occurs three times in relation to sharing of resources and is translated by the Authorized Version:
  - a. Distributing (Romans 12:13) – “Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.”
    - 1) The New American Standard Bible: “Contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.”
    - 2) The New Century Version: “Share with God’s people who need help. Bring strangers in need into your homes.”
    - 3) The New Living Translation: “When God’s children are in need, be the one to help them out. And get into the habit of inviting guest home for dinner or, if they need lodging, for the night.”
  - b. Communicate (Galatians 6:6) – “Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.”
    - 1) The New King James Version: “Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.”
    - 2) The New Century Version: “Anyone who is learning the teaching of God should share all the good things he has with his teacher.”
  - c. Communicated (Philippians 4:15) – “Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.”
    - 1) The New King James Version: “Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only.”
    - 2) The New Living Translation: “As you know, you Philippians were the only ones who gave me financial help when I brought you the Good News and then traveled on from Macedonia. No other church did this.”
- C. One of Paul’s reasons for visiting the church at Rome was to feed the believer’s faith (Romans 1:11-12).
  1. One of the ways Paul planned to feed the believer’s faith was through the sharing of spiritual resources.
  2. “Impart” in Romans 1:11, translates the Greek verb *metadidōmi* (μεταδίδωμι), which means “to share.”
- D. Some of the resources the believers in the early church shared with one another to meet human needs:
  1. Bread (Acts 2:46)...
  2. Blessings (Acts 2:45-46; 4:34-37)...
  3. Burdens (Acts 4:23; cf. Galatians 6:2)...

- a. The verbs “had,” “sold,” and “parted” in Acts 2:44, 45 are translations of imperfect tense Greek verbs.
  - b. The imperfect tense means “continuous action in the past.”
    - 1) The present tense “means continuous action in the present.”
    - 2) The aorist tense means “a once-for- all action....”
  - c. “Common” in Acts 2:44 translates the Greek “koinos,” which is the adjective form of the Greek noun “koinōnia.”
4. Beliefs (Acts 4:33; cf. Philemon 1:6)...
  5. Battles (Acts 4:23-31; cf. 1 Corinthians 10:13; Ephesians 6:12; 1 Peter 5:8-9)...

## II. Fellowship Means Partnership.

- A. In Philippians 1:5, Paul informed the Philippian believers that he always gave thanks to God for their fellowship in the gospel.
  1. “Fellowship” translates *koinōnia*.
  2. *Koinōnia* is translated “partnership” by Holman Christian Standard Bible.
  3. The Amplified Bible: “[I thank my God] for your fellowship (your sympathetic cooperation and contributions and partnership) in advancing the good news (the Gospel) from the first day [you heard it] until now.”
  4. Another adjective form of *koinōnia* is *koinōnos* (κοινωνός).
    - a. *Koinōnos* is also used as a noun.
    - b. *Koinōnos* is translated:
      - 1) “Partner” in 2 Corinthians 8:23; Philemon 1:17;
      - 2) “Partners” in Luke 5:10;
      - 3) “Companions” in Hebrews 10:33;
      - 4) “Fellowship” in 1 Corinthians 10:20.
  5. Partnership involves cooperation and participation in the accomplishment of common goals...
- B. Paul had many partners who worked with him in the advancement of the gospel: Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Apollos, etc.
- C. Four advantages of having a partner are listed in Ecclesiastes 4:9-12:
  1. Production – “Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor” (v. 9)...
    - a. Two working together can usually accomplish more than one working alone: Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, Peter and John, Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Silas, Paul and Timothy, Paul and Titus...

- b. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:6, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.”
  - c. Study the greetings and benedictions at the end of Paul’s letters and observed his list of partners in ministry (Romans 16:1-27; 1 Corinthians 16:10-24; Colossians 4:7-18; Titus 3:12-15; Philemon 1:22-25).
    - 1. Paul mentions at least one partner in all of his letters.
    - 2. Many are lonely today because they did not take time to develop relationships...
  - d. According to Mark 6:7, Jesus sent the twelve disciples out in groups of two...
  - e. John Maxwell said, “Nothing of significance was ever achieved by an individual acting alone. Look below the surface and you will find that all seemingly solo acts are really team efforts.”
  - f. Complete the following sentences:
    - 1) Two heads are better than – one.
    - 2) There is strength in – numbers.
2. Pickup – “For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up” (v. 10)...
    - a. We need someone to pick us up when we are down with depression discouragement, disappointment...
    - b. When Paul was discouraged on one occasion, God used Titus to pick him up (2 Corinthians 7:6)...
  3. Provision – “Again if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?” (v. 11)...
    - a. Provision of comfort – During the cold times of life, the presence of a partner can bring comfort:
      - 1) Job’s three friends were good comforters for seven days and seven nights because they were silent (Job 2:11-13)...
      - 2) Job’s three friends cease to be good comforters when they began to speak (Job 13:1-6; 16:1-5; 19:1-3; 21:34; 42:7-10)...
      - 3) Sometimes the most comforting thing you can do for a partner is just be present during the difficult times of life (cf. 2 Corinthians 7:6).
    - b. Provision of counsel – According to Proverbs 11:14, “In the multitude of counselors there is safety.”
  4. Protection – “And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (v. 12)...
    - a. All believers are in a battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil (Galatians 5:17; 1 John 2:15-17; 1 Peter 5:8).
    - b. The believers in the early church faced battles together (Acts 4:23-31).
    - c. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego faced battles together (Daniel 3:1-30).