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Bridgeway Community Church
Series: TABLE TALK
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TABLE TALK:
“Fellowship”

I. INTRODUCTION

Good morning Bridgeway!

We are in the second part of a series called “TABLE TALK.” Our ministry year theme this year is “COME HOME,” and this series consists of conversations on *home* and what it means to be a spiritual home. Last week we talked about Spiritual Authority, and today we are talking about *Fellowship*. As we walk together through Acts 2:42 we are told that the early Christian believers were “devoted to fellowship.” We are going to examine what that means and what it looks like for us following Jesus today.

Main Idea:

Fellowship is sweet revenge in a world that has gone mad

It is a divine gift in a world of division, derision, damage and relational brokenness. In the midst of this brokenness, I believe one unique gift the Lord gives the church is the sweetness of Christian fellowship.

But before we talk about what fellowship is, let's clarify what fellowship is NOT...

1. Fellowship is not FRIENDSHIP.

Friends are people who come together to build relationships socially for a myriad of reasons, such as:

- **Companionship** - *accompanying one another*
- **Recreation** - *playing together*
- **Socializing** - *hanging out together*

Such relational connections are made through communicating and talking with one another, listening and laughing together, and simply enjoying time together in emotional safety.

With friendship, there is no exchanging of services.

While friends may serve each other, the relationship is not based on an exchange of services or commodities.

If there is an exchange of services like a *doctor-patient* relationship, then that is not technically defined as a "*friendship*".

- It is a professional relationship.
- A friendship goes beyond a professional relationship of a doctor & patient, or a therapist & client, or a boss & employee.
- Now you can BECOME friends with those professional relationships, but the truth will tell whether you are friends or not outside of the professional exchanges.

2. Fellowship is not FAMILY-SHIP

- Family relationships are blood-ties between family members as relatives.
- Usually these relatives grow up together or live together in the same home in their younger years.
- Even if the relatives are not blood related, when family members share the same upbringing under the same roof they are connected through the bonds of siblinghood, that is also, "Family-ship".
- We see this through parental-child relationships and/or guardianships. This would generally define family.

3. Fellowship is not ACQUAINTANCESHIP

- *Everyone is not a friend*, even if there are deeper social and emotional connections.
- *Everyone is not family*, where there are blood ties or bonding as relatives.

Most people you know are most likely acquaintances.

- These can be people who you know casually and are "acquainted" with through human interactions based on proximity.
- If you were not in proximity with these people, you would not be interacting with them
- If you move from one neighborhood to a different neighborhood, you will most likely not spend time or ever see those people again.
- These neighbors are acquaintances.
 - If you still maintain a relationship regularly with some old neighbors then that is a testament to the fact that you became more than acquaintances, and became actual "friends".
 - But all the other old neighbors, classmates, or work mates from previous eras in life, may be best described as "acquaintances".

Question:

So, then, if fellowship is NOT friendship, family-ship, or acquaintanceship, *then what is it?*

In **Acts 2:42** it says that the New Testament believers *devoted* themselves to the apostles' teaching and to FELLOWSHIP. What does this mean?

II. **"THE TRIANGLE OF FELLOWSHIP" IN 1 JOHN**

Question:

What does this idea of fellowship mean and how is it distinguished from the other relationships?

[Draw on the white board]

- Draw a horizontal line representing friendship, family-ship, and acquaintanceship.
- Draw an angle to the top to make a triangle, which exemplifies "*fellowship*" sharing in our relationship with Jesus Christ. (See **1 John 1:3**)

Look with me at **1 John 1:3, 6-7**. And remember that John was a *disciple* who had become an *apostle*. What made someone an apostle was that they had walked with Jesus, they learned from him as they heard him teach, they had seen him do miracles and encountered him when he was

raised from the dead. And now all these new believers in Acts 2 are saying, *Tell us about Jesus – tell us what you saw and learned from him.* This is “the apostles’ teaching” they devoted themselves to, which we spoke about last week (**Acts 2:42**).

But it also says they devoted themselves to “fellowship.” In Greek, the word fellowship is the word *koinonia*. And John, then, writes this...

- *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... If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. 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, purifies us from all sin (1 John 1:3, 6-7 NIV84).*

According to **1 John 1:3, 6 & 7** we have fellowship with one another in Christ, as the light.

- Draw a stick figure in the middle and draw a line "up" to God, but out like an L into the darkness.
- **1 John 1:6** says we are liars if we live in darkness. What John is saying is that while we have fellowship with God (draw a stick figure in the middle of the triangle), if we live in darkness (draw a circle outside the triangle) – then you’re a liar.
- God is LIGHT... so if we live in darkness, we are out of fellowship with God.
- But this is amazing! He moves in **verse 9** and says that, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and cleans us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9 NIV84).*
- Then, we come back into the light and close the triangle again. (**1 John 1:9**) Confession means to “say the same thing as.” When I agree with God and say the same thing that God says about my sin and darkness, and when I ask for his forgiveness, it says he is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse us. In other words, God says: “COME HOME!”

Main point:

The Door back to our fellowship is confession & cleansing

Has anybody ever needed forgiveness and cleansing from God?

But John also teaches us that we can “lie” and break fellowship with God in another way. Look with me at **1 John 4:20-21**...

- *If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother. (NIV84)*

We can step out of fellowship by living in darkness (*sinning*), but we can also step out of fellowship with God when we hate a brother or sister (*hating*).

And how do you get back and close the triangle? By no longer hating, but LOVING...

Main point:

Therefore, LIGHT & LOVE is God at the top of the triangle.

It is LIGHT and LOVE that keep fellowship going! So, if we walk in the light by not sinning and if we walk in love by not hating, then we can be in fellowship with God and each other.

- This fulfills the “great commandment”: *To love the Lord your God with all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength* (see **Matthew 22:36-40**).

Jesus is saying that when we LOVE God and LOVE people, walking in the LIGHT, we are fulfilling the entirety of the Law and 10 Commandments. They fall into the two categories of the 10 commandments – the first 4 commandments focus on loving God; the last 6 focus on loving our neighbor.

When we come into fellowship with God and with each other, we have the beauty of *koinonia* - FELLOWSHIP!

III. CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP DEFINED

Based on what we’ve read so far, I define Christian fellowship in the following way...

Definition of Christian Fellowship:

Sharing experiences together with other believers in the light & love of Christ

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP is one of the greatest blessings of the Christian life. We cannot have true “Christian Fellowship” with others in our sin. Confession and forgiveness helps us restore our fellowship with God and each other.

Christian fellowship is when we are sharing our *experiences in Christ* together in His light and in His love.

Main point:
We cannot have Christian fellowship alone!

Even Jesus had fellowship with his family and 12 disciples.

Hebrews 10:25 says that we are not to “*forsake the gathering of the assembly*” as “*some are in the habit of doing*” (NIV2011). When you’re in the habit of not fellowshiping with other believers, you’re usually developing other bad habits!

Coming together with other believers helps us remember what LOVE is and what the LIGHT is. This is why there are people who’ve left church and left God and are living completely antithetical to the love of God and the light of God.

Until they come into a relationship with the God who created Christian fellowship, they won’t be able to understand you!

- This is why we need to keep closing the triangle in LOVE when we feel hatred rising up in our hearts
- This is why we need to keep closing the triangle in CONFESSION, walking in the LIGHT when we feel the power of sin rising up within us

We need Christian Fellowship to survive in Christian life.

Question:
Do you have true Christian Fellowship in your life?

- Who do you share *experiences in Christ* with, outside of Sunday mornings?
- You can get FELLOWSHIP with a gang, with a fraternity, with other social groups.
- All of these social groups can be wonderful and much needed gatherings, with good purposes.
- But, true Christian Fellowship (*Koinonia*) only happens among CHRISTIAN believers in Christ!
- Such Fellowship is a divine gift from God!
- Such Fellowship is a provision of God’s grace in our lives.

Remember this beautiful benefit: *You can have Christian fellowship with any believer around the world at any time because of your connection to Christ.*

IV. THREE SOURCES OF CHRISTIAN SUPPORT

In fact, to succeed in the Christian life we need **3 MAJOR SOURCES OF CHRISTIAN SUPPORT**:

[Draw another triangle of the board and put a cross in the middle]

1. The WORD OF GOD

- You're getting an awesome diet of Sunday sermons from our clergy team
- You've got wonderful opportunities through WNA, Youth groups, Life groups, Care groups, to grow in your understanding of the Word with others.
- The Word of God renews our MIND (see **Romans 12:1-3**)

2. The SPIRIT OF GOD

- We pray that the Holy Spirit would lead, convict us and guide us
- We pray for strength and peace in our inner-person
- We lean on the Holy Spirit to develop the fruit of the Spirit in our lives (see **Galatians 5**)

3. The PEOPLE OF GOD

- When we are with God's people we are challenged and supported and inspired to live according to God's word and God's Spirit.
 - **C.S.I.** - this is a better kind of CSI!
 - The other kind of CSI takes place *after* a crime scene
 - This kind of CSI is *helping you prevent* a crime scene

- These are the 3 BENEFITS to Having the Fellowship with the People of God in your Life are...
 - **They CHALLENGE you**
 - Appropriate accountability
 - They also challenge you to be *contributors* not just consumers
 - To not just show up and consume, becoming spiritually fat; but to share with others what God is teaching YOU through the Word
 - **They SUPPORT you**
 - Walking with you
 - Talking with you
 - Praying with you
 - This is what Pastor Jin, Rachael Maruca and our CARE Ministry do so well
 - **They INSPIRE you**
 - When you see others ahead of you, you can aspire to be that kind of person
 - You can keep fighting, running, and persevering
 - The grace God has given to them encourages you grow in grace yourself

V. CONCLUSION & PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

What have we learned today?

Fellowship is NOT:

- Friendship
- Family-ship
- Acquaintanceship

Fellowship is:

- *Sharing experiences together with other believers in the light & love of Christ*

3 Major Sources of Christian Support:

- The *Word* of God
- The *Spirit* of God
- The *People* of God

3 Benefits of Christian Support:

- Challenges you
- Supports you
- Inspires you

Finally, to close out for today, I'd like to give you some practical applications...

Practical Applications:

1. **Pray that God blesses you with 2 or 3 good Christian brothers or sisters** that you can share in Christian fellowship with
2. **Pray with each other as Christian family members**
 - Ask your Christian brothers & sisters how you can pray with them
 - Ask them if you can pray with them sometimes
 - Prayer is the basis of Christian fellowship

3. **Thank God if you have the blessing of 2 or 3 brothers and sisters** that you can share in Christian fellowship with. Let's not take them for granted.

CLOSING PRAYER (IN UNISON):

Let's pray together to close out, repeating in unison after me...

DEAR GOD,

- THANK YOU FOR CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.
- THANK YOU FOR MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST.
- THANK YOU FOR A CHURCH LIKE BRIDGEWAY WHERE I CAN WORSHIP TOGETHER WITH OTHER FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST.
- THANK YOU FOR THE PRIVILEGE OF SITTING AMONG OTHER BELIEVERS WHO NEED YOU AS MUCH AS I DO.

DEAR GOD, THE FATHER,

- PLEASE HELP ME TO BE A *MORE LOVING* CHRISTIAN SIBLING.

DEAR JESUS, THE SON,

- PLEASE HELP ME TO BE A *MORE FORGIVING* CHRISTIAN SIBLING.

DEAR HOLY SPIRIT,

- PLEASE HELP ME TO BE A *MORE PATIENT* CHRISTIAN SIBLING.

OH GOD,

- THANK YOU FOR *YOUR LOVE*.
- THANK YOU FOR *YOUR FORGIVENESS*.
- THANK YOU FOR *YOUR PATIENCE*.

In Jesus' Name – AMEN, AMEN, & AMEN!