

Growing In Christ

Fellowship as a Means of Grace



Christian fellowship is the shared life

- (1) flowing from the gospel,
- (2) through which God forms us in Christ through one another and
- (3) in which we bear mutual responsibility.



I. The gospel that restores our fellowship with God is the same gospel that makes fellowship with one another possible.

Fellowship : koinonia

Fellowship means sharing or partnership in something held in common.



A. What is fellowship?

Koinonia means **sharing, participation, partnership, or communion in something held in common.**

Christian fellowship is **not merely friendship** or proximity. It is participation in a common reality and mission.

We see this in fellowship of the Rings. These are not friends by nature, they are bound together for a purpose. We will see this theme carry through.

Key line:

Biblical fellowship is not merely being together; it is being joined together in something.

I. The gospel & fellowship



Biblical Fellowship is rooted in God

I. The gospel & fellowship

1. Fellowship is first vertical before it is horizontal



Fellowship is first a vertical reality before it is a horizontal reality.
Lots of lonely popular people.

Important:

This is why fellowship is so important is because it **flows from our creator**.

Fellowship is built into our **original design**

Our god is trinitarian; 1 in being, 3 in persons.

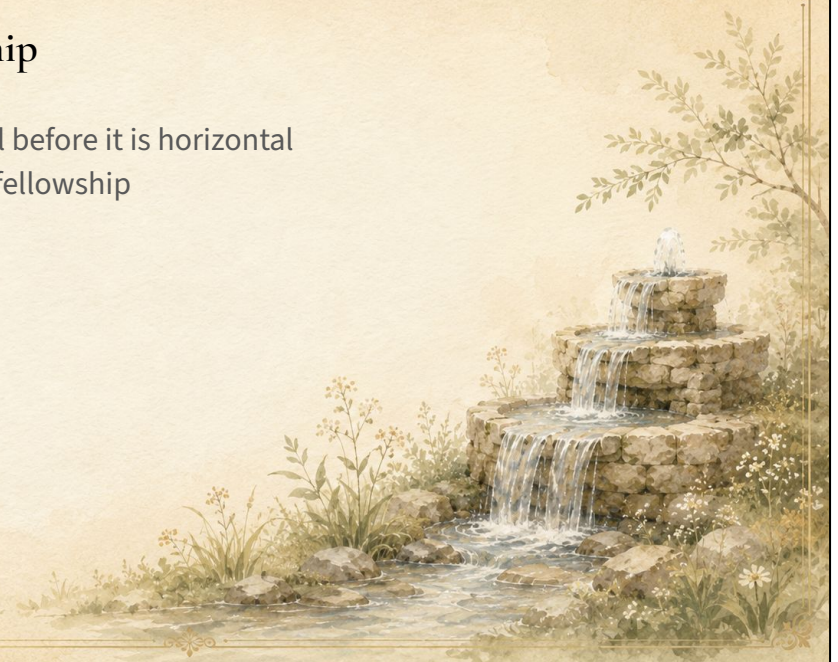
The persons of the trinity have fellowship with each other, perfectly.

There was no need for additional conversation, love or relationship.

Like so many attributes we share with God, they are given out of an abundance in Him not because He needs anything from us.

I. The gospel & fellowship

1. Fellowship is first vertical before it is horizontal
2. Humanity was made for fellowship



If you could meet someone from the bible other than Jesus who would it be?

Adam & Eve

I can't imagine what perfect humanity and perfect fellowship with God looked like.

When we read Genesis 1&2 we get to see a glimpse of how things were before sin and how they will be one day for all believers.

Adam was created, **not good to be alone**, so God gave him Eve.

Before the fall man was made to fellowship with;

God, perfectly

Each other perfectly

Work is post fall for sure right? What was their shared endeavor?

Glorify God

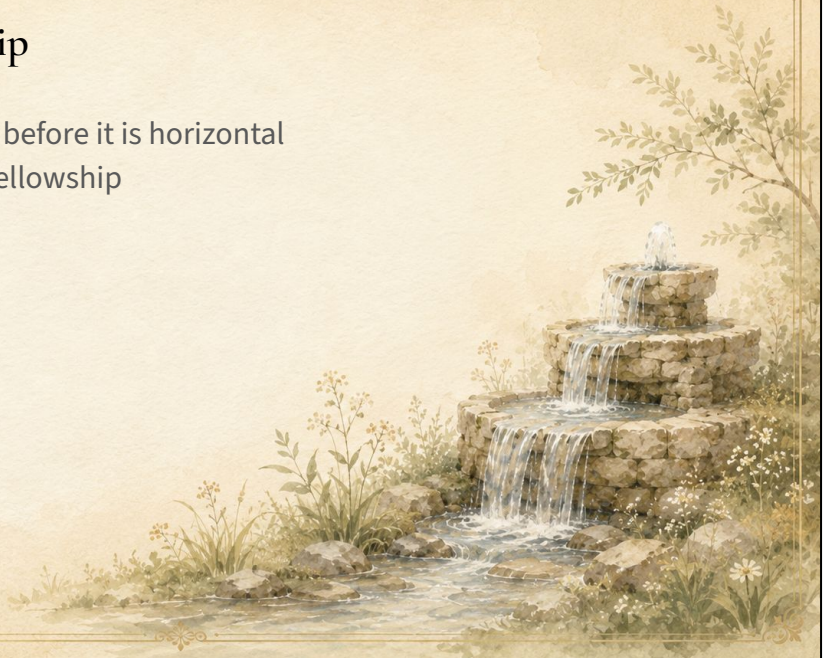
Dominion and cultivation

Possible questions:

- What did communion with God look like?
- What did life with one another look like?
- What was humanity's shared calling?

I. The gospel & fellowship

1. Fellowship is first vertical before it is horizontal
2. Humanity was made for fellowship
3. Sin breaks fellowship



Sin breaks fellowship

That perfect fellowship with;

God is now broken. Distance, shame, etc...

Fellow creatures, immediately blames Eve, Cain and Abel.

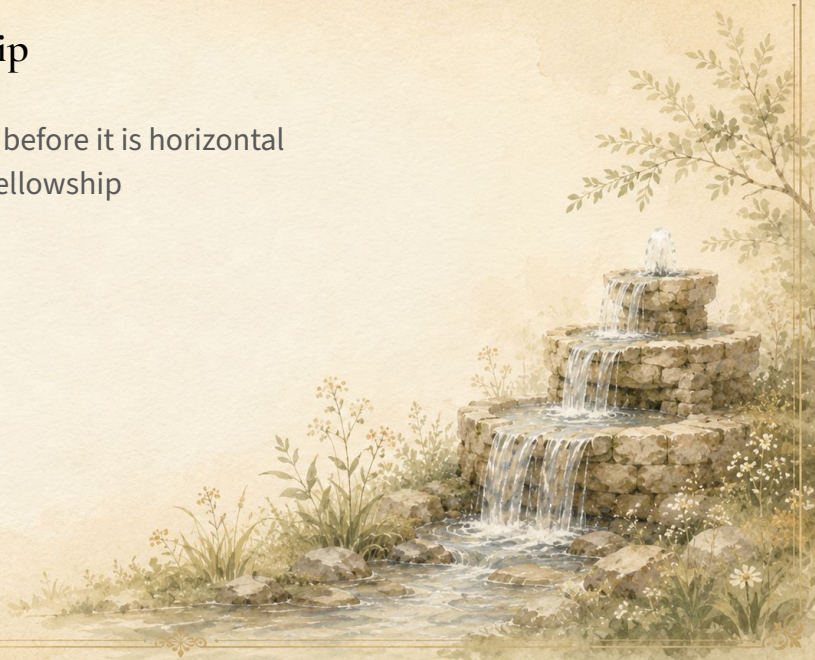
How did it impact their shared mission? Futility

Key line:

Fallen humanity is alienated from God and fractured within itself.

I. The gospel & fellowship

1. Fellowship is first vertical before it is horizontal
2. Humanity was made for fellowship
3. Sin ruptures fellowship
4. Christ restores fellowship



E. Christ restores fellowship

First and foremost Christ **pays our debt**, then adopts us into God's family.

Speaking of family, **God makes a people** out of every tribe tongue and nation.

This **new family is so powerful** that we have more in common with them than lost people in our own biological family.

This new fellowship **has the power for former enemies** to call each other brothers and sisters.

There is literally **no difference this world** can come up with that can overcome this kind of shared identity.

The fellowship that was purchased for us was so immense that it can't help but overflow from us onto the people around us.

Summary

The deepest thing Christians have in common is not age, ethnicity, personality, politics, family structure, or interests. It is Christ himself.

Transition:

And if the gospel creates this fellowship, the next question is: how does God actually use that fellowship in our lives?

II. Fellowship Embodies the Truth



Our God is so amazing He not only reveals himself through His word but through His people. Jesus says to know Him is to know the Father. One of the ways you know Jesus is through His people, I mean they are called The Body of Christ.

Graham Tomlin: “We tend to change when we see a quality in someone else we admire and would like to emulate, and we learn to exercise that quality as we see someone else live it out. Embodied truth is much more effective than disembodied concepts”.

II. Fellowship Embodies the Truth

1. Learning truth through example



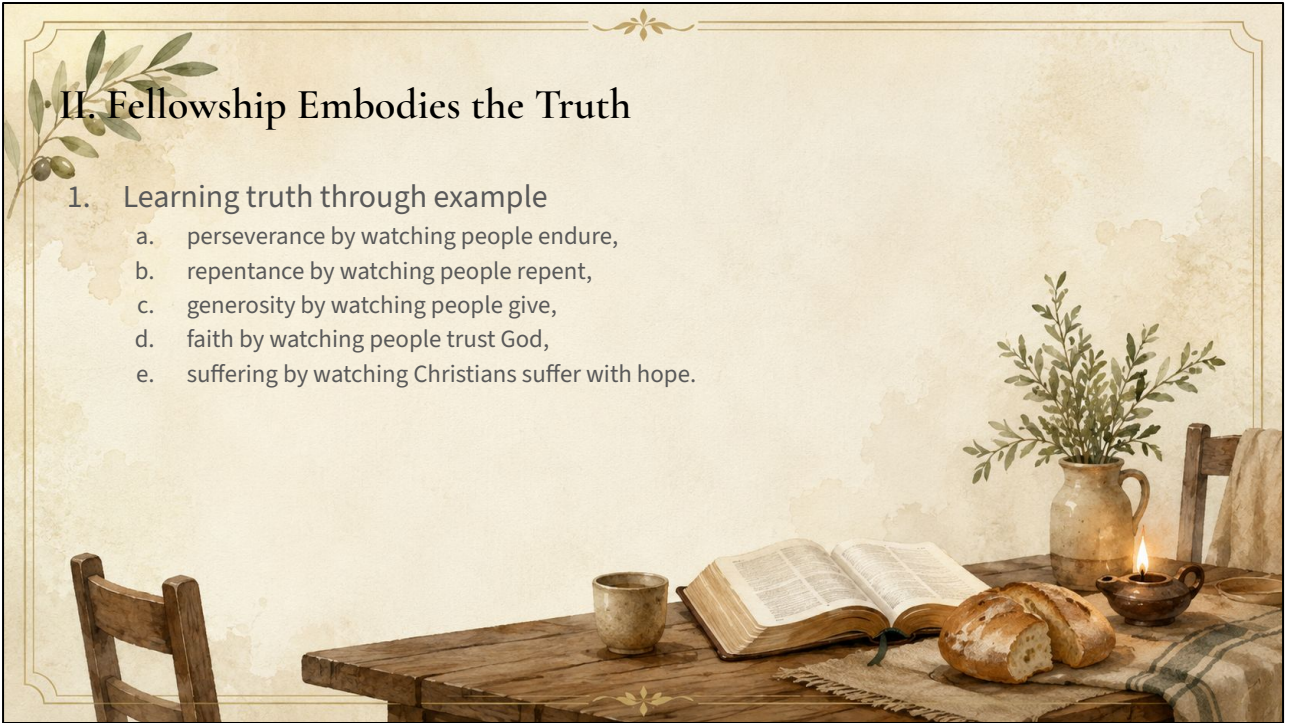
God does not reveal Himself and guide us as a distant far off God but **one that is near.**

God never changes and His word is complete, there are **no new books of the bible.**

Through the Holy Spirit we, as a fellowship of believers, apply God's word to every aspect of our lives, mostly through example.

II. Fellowship Embodies the Truth

1. Learning truth through example
 - a. perseverance by watching people endure,
 - b. repentance by watching people repent,
 - c. generosity by watching people give,
 - d. faith by watching people trust God,
 - e. suffering by watching Christians suffer with hope.



1. We learn:
 - a. perseverance by watching people endure,
 - b. repentance by watching people repent,
 - c. generosity by watching people give,
 - d. faith by watching people trust God,
 - e. suffering by watching Christians suffer with hope.

Question: When you think of biblical teachings like, hospitality, humility, generosity, suffering well, finish the race well, is there someone that comes to mind? Who is that and how do they spur you on in that area?

Transition: In that same vein we see the living out of God's truth through the reverberation of His word through His people.



II. Fellowship Embodies the Truth

1. Learning truth through example
2. The Word reverberate out

B. In fellowship we see The Word reverberate through God's people.

On Sunday morning **God's word doesn't stop** working at the end of the benediction.

God's people want to see it work it's way **through the body and out to the world.**

From the lobby, ride home, dinner later in the week, office, community group, neighbors.

If everyone in the service **talked to 2 people** that week about 1 thing from the sermon, how far do you think that word could go?

Now, **what if a few of them became convicted** and changed their behaviour, and then the people in their life noticed that change. Now they are learning God's word from the sermon through the putting into practice of this person.

Key line:

The church is a community in which the Word of God continues to echo through the lives and conversations of God's people.

II. Fellowship Embodies the Truth

1. Learning truth through example
2. The Word reverberate out
3. We learn to pray by praying with praying people



C. We learn to pray by praying with praying people

Brian and Josh thoroughly covered prayer both privately and corporately so I won't give any new content here.

Question: How as praying with others encouraged you?

What about the topic of how to pray, do you have an example of someone that "taught" through example?

II. Fellowship Embodies the Truth

1. Learning truth through example
2. The Word reverberate out
3. We learn to pray by praying with praying people
4. God's people applying God's Word



D. Other Christians, equipped with the Holy Spirit, apply God's word.

Story of man in a flood trapped on his roof asking for help. Canoe, Motor boat, Helicopter.

Sometimes we pray to hear from God, we pray, we read the bible waiting for an answer, all of which is exactly what you should be doing. Maybe God has sent some Elders, community group leaders, or other mature believers to help you work through that issue.

The same Spirit you are pleading with to give your clarity lives inside of hundreds of people in this church that have committed to helping you out.

Question: Does anyone have an example where God used someone in your life to get right at something you were dealing with? Maybe it was the timing of that person's comment, or they said the exact right thing?

Key line:

One of God's protections against the deceitfulness of sin is the loving voice of another Christian.

Transition:

If Fellowship is the embodiment of the Gospel, which we make visible to each other and the lost world around us, then this has major implications for how we should think about our relationships and conversations.

III. Fellowship Creates Mutual Responsibility



3rd and final point: Fellowship Creates Mutual Responsibility

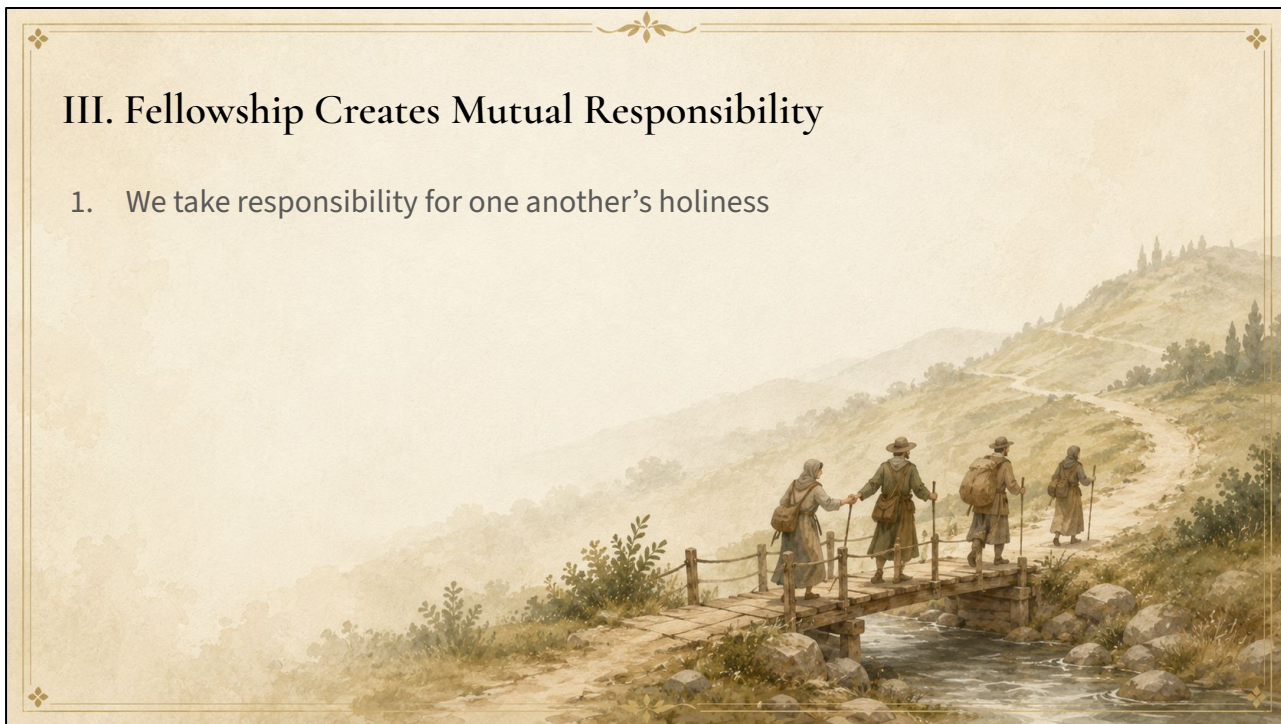
Thesis

Because we share Christ, we take responsibility for one another's holiness, burdens, needs, and common mission.

This is where we start to see the shape of what true Christian fellowship looks like and becomes more than "Christian friendship."

III. Fellowship Creates Mutual Responsibility

1. We take responsibility for one another's holiness



A. We take responsibility for one another's holiness because we know lifelong obedience is hard, and we need help.

We need to run the race and are committed to seeing that we all finish strong.

Two common reasons of running failure, fatigue or getting lost.

- Encouragement, antidote to fatigue
 - Flattery seeks to puff up or have the person think greater of you
 - Specific, unprompted, and desires to build the other person up.
- Correction, antidote to getting lost
 - Restorative, Same team, Patient, prayed about and waited for a pattern
 - Specific, gives the person the ability to understand

Christian fellowship that help one another in the race asks:

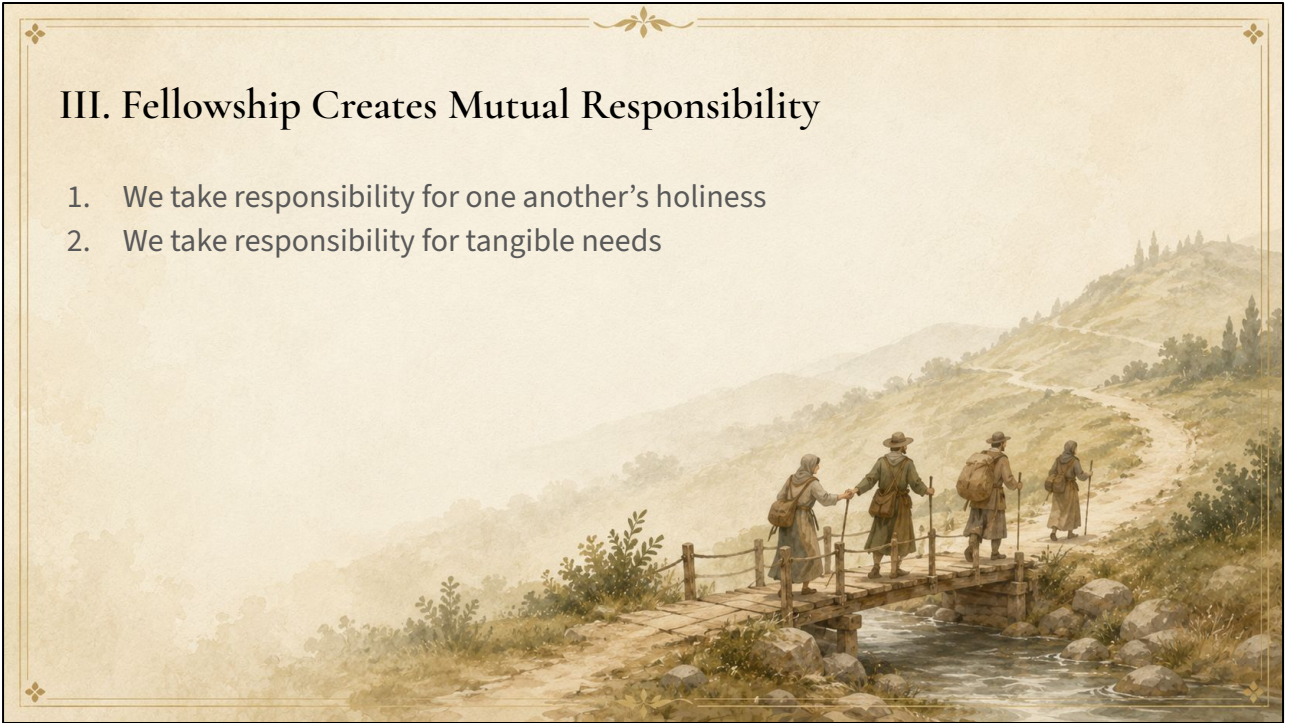
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| • How are you doing spiritually? | Old timey, How is your soul? |
| • Where are you tempted? | Where are you discouraged? |
| • How can I help you keep following Christ?
encouraged? | How are you particularly |

Do you have friendships where asking these questions are not strange but common?

Key line: Christian correction is not fault-finding; it is restorative love from people who know they also need grace.

III. Fellowship Creates Mutual Responsibility

1. We take responsibility for one another's holiness
2. We take responsibility for tangible needs



B. We take responsibility for tangible needs

Koinonia includes actual sharing.

Grudem

- Personal helping helps
 - One being helped - ✗ Praise God because He showed up through the giver. ✗ Feeling of belonging into a family/body. ✗ Teaches humility rather than self sufficiency. ✗ Deepens their relationship to the giver
 - The helper - ✗ Exercise God glorifying generosity. ✗ Exercise self controller over the thing they are giving. ✗ Receive gratitude and thanks Encouraged to give more. ✗ Deeper their relationship to the receiver.
- Both parties gain in this scenario.

Let's test out Grudem's theory.

Question: How many have experienced the benefits of receiving help from the body, when you were in need?

Question: How many people experienced overwhelming gratitude when you received you COVID stimulus check? Why?

Question: How about a real example where you felt the care of the Lord by being served by someone?

Key line: In our American self sufficiency we rob God of glory and our fellow brothers and sisters the opportunity to grow in Christ-likeness when we refuse to ask for help.

III. Fellowship Creates Mutual Responsibility

1. We take responsibility for one another's holiness
2. We take responsibility for tangible needs
3. We take responsibility for the mission



C. We take responsibility for the mission

Like the Fellowship of the Ring, **Christians are not merely companions.** We are partners spurring each other on.

One of the **coolest things** a believer can experience is seeing someone go from **death to life or have a dramatic spiritual maturity** moment.

We should be hungry for the **reconciled fellowship** that we have with God to **spill to those around us**, and the relational component can be the most effective catalyst.

Lifeway survey showed 82% of the unchurched are likely to attend church if a friend, co-worker, neighbor or family member invite them.

We want to see people saved and join in arms to do it. **Maybe you invite, another believer sees** you coming in with a new face and strikes up a conversation, then another invites them to lunch.

If the Lord would draw that new person to Him then **3 or 4 people now get to be first witnesses** to seeing another family member join the ranks!

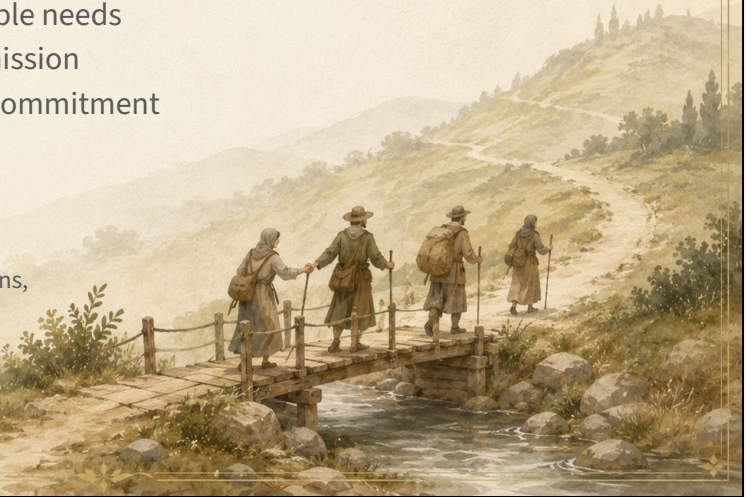
Bambi Phase: When someone's first season of being a believer is marked by mostly enthusiasm and very little coordination, much like my dancing.

Question: Does anyone have some encouraging bambi stories? How about this tag team effort where multiple believers, maybe even uncoordinated, all were instrumental in someones conversion or significant formation?

Key line: Fellowship is not simply enjoying one another; it is laboring together for

III. Fellowship Creates Mutual Responsibility

1. We take responsibility for one another's holiness
2. We take responsibility for tangible needs
3. We take responsibility for the mission
4. Mutual responsibility requires commitment
 - a. It takes time to:
 - i. know and be known,
 - ii. suffer together,
 - iii. forgive one another,
 - iv. endure disappointing seasons,
 - v. watch one another mature,
 - vi. build trust,
 - vii. carry burdens.



D. Mutual responsibility requires commitment

This is where the local church emphasis belongs.

Deep fellowship normally grows through long faithfulness to a particular people.

There are no microwave solutions quality of time is a product of quantity of time.

It takes time to:

- know and be known, suffer together, forgive one another, endure disappointing seasons, watch one another mature, build trust, carry burdens.

There can be some good reasons to leave a church but for Christians it should be a weighty decision.

Key lines: Some forms of grace only become visible after years of shared life.

You cannot practice long-suffering with people you leave as soon as they become difficult.

Christian fellowship is forged not only by what we enjoy together, but by what we endure together for the sake of Christ.

And then: The gospel does not eliminate natural friendships, but it creates supernatural ones.

Growing In Christ

Come to the gatherings you already attend with greater intentionality.

Approach the relationships you already have as opportunities for Christian fellowship.

Commit deeply enough to a local church that you can know, serve, forgive, suffer with, and be formed by a particular people over time.



Conclusion: Ordinary Means, Intentional Participation

The means of grace are not primarily more things to add to an already crowded life. They are ordinary gifts God has already given us that become more fruitful when we understand and intentionally use them according to their design.

So the application is not simply: add a bunch more stuff to your already busy schedule.

It is:

Come to the gatherings you already attend with greater intentionality.

Approach the relationships you already have as opportunities for Christian fellowship.

Commit deeply enough to a local church that you can know, serve, forgive, suffer with, and be formed by a particular people over time.

Let's pretend I said nothing this morning. How many of you were encouraged by answers you all gave to questions I asked?

Question-Who has some examples of this where, when you think of a verse or biblical principle you have a specific person in mind?

Question: Who are some great prayers and why? How have you learned how to pray from someone?

Question: Does anyone have an example where God used someone in your life to get right at something you were dealing with?

being served by someone?

Question: Does anyone have any examples of what I call the Bambi phase?

If you were then we did it, look how easy that was! When you get some Christians together, you know what they love talking about, JESUS! No one was strong armed or felt awkward. All it takes is someone to initiate the conversation and I think you will find followers of Jesus love talking about Him, which will bless everyone who hears about it.

Final line

God does not merely give us truth to believe. He gives us a people with whom to believe it, live it, and endure in it together.