TITLE: **koy-nohn-ee'-ah** FELLOWSHIP

TEXT: 1Jn. 1:6-7; Heb. 10:23-25; Pr. 27:17; Ephe. 4:9-13; Jn. 13:34-35

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about one of thee most important aspects of Christianity.

Something that is of the upmost importance in our walk with and relationship to the Lord.

Without it, it is all but impossible for us to please God and grow in our faith as a Christian, yet it seems that it is something that many Christians struggle with and some try to survive without-- and that is fellowship.

You show me a Christian that is struggling in their walk with the Lord and I will show you a Christian that’s fellowship with other believers is probably impaired…

Fellowship is to a Christian what an M-16 or an M-4 is to a soldier going into battle. It is something that God has equipped us with to help protect us from the dangers of a hostile environment

Fellowship is to a Christian what a staff is to a shepherd.

It is what helps steady us as we walk on what is often the very shaky and uneven ground of this world.

In fact, it is questionable that we can be or remain a Christian very long without it.

1Joh 1:6 (NIV) If we claim to have fellowship with him (Christ) yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.

**7 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.**

**7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.**

Just what does the word fellowship really mean?

**2842 koinonia {koy-nohn-ee'-ah}**

**1) fellowship, association, community, communion, communication, distribution, joint participation,**

**1b), intimacy, intercourse**

If we are walking in the light as He is in the light we will have fellowship with one another!

We will have fellowship, association, joint participation, communion with one another.

It speaks of a distribution. I, distributing myself to you and you distributing yourself to me! There is a spiritual intimacy, a spiritual intercourse, interaction that is to take place between believers.

The Apostle Paul gives us this admonition….

**Hebr 10:23 (NIV) Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.**

**24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.**

**25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.**

Paul is talking about the necessity of fellowship in our lives as a Christian.

**24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.**

**25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.**

The necessity of fellowshipin our lives is a fundamental truth of Scripture.

Jesus surrounded Himself with 12 close friends to fulfill this need for fellowship.

When Jesus sent out the disciples he didn’t send them out alone! He sent them out in two’s.

Paul and the early missionaries didn’t go out by themselves! They went out in teams of two or more.

Paul and Silas! Barnabas and John Mark.

Why did the Lord see it necessary to not send them out alone but sent them out in two’s?

Because He knew the importance and necessity of fellowship in the life of a believer.

One thing that fellowship accomplishes in our life, as a Christian, is it places us in an environment of accountability.

**Prov 27:17 (NIV) As iron sharpens iron,**

**so one man sharpens another.**

Example: A dull knife as it stands alone has a hard time cutting butter…But run that knife over a steel, a sharpener, and it will cut whatever needs to be cut.

As a dull knife is brought into fellowship with the sharpener it is able to fulfill it purpose in life.

**As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.**

Fellowship helps us keep our spiritual edge. Fellowship will help keep us spiritually sharp.

If I start to become spiritually dull I want a brother to come alone side and help hone me so that I can retain my spiritual sharpness.

If the trials and tribulations of this life start to wear me down I want a brother in the Lord to come alongside to support me through those trials and tribulations.

If I become tempted to sin and am in danger of falling to it, I want someone there to hold me accountable so that I do not fall to that temptation.

And if I do fall I want a believer there to help pick me back up.

**As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.**

This speaks of our need for accountability. To be held accountable.

Fellowship helps meet that need.

A remember one winter we had a very heavy, very wet snow that came early. Many of the trees still had their leaves on when this heavy, wet snow fell.

Going down the highway there was a large grove of tall, young trees. The branches were bowed down with the heavy snow--so low that branches from one tree were often leaning against the trunk or branches of another. It was like the whole forest was tipped!

In town however, where many trees stood alone, the effect of the heavy snow was different.

The branches had become heavier and heavier, and since there were no other trees to lean against, the branches snapped. There were broken trees down all over the city.

The same thing is true for us as Christians.

When the storms of life hit, we need to be standing close to other Christians. The closer we stand, the more we will be able to hold up under those storms as we have each other to lean upon.

There are no lone rangers who make it very long as a Christian! Riding alone, it will not take long for us to get shot out of the saddle. But even the lone ranger wasn’t really alone—he had Tonto.

Satan has his archers all around us ready to fling their flaming arrows at us each and every day. We all need someone or a group of someone’s to help watch and protect our backside, and we theirs.

A universal truth of this world is that there is strength in numbers.

There is an old Japanese proverb that says:

“*a single arrow is easily broken but not ten in a bundle!”*

Solomon, the wisest man to have ever lived understood the importance of fellowship when he wrote…

**Eccl 4:9 (NIV) Two are better than one,**

**because they have a good return for their work:**

**10 If one falls down, his friend can help him up.**

**But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!**

**12 Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves.**

**A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.**

The reason that Jesus sent the disciples out into the world in groups of two or more, the reason that Scripture admonishes us to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, to not forsake fellowship with other believers, is because that He knew that there is strength in numbers.

He knew that there would be times when this world would knock us down or we would stumble and fall over temptation and sin and we would need someone to be there to help pick us up. Or that a brother or sister in the Lord may fall and they would need us there to help pick them up.

That is the purpose of the Church, the fellowship of the body of Christ, for the believer.

In speaking about Gods gifting to the Church Scripture says:

Ephe 4:11 (NIV) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,

**12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up**

**13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.**

Possibly the most important aspect of fellowship is accountability.

We all need to be accountable to someone else.

We are all ultimately accountable to the Lord whether we are saved or not. One day we will all stand before the Lord and Scripture says that we will all have to give an account for even every careless word that we have spoken.

One of the things that fellowship does for us in this life is it gives us someone to help keep us accountable to help us in our accountability to the Lord.

-- Stendhal

*One can acquire everything in solitude--except character.*

Fellowship brings accountability, accountability helps develop ones character.

I heard an excellent example of this accountability between believers …

In the mid 1980’s there was a popular Christian female vocalist whose life was not as charmed as it appeared. She had serious troubles in her marriage--her husband’s cocaine habit and their subsequent talk of divorce--left her in one of the darkest moments of her life.

She said: "`For a few days, I just stayed in bed and mourned my life. The only hope I could seem to see was just junking it all, moving to Europe, and starting everything all over again.

She said, It was then my sister, in a last-ditch visit, marched up right beside my bed and said, "Fine, go to Europe, leave it all behind, start your life again. But before you go, you tell my little girl, the niece that adores you, how you can sing that Jesus can help her through anything in her life, but that he couldn't help you."' (This is called tough love)

"The words hit home. This woman and her husband began marriage and personal counseling, slowly rebuilding their relationships with each other and with God."

This is what fellowship and accountability are all about.

**Helping to spur one another on toward love and good deeds!**

When I start to fall, God has placed you here to help hold me up and when you start to fall God has placed me here to help hold you up.

God has provided you in the body of Christ for me and He has placed me within His body for you!

Why?

Ephe 4: 12 to (help) prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

**13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.**

Jesus said

**John 13:34 (NIV) "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.**

35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

As Christians one way that we express our love for each other is through the act of fellowship.

Often the most loving thing we can do when a brother or sister in the Lord is in pain is to share the pain--to be there even when we have nothing to offer except our presence, and even when being there is painful to ourselves.

Lee Iacocca once asked legendary football coach Vince Lombardi what it took to make a winning team.

In his book Iacocca records Lombardi's answer: *"There are a lot of coaches with good ball clubs who know the fundamentals and have plenty of discipline but still don't win the game. Then you come to the third ingredient: if you're going to play together as a team, you've got to care for one another. You've got to love each other. Each player has to be thinking about the next guy and saying to himself: 'if I don't block that man, Paul is going to get his legs broken. I have to do my job well in order that he can do his.'*

*"The difference between mediocrity and greatness," Lombardi said, "is the feeling these guys have for each other."*

This is the way things should be within the Church!

As Christians we need to learn to care for each other. As we take seriously Jesus' command to "love one another," we contribute to a winning team.

It is impossible to have a winning team without fellowship and a genuine concern for one another.

Jesus said

**As I have loved you, so you must love one another.**

35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

How has Jesus loved us? Completely, selflessly and sacrificially!

His love for us caused Him to give all that he had to give!

He didn’t even withhold His very life from us!

He loves us so much that He designed a way to fellowship with us even after His death on the cross.

He rose again! Ascended to heaven and then send back the comforter, His Holy Spirit, to indwell us so that we can remain in the closest fellowship possible with Him!

Just as Jesus has remained faithful in fellowship with us we are to remain faithful in fellowship with one another.

The three greatest gifts that God has given us as believers are:

1. Restored fellowship with the Father through His Salvation

2. Fellowship with the Son through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives

3. The fellowship we have in one another.

Church, Fellowship is not just important in the life of a believer—it is essential.

Satan knows that very well. That is why he strives so hard to get us to break fellowship.

God has placed me in a place of privilege in being able to fellowship with those who are under incarceration through the jail ministry..

It really surprised me to find that many of those I visit with that are incarcerated, that have committed crimes that have landed them in jail, have come from Christian homes.

Many of them say that they had received Christ at an earlier age but had fallen away from the Church.

And though the stories are all different—they all seem to have a common denominator….

The common denominator is that at some point they all broke fellowship with the Body of Christ.

The reasons, as to why they broke fellowship with the body of Christ may differ, but the fact is they all did.

Folks, as a Christian, if Satan can take us and get us to separate ourselves from fellowship, isolate us, get us in a position where we stand alone, then it is going to be a lot easier for him to get us to fall or neutralize us in our effectiveness as a Christian…

A single arrow by itself is easily broken but not ten in a bundle!

This morning, have you bundled yourself within the body of Christ?

Do you stand, not as a lone arrow, but have you placed yourself in the quiver of Christ through your faithfulness to fellowship.

**As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.**

God has created us, or more accurately, re-created us in Christ Jesus, and called us to fellowship.

To Fellowship with the Father through the salvation that is only found in the Lord Jesus Christ.

To Fellowship with the Son through receiving His Holy Spirit in our hearts.—

And we have been called to fellowship with one another to help prepare each other--- for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

This past year with the pandemic of covid-19 and the health conditions of some people that has made it necessary for them to stay away from any group of people for health reasons fellowship has been severely hampered. Even though that separation has been necessary for them the lack of fellowship with other believers may still have had an effect on them spiritually….And for the rest of the body of Christ as well.

Although not perfect, in the world that we live in today we can still remain connected in fellowship with phone calls, text messages, email and other technological means.

So church strive to maintain the greatest degree of fellowship with each other that you can.

to (help) prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

**13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.**

Are you experiencing all the fullness that God has for you this morning?

Are you being faithful to the fellowship that He has called you to?

Are you being built up to reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and becoming mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Are you thankful for the gift that God has given you in the fellowship of your brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ this morning?

Prayer