

The Importance of Fellowship

From America's earliest roots we have been individualists - tough, self-reliant bootstrap survivors. That approach to life and nation building has served us well in business, frontier settlement and even daily life. From mountain men to cowboys to modern industrialists we have risen to super-power status as a nation often because of our individualistic approach to self-motivation and accomplishment.

But there is a downside. When we try to apply the "rugged individualist" approach to personal relationships we fail the vast majority of the time. The proverbial "macho man" seldom has deeply close relationships, even with his own family members. The testosterone fueled movie hero is not the same character as Tom Hanks in *You've Got Mail*.

However, over the years the careful student of culture has often seen the rugged individualist become the lonely old man. Income and status make no difference. The lonely, aging Howard Hughes is not significantly different from the lonely, aging man under a bridge. Genuine human relationships are no respecter of social status.

Enter "fellowship." The New Testament word is *koinonia*. Our old friend Webster defines it as:

1. the Christian fellowship or body of believers
- 2: intimate spiritual communion and participative sharing in a common religious commitment and spiritual community.

Oxford's rendering:

Christian fellowship or communion, with God or, more commonly, with fellow Christians.

In common usage we could simply say, "Fellowship is the genuine sharing of life together as a closely knit family. As such we share (things and life), we communicate (happiness and heartaches), we really do participate in another's pains and parties. This genuine family spirit becomes a closeness wherein we can share our successes and our failures, knowing full well that we will be loved beyond and in spite of our fiascos. Then, and only then, can a church family actually live out the deeper meaning of the terms "brother and sister."

During this Covid crisis, the quality of our *actual* fellowship is both felt and seen - the way we miss each other, the way we long to sing and praise God together, the depth with which we miss simple handshakes and hugs - all are indicators of the genuine closeness of our *koinonia*. Praise God that we can at least, call, text, swap phone photos and say "Hello" on facebook posts.

If all goes well, on June 7th we will resume Acts 2:42 in earnest and in person:

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Be honest, be deep - we miss each other and we need each other as we walk the paths of life together toward our heavenly home. God made us that way. I'm excited!

Ray Wallace