

Koinonia Is - -

www.john2031.com/the_is_series/tis2.html

I John 1:3, 6-7 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. 6) If we claim to have *fellowship with Him* 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.

The Basics

Without meaningful relationships with God and fellow humans, man is hopelessly incomplete and restless. Adam's need for Eve was for more than sex and procreation, it was for relationship. A partner - - a helpmate in life's journey. One through whom he would become more fully man.

The Greek word "koinonia" (koi-nō-nē'-ä) is often translated "fellowship" in the Bible, but it has a much deeper meaning than we give it today. To us, "fellowship" may simply mean being together and having a good time, probably around food. Our lives might touch each other but it can be limited to nothing more intimate than giving high fives.

In contrast, koinonia is like raising open hands toward each other, inter-locking fingers, and becoming connected to each other. It applies to all of life, not just to sharing in possessions. ([Acts 2:42-47](#)) Consider [Ecclesiastes 4:9-12](#).

"Koinonia" ([Strong's 2842](#)) is the feminine noun of the root word "koinos" ([2839](#)) meaning "common." It means "fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, intercourse." The masculine noun is "koinonos" ([2844](#)) and means, "a partner, associate, comrade, companion, a sharer in anything." Koinonia with God and fellow man is an essential ingredient of human wholeness.

Our key text says that our fellowship with each other is based on our first having fellowship with God. (v3) It also says that if we don't have fellowship with God we are walking in darkness (6), but if we do, we *will* have fellowship (koinonia) with each other (7). We won't be "Lone Rangers." We will recognize that we need others and they need us.

In the New Testament

Here are examples of how "koinonia," in its several forms, is translated in the New Testament (niv). Try to feel the sense of investing oneself in the life of another in more than a superficial way. Consider how often koinonia "costs" us something, and how much it shapes everyday life and relationships.

[Luke 5:10](#) Simon's fishing *partners*.

[Acts 2:42](#) They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the *fellowship* of

[Rom. 12:13](#) *Share with* God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

[Rom. 15:26](#) make a *contribution for* the poor - -

[I Cor. 1:9](#) God, who has called you into *fellowship with* His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

[II Cor. 8:4](#) they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of *sharing in* this service to the saints.

[II Cor. 8:23](#) Titus, my *partner* and fellow worker - -

[II Cor. 9:13](#) - - your generosity in *sharing with* them.

[Philip. 1:5](#) because of your *partnership in* the gospel

[Philip 3:10](#) the *fellowship of* his sufferings,

[Heb. 2:14](#) He too *shared in* their humanity so that

[Heb. 13:16](#) and to *share with* others

[I Peter 4:13](#) *participate in* the sufferings of Christ

[I Peter 5:1](#) one who also will *share in* the glory

[II Peter 1:4](#) you may *participate in* the divine nature

Koinonia in Practice

You saw that sometimes the word is translated "partner." We become partners with each other including bearing one another's burdens. ([Gal. 6:2](#)) We understand that each of us is at times strong and other times weak. Each has both resources and needs. ([II Cor. 8:14](#))

In Biblical koinonia we share meaningfully in successes and failures, joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, abundance and need, strength and weakness. ([1 Cor. 12:26](#), [Heb. 10:33](#) nas)

As needs arise we will participate in each other's lives through words of comfort, encouragement, challenge and admonition; and in deeds of kindness, giving financial counsel or assistance, and helping in various ways.

We will also pray for each other, including intercession and fasting in response to the need of one whom we are connected to.

Koinonia based relationships also imply that we let others cross the circle we draw around ourselves, allowing them to touch us at *our* point of need.

We share together in the work God has given us. We understand that Christians are not passengers on a ship, we are the crew and the participation of all is vital.

We recognize that we can do more together than separately! We acknowledge that none of us has all the gifts and skills needed for effective ministry. Our gifts vary. They complement each other and we need all of them. We are partners in both life and ministry! ([Rom. 12:6-8](#), [1 Cor. 12:4-27](#), [Col. 3:16](#))

Points to Ponder

True koinonia is one of the most crucial ingredients in effective Christian life and service. However, it represents a major shift in thinking because this opening of our hearts to each other is the direct opposite of the individualism and self-centeredness that rule our world.

Koinonia and unity go together. Each requires that we first surrender ourselves to God and to His plan for us, thus partnering with Him in making Himself known to the ends of the earth. Our fellowship with God then becomes the basis for our fellowship with each other and the result is "unity!"

Biblical koinonia is not a popular subject because it requires us to focus more on others and less on our-

selves. It compels us to deal with the selfishness, pride, prejudice, individualism, competitiveness and judgmentalism that distance us from others.

Because of our struggles with fleshly instincts, nothing but individual surrender to the rule of God ([Luke 9:23-26](#)) will enable us to experience authentic koinonia/fellowship with each other.

Koinonia Is - -

- what Jesus did when He came to earth and *shared in* (there's our word!) humanity with us. ([Heb. 2:14-18](#)) Its ultimate expression is in His bearing our sins in His body on the cross so that we can have fellowship with the Father;
- the answer to the deepest cry of the human heart ([Psalm 42:1-2](#)) because it connects us to God and each other, and;
- an essential characteristic of the Christian and the church that can be used by God in reaching the lost.

Additional Scriptures

These texts show koinonia in action:

[Rom. 12:10](#) and [15](#) [Rom. 15:5-6](#)

[Eph. 4:25](#) [Col. 3:12-17](#)

[Heb. 10:24-25](#) [1 Peter 2:5](#)

[1 Peter 2:9-10](#) [1 John 3:16-18](#)

Conclusion

The days ahead might be as they are now, or they could become more difficult for those who confess Christ. If the former, taking bold steps now toward koinonia will move us closer to what we have always been called to be, and it will make us exponentially more effective in spreading the Good News. If the latter, only those who embrace koinonia will stand. We have everything to gain and nothing to lose by acting now!

This is #2 in "The IS Series" and is one of many short articles that can be found at www.john2031.com
©2013, Ken Stoltzfus, P.O. Box 228, Kidron, OH 44636 USA. May be printed for personal use and may be reproduced for non-commercial purposes without further permission if proper acknowledgment is given. Posted March 21, 2013, Rev. 3/30/13