

# Fellowship

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[0:00] At Fellowship today, this is part of a series called Discipleship 101, the kind of basics! of being a Christian and today we've been given the subject of fellowship. We need God's help as we come! to look at his word, don't we? So let's pray together now and ask for that. Our Father God, we thank you for your words. We thank you that we have it here in front of us, that we get to read it together and we trust Father that you will speak to us this morning. We pray that you would speak to each and every one of us and change us this morning we pray and we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. So what is fellowship? It's a word I guess you will have heard, particularly I think in church life, fellowship comes up a lot. I think some of us may kind of think it's that thing that can only possibly happen when the last prayer is said on a Sunday morning and we go out there and we get our teas and coffees and we have a chat to each other. Maybe that's for some of us, that's what we think fellowship is. Tea and coffee and chatting to other Christians. Or maybe you think of it in other ways in life. Maybe you think of it as something which happens when you share with something with other people. So every other week at the Amex Stadium, football fans gather together to watch Brighton and

Hove Albion and they share together in that. Is that what fellowship is? Or maybe it's when you go to your kind of art class and you share together in doing and learning art. Is that what fellowship is? What is fellowship? Well the words in the Bible for fellowship in the New Testament is a word that you may have heard before. It's a word called koinonia. There's a care home in Worthing which I believe is called that. There's youth groups that I know of called that. But what does that word mean? Well it means participation, communion with other people, sharing together with other people.

Fellowship you could say is having a share with someone in some things. So maybe you're business partners with some people. Maybe you are at the Amex Stadium sharing together in the joy of watching Brighton, Hove, Albion. Maybe you're sharing a cup of tea after church together. It's fellowship. But I want to say to us this morning that Christian fellowship goes far deeper than these things. A definition I think of Christian fellowship that we can think together on is this, sharing together in the life of God.

[3:23] sharing together in the life of God. We're going to use those two passages that Brenda read for us to help us in our understanding of fellowship this morning. I think there's lots, lots more I could say on this subject. We only have one sermon on it. So let's just kind of see where we get to today in these two passages. And I've got two big points for us. The first of which particularly comes from 1 John chapter 1. So be helpful if you have that open in front of you. We'll look at it.

So the first big point is our fellowship with God. Let's think about our fellowship with God. Now many of us were here for our series in John's Gospel just recently.

And maybe as we read this opening verse in 1 John, we're thinking about what John chapter 1. The Word was with God. The Word was God. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God. And the Word was with God. Very similar. Very similar words in this verse here. That which was from the beginning. And it talks about the Word, the Word of life in this verse.

John begins his letter in a very similar way, pointing people to Jesus, the Word of life, who was from the beginning, who existed before the beginning of time, the eternal Son of God.

[5:31] He went to our world. God made flesh. And he's saying to his readers, look, we have actually heard him speak. We have actually seen him with our eyes. We've actually touched him with our hands.

He's writing to people who will have heard from false teachers something other than Jesus coming into this world in this way. Putting doubt into their minds about the Lord Jesus and his work.

But John is writing and saying, no, we have seen him. We have heard him. We have touched him. And we can proclaim to you the word of life from him.

John is telling them, I have really heard him with my own ears. John is telling them, I have really heard that sermon on the mount.

I have really heard that parable of the sower. I have really heard him declare, I am the bread of life. And he's saying, I have really seen him.

[6:39] With my own eyes, I have seen him. I saw the miraculous catch of fish. I saw the water turned into wine. I saw Lazarus being raised from the dead.

I saw blind men being healed. And I've even touched him. Even shaken his hand, given him a hug, whatever it might be.

This is Jesus. He has really, really, truly lived on earth. The one who existed before the world began.

I know him. The one who existed before the sun ever shone. Before the trees were ever standing. Before the bees were ever buzzing.

Before the snow had ever fallen. I have seen him and I know him. And I can proclaim to you the word of life. That's what John says in verse 2 about what he proclaims of the Lord Jesus.

[7:48] Verse 2, the life appeared. We have seen it and we testify to it. And we proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and has appeared to us.

John has heard the word of life speak eternal life to this world. What is eternal life? Jesus in his prayer said this.

In John 17 verse 3. Now this is eternal life. That they know you. The only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Maybe there's times in our lives where we say, oh this is the life, isn't it? When we're having our feet up and a cup of tea in our hands and watching the telly.

We think this is the life. Or by a beach on a hot summer's day. This is the life. John says, no really, that life is found in a person.

[8:59] It's found in the Lord Jesus Christ. And we proclaim to you that you can know him. And if you know him, that's eternal life. Yes, we get to live forever with God and his people in a new heavens and a new earth.

That's fabulous. But eternal life, it's knowing God. Knowing God for ourselves. And so John says this in verse 3.

So 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. He is telling his readers that we have fellowship with one another on the basis of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This word of life. Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. Our fellowship with one another can only possibly come through knowing the word of life.

[10:18] The one who gives eternal life. The one who offers you a way to know your Father, God as your Father. And so he's writing this.

He's writing this, remember, to people who are hearing from false teachers. And he says, don't have fellowship with those. If you do, you can't have fellowship with us.

You can have fellowship with us if you know Jesus and the eternal life which he gives. And if you know that you have fellowship with us.

You have fellowship with each other. Because of Jesus. He goes on in verse 6 to say this.

If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.

[11:29] And the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all our sin. We have fellowship with one another.

In the Lord Jesus Christ. When we recognize that we sin. We thought about that at the beginning of our service. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just.

And will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. And the way we have purification for our sins, it's through the blood of Jesus, the eternal word of life.

And so our fellowship this morning with other Christians is based first on our fellowship with God.

On knowing God. On having eternal life with him. Eternal life which is knowing God.

Thank God. I've met some great people in my life.

[12:33] I've met some famous names. I've met a man called Jimmy Hill who used to live in Hurstwood Point. He used to play football. He was a footballer.

He was a football manager. He used to present football on TV. I have seen him with my own eyes. I have touched him. I've shaken his hands. I've heard him speak.

I've met a YouTuber called Tomska. Who's that? Famous YouTuber supposedly. He is.

I've met him. I have seen him with my own eyes. I've heard him speak. I've shaken his hands. I've had a photo with him. I've met Glenn Scrivner who's speaking at the Sussex Gospel Partnership Conference.

I've seen him with my own eyes. I've heard him speak. I've shaken his hand. I've touched him. But none of these people are like knowing who John has known.

[13:42] He has seen. Who he has seen. Who he has touched. Who he has heard. Because none of them. None of those people that I have met can allow me to have fellowship with God.

But Jesus can. Meeting Jesus is like meeting no other person. Meeting Jesus means that we get to share an eternal life.

With him and with his people. As Jesus continued in his prayer in John 17. He prays for all those who come to believe in him.

He prays that all of them may be one Father. Just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us. So that the world may believe that you have sent me. Amazingly in what Jesus is saying there.

He is saying that we get to be one with him. We're united together in the Lord Jesus Christ. We share in the life of God together. We have fellowship with him.

[14:56] We share together in the life of God. It's a huge thing. It's a wonderful thing. It's a huge thing.

We share in the life of God. God the three in one. Who is himself united together in perfect fellowship. And we ourselves we get to share as Christians.

Because of the Lord Jesus Christ. We get to share in the love of God the Father. We get to share in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. And in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

And so hopefully we're seeing this morning that fellowship is far more than just a bit of time that happens when a final prayer is said on a Sunday morning.

And you have a tea and a biscuit and a chat with someone else. That's an expression of our fellowship together. But the fellowship is far deeper than that.

[16:00] We get to share together in the life of God. What a privileged people we are. Truly, truly are.

We get to know eternal life which is knowing God. We have fellowship with him. Maybe this morning you're kind of here and you're hearing that.

You're hearing that you can share in eternal life with God. You can know Jesus, the one who existed before time began. And you're just thinking, that's amazing.

I want to share in that. As we've already said, it's very clear here in John's writing. What we need to do to be part of that.

Confess our sins, verse 9. And if we do, he is faithful and just. And will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

[17:02] Look to Jesus, confess your sin. You can have fellowship with God in this way too.

What a wonderful thing. So we have fellowship with God as Christians. We share together in the life of God. And if we share together, we have fellowship then with others.

It's not just me and God. No Christian is an island.

No man is an island. That's a famous phrase I discovered this week. That's a phrase which was preached. It was first used in a sermon at St. Paul's Cathedral.

No Christian is an island. No Christian is an island. No Christian is an island. We're not on our own in our life with God. We share it with others. That's what God's been kind of doing.

[18:05] In his great plan of salvation, he's been bringing together a people. So back in Genesis with Abraham, he called Abraham.

Abraham, one person, but called him and promised that he would make Abraham into a great nation. So people. Abraham and Sarah, they couldn't have children.

How on earth was Abraham and Sarah going to become a great nation? Well, eventually, after years and years, they were blessed with a son, Isaac.

And God, through small beginnings, was growing a people. Not just one man on his own, but a people.

And one of Abraham's many descendants was the Lord Jesus Christ. That word of life, who existed before the beginning of time, who came into the world to bring people to God.

[19:12] And as we looked at in our studies in Peter in the summer, it says, Peter writes, we're a chosen people. We're part of a new community of people.

Joined together in this life with God. And so when we become Christians, we get a whole new family.

We're not just on our own. No Christian is an island. So, John says in verse 3, 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. We've seen that fellowship exists because we have fellowship with God.

And then we have fellowship. We have fellowship with others. And it exists because of the blood of Jesus, which purifies us from our sin.

[20:18] We talk in our family, we might talk in our families about blood relatives. Well, as Christians, we're all related by blood. We're all related by the blood of Jesus Christ.

The Christian family is related by blood. And so our shared life together, hopefully we're seeing more and more, it goes far deeper than just that tea and biscuit at the end of a service.

And our shared life is together. That's not an option. It's not just me and God.

And I'd love us to turn to Acts chapter 2 to just see a bit more of that. Reading we had from Acts chapter 2 verse 42, which comes directly after Peter on that day of Pentecost, the day when the Holy Spirit came upon the Lord's people.

Peter preached a wonderful sermon, which was all about Jesus. A sermon in which he said, as people asked, what shall we do?

[21:39] He said, repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the Holy Spirit. And 3,000 people came to faith on that day.

God growing his church. And as they come to faith, what do we see them do in verse 42?

Well, it says, they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. Straight away, they were spending time together.

Spending time together, doing those four things, listening to God's words through the apostles, having fellowship with one another, breaking bread, which I think I take there as communion, maybe in the context of a meal, and to prayer.

They were sharing together in the life of God. They weren't doing it on their own, but together. And they met, verse 46, every day.

[22:53] I'm not about to say we should be meeting every day. This was an extraordinary time. An extraordinary time, a time of Pentecost, a Jewish festival time.

people would have had the time to spend every day together. But they were spending every day together. They wanted to.

And I think that's important, that they're spending this time together. And I want us to see three things.

Firstly, this word devoted. Devoted. That word there means continuing with a steadfast and intense effort.

They were totally committed to each other. They were devoted to sharing together in the life of God in this way. A devotion.

[23:51] They weren't going to let things interrupt this time with one another. They weren't going to let a football match interrupt them. They weren't going to let something get in the way, shopping, whatever it is, get in the way of the meeting with one another.

They were devoted to it. And I think that's a challenge for us. Are we devoted to spending this time together, sharing together in the life of God?

Are we committed to being with God's people when we have the opportunity? As we do now on a Sunday morning. We have other opportunities to be together as a church too on a Sunday evening and a Wednesday evening prayer meeting.

Are we devoted to being together if we possibly can in those ways? So that we can share together in the life of God. As we've been seeing in our series in 1 Peter, the Christian life is hard.

It involves suffering. The great thing is we don't do it on our own. We need to be together to encourage each other in these things.

[25:16] As the writer to the book of Hebrews says, do you not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing. But all the more as you see the day approaching. Are we devoted to being together as the Lord's people?

One of the things in that list in verse 42 the breaking of bread the Lord's Supper thinking about how great an illustration visible illustration it is of our fellowship with one another.

As we remember together what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us we share that bread and that wine together and we as a church our pattern has been to take those things all together at the same time to display our unity together in the blood of Christ in the work that Christ has done for us.

It's a great illustration a great reminder of what Christ has done and our fellowship that we have together in that work. And so we devoted to being at communion.

communion. We have two opportunities in a month 10 o'clock on the first Sunday morning of the month so next Sunday or a Sunday evening at 6.30 or both a third Sunday evening I should say we make a point of being at those times being devoted to sharing those times together.

[26:52] They were doing it every day. devoted. Secondly they had everything in common it says verse 44 all the believers were together and had everything in common.

They shared together in their life of God together as very different people people from different parts of the Jewish world but it says they had everything in common different people different ages and stages of life and races all sharing together in the life of God and that they had everything in common it's a remarkable thing and they expressed that in a couple of ways they expressed that first in the kind of sharing of possessions making sure nobody was needy so verse 45 they sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had needs they saw a needy person and they thought well I've got this I could sell this and give them that money or I could give them this maybe someone needed a toaster so I've got a spare toaster in the cupboard

I'll give it to them they were sharing together practically as they shared together in the life of God so let's make sure nobody is in need they thought now I don't think anywhere in scripture it commands us to do these things but there is a spirit of generosity in these new believers that I think we can learn from and just think how can I help those in my church family who are in need there's a needs and offers board out by the kitchen hatch maybe have a look at that if you hear of someone who needs a lift to an appointment and you have a car and you have a time to do that maybe offer your car a space in your car to give them a lift sharing so that people aren't in need in the church family as we share together in this life with

God and they were involved in one another's lives so verse 46 every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts they broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts so they were meeting together in the temple courts doing the listening to the words breaking of bread and prayer but then it says they met in people's homes as well and I think they broke bread in their homes it is more talking about a meal maybe involved sharing the Lord's supper in homes too but the point is they ate together in their homes they welcomed people they

were sharing their lives their homes their time with one another as the body of Christ what an attractive community this is people in and out of one another's homes making sure nobody was in need and I wonder where we can do that more as I said there's that needs and offers board someone needs a toaster you have a spare toaster give it to them there's a very small example and then when you get that toaster why not invite someone for beans on toast into your home and eat together and share in the life of

God together pray together read scripture together share together in the life of God we can enjoy doing that it doesn't it's not just the formal time together which hopefully we do enjoy but we can just enjoy the normal things sharing food a walk whatever it might be sharing together in the life of God a final thought on fellowship it's a witness to the world a witness to the world notice that in verse 47 they were praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people and the Lord added to their number daily those who are being saved as these brothers and sisters shared their lives together they made sure nobody was needy as they were in and out of one another's homes as they were meeting together regularly it says that they were enjoying the favour of all the people people looking on at this

[31:58] Christian community and thinking wow we love that we love that they do that and the Lord was even adding to their number saving people because of the witness of God's people here remember this is an extraordinary time in the life of the church this is very early church things God was establishing his people but at the same time we do see that this is a witness to the world now they didn't always enjoy the favour of God together if you read on through the rest of Acts you'll see persecution breaks out life is hard as a Christian but it's also as we live together sharing in the life of God it's also to be a witness to the world Jesus again in John 17 says as he prays

I in them you and me so that they may be brought to complete unity then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me as we united together in the life of God as we're sharing that together Jesus says as we do that then the world will know that you sent me through our times together through us showing together to the world that we are one that we're united in the Lord Jesus the world can know that you sent me can know this great love that it has transformed our lives being together is a witness to the world as we come in on a Sunday morning gathering as God's people for those who pass by let's pray that that's just a witness thinking oh wow those

Christians they keep going there every Sunday morning why is that because we love God he's changed our lives that could be a witness to the world that's why we want to open up our church building on Friday morning so that people can come in and see us and meet us and maybe even meet the Lord Jesus Christ fellowship together is enjoying the privilege of sharing in the life of God knowing eternal life knowing God and we do that together no Christian is an island we do that together as the family of believers and we need God's help as we seek to do that let's pray father God we thank you for the fellowship that we can have with you through the Lord Jesus Christ thank you for his blood which purifies our sins thank you that we're joined together by his work and thank you that we don't do it alone living for you in this world is hard thank you that we have one another and we pray father that you would help us at Calvary Church to grow in our unity grow in our love for one another and we pray father that that would be a witness to this world of you and your work in us so that your kingdom can grow even in this city we pray and we ask this in Jesus name amen amen amen amen