

Xenos Christian Fellowship
Christian Principles Unit 3, Week 2
Body-Life as a Means of Growth

Introduction

koinonia-

"How involved in Christian fellowship should I be?"

1. Involved enough to act consistently with our new identity (1 Cor. 12; Rom. 12**)**

The Vertical Aspect: Union with Christ

The Horizontal Aspect: Union with one another

(1 Cor. 12:12-14) For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. (13) For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. (14) For the body is not one member, but many.

(Rom. 12:3-5) For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. (4) For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, (5) so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

We need to regularly receive the life of Christ from other members.

(1 Cor. 12:21) And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you;" or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

We need to regularly give the life of Christ to others.

(1 Cor. 12:15,16) If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body.

2. Involved enough to “Love one another as I have loved you”

(Jn. 13:34,35) "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

The epistles unpack this command to us through several "one another" imperatives.

(Gal. 5:13) For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

(1 Thess. 5:11) Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

(Col. 3:16) Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another . . .

(Jas. 5:16) Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed.

(Eph. 4:32) And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

(Eph. 4:2) . . . with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love . . .

(Rom. 15:7) Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.

(Gal. 6:2) Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ.

(Rom. 12:10) Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor . . .

(Rom. 12:16) Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly.

“What does this have to do with how involved I should be in fellowship?”

Structures that facilitate this kind of involvement:

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Can a lifestyle of self-giving love be fulfilling?

(Phil. 2:3-5*) Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus . . .

The paradox of self-giving love:

Jesus prioritized this lesson with his disciples:

(Jn. 4:34) Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work.

(Jn. 6:5-13) Jesus therefore lifting up His eyes, and seeing that a great multitude was coming to Him, said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, that these may eat?" (6) And this He was saying to test him; for He Himself knew what He was intending to do. (7) Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little." (8) One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, (9) "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?" (10) Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. (11) Jesus therefore took the loaves; and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted. (12) And when they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments that nothing may be lost." (13) And so they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves, which were left over by those who had eaten.

(Jn. 13:1-17) Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end . . . (3) Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God, and was going back to God, (4) rose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself about. (5) Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded . . . (12) And so when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments, and reclined at the table again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? (13) "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. (14) "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. (15) "For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. (16) "Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master; neither is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. (17) "If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."

(Acts 20:35*) “. . . remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Qualification:

Common Barriers To Healthy Body-life

1. Culturally glorified autonomy ("Needing other people is a sign of personal weakness.")

(1 **Thess. 3:1**) Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone . . .

2. Codependence ("You must meet my needs" vs. "God meets my needs, sometimes through you or others.")

(**Phil. 4:10-19**) But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity. (11) Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. (12) I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. (13) I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. (14) Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction . . . (19) And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

3. Super-spirituality ("Involvement with other Christians hinders my intimacy with Christ.")

(1 **John 4:19,20**) We love, because He first loved us. (20) If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.

(**Col. 2:2,19**) . . . that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself . . . (19) (The false teachers are) not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

4. Materialism ("I'm too busy with my career/schooling to be this involved with other Christians.")

(1 **Jn. 2:10,15**) The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him . . . Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

(1 **Jn. 3:14-17**) We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. (15) Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. (16) We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (17) But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?

5. Tribalism ("I am so busy with my children's [sports, music, etc.] that we don't have for fellowship," "God first, my family second, church third . . ." or "My family is my ministry.")
Col. 3:12-21; Eph. 5:1-33

Qualifications:

6. Moral impurity (Often manifested by withdrawal from fellowship &/or complaints about the church.)

(1 Jn. 1:7) . . . but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another . . .

7. Rebellious attitude ("Who are you to tell me what to do/how I should act?")

(Heb. 13:17) Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

(Heb. 12:6,9,10) Those whom the Lord loves he disciplines, and he scourges every son whom he receives . . . (9) Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us . . . (10) they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness.

8. Shy or introverted ("I'm just shy and introverted.")

(2 Tim 1:7) For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

Spiritual Gifts

As you are involved in Body-life and practicing Christian love? God will eventually reveal certain ministry strengths that he has provided. These are called spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12; Rom. 12; Eph. 4:7,11-13; 1 Pet. 4:8-11).

Ministry Teams

Discipleship

As you learn about God and begin to follow him, He will give you the opportunity to help younger, hungry Christians learn how to walk with him. We call this ministry discipleship.

2Tim 2:2 And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

Col 1:28,29 And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ. And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.

Body Life (receiving & giving Christ's love) as it relates to the other Means of Growth

The Interaction of Body-Life (Receiving Christ's Love) With the Other Means of Growth	
Prayer	The church is to be a praying community. By precept and example, prayer plays a central role in the life of the church. Others can stimulate us to love and good works (Heb. 10: 24,25), including by prayer. By establishing regular times to pray with others, we can strengthen our prayer habits, while gaining the discernment of the other members. Prayer is the spearhead of the church's ministry; opening doors, producing conviction in the hearts of those who hear, protecting those reached from Satan and granting spiritual empowerment to Christian workers.
Scripture	The church exists to accomplish ministry, both to its members and to the world outside the church. Ministry carried out by myself is never as impactful as that accomplished with others. I need to learn to disciple (train) others so they can carry on the same kind of ministry. I may have to be disciples myself before I can be effective at ministry, and this is best accomplished in a healthy local church.
Discipline of the Holy Spirit	When we are undergoing difficult times of spiritual discipline from the Lord, Christian fellowship is sometimes the only thing that keeps us from falling apart. We were never meant to undergo significant breaking without the support of a loving community. At the same time I receive support, I have the opportunity to give support and to coach young Christians on how to understand God's hand in their lives during trials.

The Interaction of Body-Life (Giving Christ's Love) With the Other Means of Growth	
Prayer	Those who are strong in ministry know how many times their ministries have spurred them on to intense periods of prayer. It is hard for such people to imagine what it would be like to feel the obligation to pray, but without the natural and healthy motivation created by ministry. As ministers, no longer are we merely praying because it's the right thing to do, or because we hope we can feel better as a result. Instead, there are real tasks to accomplish through prayer in the lives of others. Those who are established in defined and personal ministry consistently demonstrate more appreciation for prayer than those who are lacking this vital means of growth.
Scripture	When others are looking to us for guidance and help in their Christian walks there will be a new urgency in our study of Scripture. This is because as discussed earlier, Scripture holds the key to successful ministry. Feeding young believers the Word of God is basic to most kinds of ministry. Even service oriented ministry should be carried out in light of the Bible and should include the use of Scripture.
Discipline of the Holy Spirit	Spiritual discipline is largely intended to make us more effective in ministry. At the same time being in ministry will cause us to experience maximum benefit from discipline. We regularly find that those who are tied into extensive ministry are prepared and able to endure the necessary suffering to be conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of those people who depend on their ministry. Those who are not active in ministry find it too easy to run in the face of painful discipline.

Charts from, Dennis McCallum, "Walking in Victory," pp. 140, 157.

Memory Verses

Rom. 12 & 1 Cor. 12**** - Christians are members of the Body of Christ and therefore members of one another. This is the basis for interdependent involvement with other Christians.

Phil. 2:3-5* - God calls on all Christians to practice a lifestyle of sacrificial, self-giving love.

Acts 20:35* - Giving sacrificially to others is a key means of fulfillment for Christians.

Assignment

Read *Loving God's Way*, chapters 4, 5 and answer the questions at the end of each chapter.