THIS WEEK

- Let's begin by continue with our Discipleship series. This week Pastor Theo continues our series by focusing in on what it means to walk in fellowship with one another.

STUDY the text

Let's begin by reading Acts 2:42–47 and John 13:34–35.

Acts 2:42-47 And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common. 45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

John 13:34-35 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Sermon Question 1:
What were some of the defining characteristics of fellowship in the early church? How does their example compare with the way we "do church" today? What might we be missing when it comes to genuinely living out our lives together as a Christian community?

Now let's continue by reading Hebrews 10:23–25 and Ecclesiastes 4:9–12.

Hebrews 10:23-25 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. 10 For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! 11 Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? 12 And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him--a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

Sermon Question 2:
Why do you think Scripture places such a strong emphasis on believers gathering together and encouraging one another? What are some of the dangers of trying to follow Christ in isolation? How can meaningful relationships with other believers help us grow in Christlikeness in ways that we might struggle to experience on our own?

Finally let's read Galatians 6:1–2, James 5:16, and Romans 12:9–18.

Galatians 6:1-2 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

Romans 12:9-18 Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. 10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. 11 Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. 17 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Sermon Question 3:
What do these passages teach us about our responsibility toward one another within the church? Why do you think it can be difficult for Christians to openly share their struggles, weaknesses, or burdens with others? What does it look like to create godly relationships where we can genuinely carry for one another?

LIVE the truth

When you consider your involvement in the church, are you developing meaningful relationships with other believers, or are you primarily attending services and participating in activities? Are there areas of your life where you have been trying to walk with Christ alone?

What is one intentional step you can take this week to deepen your relationships and grow together in Christ?

PRAYER Points

Let's take some time to be open and transparent with one another. Is there anyone in the group who has been carrying a burden or struggling with something they need to share with the group? I want to encourage you to take this opportunity to open up and allow others to come alongside you in prayer. As needs are shared, spend time genuinely praying for and encouraging one another.

BIBLE Commentary: Becoming Like Christ — Fellowshipping Like Christ

Hebrews 10:23–25; Acts 2:41–47; Galatians 6:2

The Christian life was never intended to be lived in isolation. From the beginning, God designed His people to grow together in a community marked by love, encouragement, accountability, and genuine care for one another. Although our relationship with Christ is personal, it was never meant to be private or disconnected from other believers.

One of the greatest dangers in the modern church is confusing church attendance with genuine Christian fellowship. We can attend services, participate in ministries, and surround ourselves with Christians while still remaining relationally isolated. Yet the New Testament presents a much deeper picture of what it means to belong to the body of Christ. Fellowship involves sharing our lives, carrying one another's burdens, and intentionally helping each other grow in Christlikeness.

These passages challenge us to examine whether we are simply attending church or truly living as the church.

1. The Early Church: A Community That Shared Life Together

Acts 2:42–47; John 13:34–35

Acts 2 gives us one of the clearest pictures of Christian fellowship in the early church. Following Peter's sermon at Pentecost, thousands of people came to faith in Christ. These new believers did

not simply adopt a new set of religious beliefs or begin attending weekly gatherings. Their conversion fundamentally changed the way they lived and related to one another.

Luke describes a community devoted to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. They gathered regularly, shared meals, worshiped together, and cared for those in need. Their relationships extended beyond formal religious gatherings into the ordinary activities of daily life.

One particularly striking characteristic was their generosity. Believers willingly shared their possessions and resources to help those experiencing need. This does not mean every Christian was required to surrender all personal property. Rather, their generosity demonstrated that their love for one another had become more important than holding tightly to their possessions.

The word translated *fellowship* comes from the Greek word *koinonia*, which communicates the idea of sharing, participation, and partnership. Christian fellowship is therefore much more than friendliness or casual conversation. It involves sharing in a common life centered on Jesus Christ.

In John 13:34–35, Jesus gives His disciples a new commandment to love one another as He has loved them. He then explains that their love for one another would be a defining characteristic by which the world would recognize them as His disciples.

This is significant because Jesus does not identify His followers primarily by their religious knowledge, impressive buildings, or public influence. He points to the love they demonstrate toward one another. Christian community is meant to be a visible expression of the character of Christ.

When we compare this picture with the modern church, an important question emerges: Have we reduced fellowship to attending the same services rather than genuinely sharing our lives?

Church services, teaching, and organized ministries are valuable and necessary. Yet if our relationships never extend beyond a Sunday morning greeting, we may be missing something central to the New Testament understanding of fellowship.

The early church was not simply a group of people who worshiped in the same place. They were a family of believers learning to live out their faith together.

2. The Necessity of Christian Community for Spiritual Growth

Hebrews 10:23–25; Ecclesiastes 4:9–12

Hebrews 10 emphasizes that believers have a responsibility not only to remain faithful personally but also to help one another persevere in faith. The writer instructs Christians to hold fast to their confession of hope, consider how to stir one another up to love and good works, and continue meeting together for mutual encouragement.

The language is intentional. We are not simply told to encourage others when the opportunity happens to arise. We are instructed to consider how we can actively strengthen one another.

This reveals an important truth about spiritual maturity: God uses other believers as instruments of our growth.

Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 illustrates this principle through the practical benefits of companionship. Two are better than one because they can help one another when difficulties arise. When one falls, the other can lift him up. When danger or opposition comes, they are stronger together than they would be alone.

Although Ecclesiastes is describing the broader value of companionship, the principle has important implications for Christian fellowship.

There will be seasons when our faith feels weak, when temptation becomes overwhelming, or when suffering leaves us discouraged. During these times, meaningful relationships with other believers can provide encouragement, correction, prayer, and perspective that we may struggle to find by ourselves.

Isolation can be particularly dangerous because it removes many of the relationships through which God strengthens and corrects us. When we withdraw from others, our struggles often remain hidden, our weaknesses go unchallenged, and discouragement can become increasingly difficult to overcome.

Community also exposes areas of our character that isolation may conceal. It is easier to consider ourselves patient, loving, forgiving, and humble when we are not regularly interacting with people who challenge us. Yet genuine relationships require us to practice these virtues.

This is one reason fellowship is essential to becoming like Christ. Through relationships, God teaches us to love sacrificially, forgive generously, serve humbly, and put the needs of others before our own.

Of course, being around other Christians does not automatically produce spiritual maturity. Relationships must be characterized by intentional encouragement, honesty, and a shared desire to follow Christ.

God never intended for us to become like Jesus apart from His body. We need one another, not simply for companionship, but for spiritual encouragement and growth.

3. Carrying One Another's Burdens

Galatians 6:1–2; James 5:16; Romans 12:9–18

The New Testament takes Christian fellowship beyond encouragement and companionship into the deeper responsibility of caring for one another through life's struggles.

In Galatians 6:1–2, Paul instructs believers to restore someone caught in transgression with a spirit of gentleness. He then commands them to bear one another's burdens, explaining that doing so fulfills the law of Christ.

This passage reveals that genuine Christian fellowship includes helping others when they are spiritually weak or struggling with sin. Rather than responding with condemnation, pride, or indifference, mature believers are called to approach others with humility and gentleness.

Paul also warns those helping others to watch themselves, recognizing that no believer is beyond temptation. Christian accountability should never become an opportunity to demonstrate spiritual superiority. Its purpose is restoration.

James 5:16 adds another important element by encouraging believers to confess their sins to one another and pray for one another. This challenges our natural tendency to conceal our weaknesses and maintain an appearance of spiritual strength.

One reason genuine fellowship can be difficult is that it requires vulnerability. It is often easier to discuss theology, participate in ministry, or exchange casual conversation than to admit that we are struggling with temptation, discouragement, marriage difficulties, or personal failures.

Yet meaningful relationships cannot develop when everyone feels the need to pretend that everything is going well.

This does not mean we should share every personal struggle with everyone in the church. Wisdom, trust, and appropriate boundaries are important. However, every believer should seek relationships where honesty, prayer, encouragement, and accountability can take place.

Romans 12:9–18 further describes what this kind of community should look like. Paul calls believers to genuine love, brotherly affection, generosity, hospitality, patience, and humility. He instructs them to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.

These commands remind us that carrying one another's burdens is not limited to responding to dramatic crises. It involves entering into the everyday joys, disappointments, challenges, and responsibilities of one another's lives.

Christian fellowship becomes meaningful when people know they are not facing their struggles alone. It is seen when someone takes time to listen, prays faithfully, provides practical assistance, lovingly confronts destructive behavior, or simply remains present during a difficult season.

Genuine Christian community is not measured only by how much time we spend together, but by how faithfully we love, serve, and care for one another.

Key Themes

- **Christian fellowship is more than church attendance.** The early church modeled a shared life of worship, generosity, hospitality, and genuine love for one another.
- **Spiritual maturity requires meaningful relationships.** God uses other believers to encourage, strengthen, correct, and shape us into the likeness of Christ.
- **Isolation can hinder spiritual growth.** When we withdraw from Christian community, we lose important opportunities for accountability, encouragement, and mutual care.
- **Genuine fellowship requires vulnerability and sacrifice.** Carrying one another's burdens involves humility, honesty, prayer, forgiveness, and a willingness to enter into each other's struggles.

Concluding Thought

One of the central lessons of these passages is that becoming like Christ is not simply an individual pursuit. God has called us into a family where we are responsible for loving, encouraging, and helping one another grow.

It is possible to attend church regularly and still remain isolated. We may know many people's names without truly knowing their lives. We may participate in the same ministries while remaining unaware of the struggles others are facing.

Yet Jesus calls us to something much deeper.

The early church demonstrated a community where faith was not confined to religious gatherings but was expressed through everyday relationships. Hebrews reminds us that we need one another to persevere, while Galatians challenges us to move beyond superficial relationships and genuinely carry one another's burdens.

This requires intentionality. Meaningful relationships rarely develop without effort, humility, and a willingness to make room for others in our lives.

As we examine our own involvement in the church, we should ask whether we are simply participating in Christian activities or genuinely building relationships that help others become more like Jesus.

We were never called to follow Christ alone. As we learn to love one another, carry one another's burdens, and share our lives together, we become a living demonstration of the love of Christ to the world.