

Acts 2:37-44

We often hear people talking about fellowship. We hear it said that what we need is more fellowship. But our modern ideas of fellowship have become so watered down and skewed that the word no longer carries the same meaning it did in New Testament times. We're missing something vital here and it is my hope and aim with this teaching series that the Word of God might bring us not only authoritative correction here, but a fresh wind to drive us and a warm fire to rest our weary souls.

We are not surprised that the early church devoted itself to “the apostles’ teaching” and also “to prayer.” Apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit, these are among the most important means of growth, power, and effectiveness in the Christian life and this is everywhere evident in the rest of Scripture.

But Luke here in v42 tells us these early Christians also devoted themselves to fellowship. No, it's more than that! There are three clues here.

- 1) The definite article is there in the Greek. It is “the fellowship”, not merely “fellowship”,
- 2) It is a noun here – it is a thing, not a verb or an action. Not “fellowshipping”.
- 3) The wording is so pointed that Luke is jabbing us with it, like a sharp stick. This can well be translated as, “and they devoted themselves steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and **the partnership**”.

The fellowship/partnership here is closely tied to the doctrine of the apostles. And, they didn't just have a friendly gabfest and a bit of prayer and some donuts among likable Christian friends, calling it “fellowship”; This was something substantially different, as according to Luke, it was intimately and inalienably tied into the doctrine of the apostles.

Stop and take a look at **1 John 1:1-4**, and you'll notice the same curious connection between the apostles, (the “we” and “our” in the passage) and fellowship!

Returning to Acts 2:42: And they steadfastly and intensely **devoted themselves** to it. This means that this fellowship was a definite thing, and it was to them a vital priority. And it was one of the objectives for being together. But notice that the fellowship was not itself the being together. That is, it wasn't the gathering together itself. Rather the fellowship was **an objective**, a specific reason or goal for meeting. They made this fellowship a priority. The word for *devoted* here shows that they continuously persevered at it.

Today, however, we often view fellowship as what we do in “fellowship hall” or when we

casually get together with Christian friends. It's the place or time where we have casual conversations and savor coffee and donuts or perhaps a meal. This is not bad and may contribute to fellowship, but it falls far short of fellowship according to biblical definition and according to the meaning and use of the Greek words for fellowship.

Now I know what you're thinking: "*Well, my view of fellowship is much richer and deeper than mere social activity. True fellowship involves getting together for spiritual purposes: for sharing needs, for prayer, for discussing and sharing the Word to encourage, comfort, and edify one another.*" And you are right... to a limited extent. This certainly is *an aspect* of Christian fellowship, and one much more important than the first idea. It is an area of fellowship that is often lacking in the churches today and one that needs to be remedied. But even this does not comprehend or grasp the full and rich meaning of "fellowship" in the New Testament. It's sort of like saying that a Ferrari is a metal thing on 4 wheels.

In order to grasp its meaning and relate our lives to its truth in an impactful way, we need to study two Greek word groups, *koinonia*, and its derivatives, and *metochos*, a word which will come into importance because of its spiritual relationship to *koinonia*.

The Koinwn Words

(1) Koinos (the root word)

The language of the NT is called **koine** Greek because, through the conquests of Alexander the Great, it became the **common** language of Christ's day uniting Romans, Greeks and Jews alike. **Koine** means common. **Koinwnia** comes from **koinos** which means "common, mutual, public." *It refers to that which is held in common.*

2) Koinwnia (n) and Koinwneo (vb) (primary words)

There are two main ideas with this word: (a) "to share *together*, take part *together*" in the sense of partnership or participation, and (b) "to share *with*" in the sense of giving to others. As we will see, there are four key ideas that come out of these two meanings according to New Testament usage.

The New Testament usage according to sentence construction refers to:

- (a) the thing shared in common in some way by all parties involved as relationships, blessings or burdens, privileges, or responsibilities (all believers in Christ share many things in common);
- (b) the person(s) doing the sharing with others;
- (c) the person(s) with whom there is sharing; and
- (d) an abstract quality of the concept of fellowship, a thing, with no object, used alone as in [Acts 2:42](#).

(3) Koinwnos, Koinwnikos (secondary words)

Koinwnos means “a partner, associate, companion” ([2 Cor. 8:23](#); [Luke 5:10](#); [Phil. 1:7](#)) or “a partaker, sharer” ([1 Cor. 10:18-20](#); [2 Cor. 1:7](#); [1 Pet. 5:1](#); [2 Pet. 1:4](#)).

Koinwnikos, is an adjective meaning “characterized by koinwnos, ready to share or partake” ([1 Tim. 6:18](#)).

The Metochos Words (metochos, metoch)

These words come from meta, “with,” plus ecw, “to have.” The basic idea is “to have with” or “to have together.”

Metochos means: (a) “a sharing in, a partaking of” ([Heb. 3:1, 14](#); [6:4](#); [12:8](#)); and (b), “a partner, associate” ([Heb. 1:9](#); [Luke 5:7](#)).

Metoch means: (a) “sharing, fellowship”; or (b) “partnership” (cf. [2 Cor. 6:14](#) where it is used with koinwnia).

The 4 Vital *Ships* of Fellowship:

Based on the meanings and uses of these words, four key ideas develop that are important if we are to grasp the richness the New Testament’s teaching on “fellowship.” If we come to understand and own these four concepts over the next few Sundays, we will begin to have a real and meaningful grasp of the doctrine of fellowship and its implications and demands on our lives. I'll just list them here by way of introduction for us for next time:

1. *Relationship*
2. *Partnership*
3. *Companionship*
4. *Stewardship*

Let's finish with these thoughts:

- Biblical, real fellowship is a doctrine of the Bible, just like theology proper or salvation. As such it is definite, definable and is to be understood and obeyed.
- Biblical fellowship has boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in various ways.
- Biblical fellowship is the work and pleasure of the Holy Spirit.
- Biblical fellowship is rewarding and a foundation for purpose in the church and in our lives.