



**Christian Life Fellowship**  
*Becoming fully devoted followers of Christ*



## **The Value of Bonding and Fellowship** *September 16, 2007*

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### **Introduction:**

Let me ask you a question as we begin. How does fellowship impact your ability to grow and function as a follower of Christ?

Today we are going to look at the core value of bonding. The definition of bonding has to do with sharing similar interests, ideals, or experiences as by reason of profession, religion or nationality. Bonding and fellowship have to do with the companionship of individuals in a congenial atmosphere and on equal terms.

When we bring a new baby home from the hospital bonding takes place between the baby and the parents. When we meet a new friend, the potential for bonding is present. Experiences are shared, stories are told. People enjoy a bond because of some commonality that exists between them.

Bonding takes place in the church and God's kingdom as well. Followers of Christ are bonded by Jesus Himself. We share commonality of faith and life in Christ. By the experiences we share of worship, prayer, fellowship, persecution, hardship, joys and victories, we bond with those of like faith.

Our mission at Christian Life Fellowship is to reach all people within the greater Mayville, Wisconsin area and the world with the hope of Jesus Christ, compelling those who do not follow Christ to do so and challenging those who do follow Christ to become fully devoted and Spirit-filled in following Him, expressing their devotion through evangelism, preaching, teaching, worship, prayer, healing, fellowship and the Biblical cultivation of a God-centered family and community as demonstrated in Acts 2:42-47.

The word fellowship in the New Testament is translated from the Greek word *koinonia*. Its depth of meaning includes to share with others in association, community and participation. To be involved in Christian fellowship with others means to open your life to others. Fellowship with other believers involves the transformational work of God's Word. It also happens as we serve together or participate in a meal together such as this afternoon at our church picnic.

Through fellowshiping, we share time, gifts, talents, joys, sorrows and money. This doesn't mean that we should expect people to support a family so they don't have to work. God's Word gives clear direction that we are to work diligently and honestly so we can have something to share with those who are in need. EPH 4:28.

Christian fellowship exists not only to meet the needs of Christians emotionally, socially, mentally, spiritually and where necessary, financially. It also is a means of demonstrating to the world the meaning of Christian love and to call people out of the world into that fellowship with Christ and His body.

When we are in fellowship it is not just to receive, but to give as well. This is where our dedication to Christ's Lordship will be made practical and proves real.

## I. We are created by God for relationship

God made us with the desire and need to connect with Him. There is a place within our being that only God can fill. We can try to fill that place with the friendship of people, pets, hobbies, entertainment, etc, but we will always come up short. If you look back at Genesis, it was God who initiated creating human beings so He could interact with them. Likewise, there is a place within us that God made that can only be satisfied by connecting with other people. He wants us to have relationships with people, especially His people. His plans for us can only be fulfilled as we learn to relate correctly with our brothers and sisters in Christ and also with those who are not followers of Christ.

To be lonely and isolated is not God's will. The family is God's idea. Even if we cannot relate to our natural family, we have a spiritual family that we become a part of when we begin to follow Christ. The family should care, love and reach out to one another. Everyone needs friends and people; people you can trust, who you feel safe with, who will pray for you and support you spiritually and emotionally.

Those who we choose to hang out with or rub shoulders with do affect our destiny. **I Cor. 15:33 says this, "Do not be deceived: evil company corrupts good habits."**

Your destiny is determined by your character and your character is affected by those with whom you choose to keep company. By spending quality time with people who love and obey God and follow his Word, you will have surrounded yourself with people who desire to make Godly decisions.

It is from God's family on earth that you receive Godly love and encouragement. True followers of Christ walk in love. **John 13:35 - By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.**

God's family is a family of love. But you have to be open to receive that love. God will provide the encouragement and care that is needed through His people. A few weeks ago Cort Tangeman spoke on the power of encouragement. I think at times we un-

derestimate how powerful our encouragement is to one another. In the same vein, we underestimate how powerful it is if we *fail* to encourage one another. People need to know that someone cares about them. A note, a phone call, going out of your way to encourage and show or do something that is meaningful to that person can make such a difference.

It is in a fellowship that we can learn to give love and encouragement to our brothers and sisters in Christ. **I Thess. 5:11 – Encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.**

Love has to be more than just saying so with words. Love is truly shown in action. **I JOHN 4:7-8 - Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.**

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we need each other. I need you and you need me. When you are faithful in attending church and being active in your service, it encourages the rest of the church and also the leaders.

## II. The value of being connected

God wants us to serve Him effectively and we cannot possibly do that without cooperating with other followers of Christ. God has made us His body and individual members. The truth of the matter is that if a hand is disconnected from the body, it cannot fulfill its purpose. In the same way, you cannot fulfill your purpose as members of the body of Christ unless you are in right relationship and fellowship with the body; God's people. Common sense tells us that without cooperation great things touching many people cannot be achieved.

We cannot fulfill the commands of Christ and the apostles without entering into fellowship. How can we love one another, encourage one another, admonish or counsel one another and serve one another if we are never *with* one another?

## III. Friendliness and church growth

A recent in-depth study by the Gallup organization suggests that flourishing friendships among attendees

more than any other factor is the key to church growth. The poll discovered that church friendliness is a determining factor not only in attendance and satisfaction, but also in determining whether or not a person joins as a member or volunteers for a lay-ministry position. The Gallup poll found that church satisfaction is 15 % higher among those who have a best friend in the congregation. People who have a best friend in the church are 21% more likely to be regular weekly attendees.

Observed spiritual commitment is 15% greater among those who have a best friend in the church. 20 % of those with a best friend in the congregation are more likely to say that faith is a part of every aspect of their lives. Research says deep, lasting friendships that are borne out of faith and nurtured in church may be the single most effective strategy in revitalizing stagnant churches.

No other demographic variable, i.e. age, sex, marital status, level of education, race and ethnicity, region of the country or religious tradition demonstrated as high a level of satisfaction as variables measuring church-based friendships.

We are committed to providing opportunities where fellowship, friendship and bonding can take place among the members of this fellowship. WE can provide the opportunities; YOU have to take advantage of them. Again let me encourage you to come to the picnic today. Who knows, perhaps you will find a new friend there.

Consider this story reported by Don Graham: In the fall of the year, Linda, a young woman, was traveling

### **Conclusion:**

Here is the challenge. Make a new friend. Get close to someone so you can help them in time of distress. Bond with them. We have a number of new families that are worshipping with us. Reach out to them. Invite them over for coffee. Sit with them in church. Go out of your way to bond with them and you will find you have been enriched for the experience.

Remember, we do not walk this journey alone. It helps if we have someone who is willing to be close to us, in front of us and behind us, to get us through the valleys and mountains of life. Every one of us is able to be close to someone, or needs someone to be close to them. Make the connection.

alone up the rutted and rugged highway from Alberta to the Yukon. Linda didn't know you don't travel to Whitehorse alone in a rundown Honda Civic, so she set off where only four-wheel drives normally venture. The first evening she found a room in the mountains near a summit and asked for a 5 A.M. wakeup call so she could get an early start. She couldn't understand why the clerk looked surprised at that request, but as she awoke to early- morning fog shrouding the mountain tops, she understood. Not wanting to look foolish, she got up and went to breakfast. Two truckers invited Linda to join them and since the place was so small, she felt obliged. "Where are you headed?" one of the truckers asked. "Whitehorse", she answered. "In that little Civic? No way! This pass is dangerous in weather like this." "Well, I'm determined to try," was Linda's gutsy, if not very informed, response. "Then I guess we're just going to have to hug you," the trucker suggested. Linda drew back. "There's no way I'm going to let you touch me!"

"Not like THAT!" the truckers chuckled. "We'll put one truck in front of you and one in the rear. In that way, we'll get you through the mountains." That entire foggy morning, Linda followed the two red dots in front of her and had the reassurance of a big escort behind as they made their way safely through the mountains.

When we are caught in the fog in the dangerous passages through life, we need to be "hugged". With fellow Christians who know the way and can lead safely ahead of us and with others behind, gently encouraging us along, we, too, can pass safely.