

Cultivate Koinonia

By Donald S. Whitney

The word *fellowship* in the New Testament (as in Acts 2:42) is a translation of the Greek word *koinonia*. At its root *koinonia* describes two or more people in close association and often speaks of these people as sharing in something, such as a marriage or business. Christian *koinonia* exists between everyone who knows God through Jesus Christ (see 1 John 1:3). Everyone united with Christ by faith is also united with everyone else united with Christ. The same Holy Spirit indwells all believers and gives each a common share in the body of Christ, the church. As the apostle Paul put it, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body . . . and all have been made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13).

The presence of the Holy Spirit in each other enables Christian relationships to be enriched with a supernatural dimension and spiritual dynamic that unbelievers cannot experience. For example, the Lord Himself blesses us through the words of other Spirit-indwelled people in ways He seldom does through Spirit-less people. The easiest and most direct way to experience these blessings of *koinonia* is just to talk with another believer about the things of God. This includes anything related to knowing God, Christian living, understanding the Bible, and applying the Bible to particular issues such as work or family or culture, prayer, theology, church, and evangelism.

But as normal as such fellowship should be to those who know Christ, if we don't cultivate it, *koinonia* gets choked out of our conversations by the weeds of words about other things. Many Christians seem almost as reluctant to initiate a discussion about spiritual things with another believer as they are with an unbeliever. Just as we often do with unbelievers, we suppose, "They don't want to talk about God now," or "They'll think I'm weird," or "They'll think I'm trying to be super-spiritual." So we sigh and chat of other things instead, even though our hearts ache for more satisfying interaction with our Christian brothers and sisters.

One simple way to cultivate *koinonia* is to ask questions designed to turn a conversation in a more spiritual direction. Here's a list to work from:

1. How is your [teaching, hospitality, outreach, deacon, or whatever] ministry going? What do you enjoy most about it?
2. Where have you seen the Lord at work lately?
3. What's the Lord been teaching you recently?
4. Have you had any evangelistic opportunities lately?
5. Have you had any obvious answers to prayer recently?
6. What have you been reading? How has it impressed you?
7. Where in the Bible have you been reading lately? What impact has it had on you?
8. How can I pray for you?
9. What's the growth point in your life right now?

10. What are you passionate about right now?

You may want to write these down and put the list in your daily planner or your wallet, or enter them into a file to access electronically. You may prefer to develop other questions of your own. But don't wait for someone else to initiate *koinonia*—be prepared to cultivate it.

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