

Redefining Fellowship

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Introduction

- We are good at fellowship at Virginia Tech
- We have one of the most spiritually active secular campuses in the country
 - National average for students on secular campuses involved in Christian Campus Ministries is 1%
 - 4% is considered to be very good
 - At Tech, we have approximately 10% of our campus involved with no overlap
 - There are over 30 different CCM's, many of which are represented here tonight
 - These ministries are growing, which is a great sign!
- So, if we are so good at what we do, why do we need to redefine fellowship?
 - Response question: what percentage of our campus engaging in fellowship is acceptable to God? 5%? 15%? 60%
 - He wants it all, an entire campus of college students 100% sold out for Him
 - 3 reasons why we need to redefine fellowship
 - For those who have been believers for a long while: sometimes we lose sight of what we once knew and need to rediscover God's design for our lives and be reminded of His plans for us.
 - For those who are younger in the faith: You may not have ever been able to experience real fellowship and may not even know what it is. God wants to give you the tools to find and engage in real fellowship with other believers.
 - For those who do not yet know Christ (at least 90% of our campus): Fellowship is what brings them to our Savior. Those of us who know Him must be aware of this.
- Bottom line
 - Human beings were created for fellowship with both God and man.

- In order for us to effectively engage in fellowship for all it is worth, we need to understand what it is.
- Here is how we will do this
 - Start with a definition (abstract part)
 - Move into application (practical part)
- Pray

Definition of Fellowship

“Fellowship, designed by God, is our spiritual act of worship in response to God’s love for us, extended to believers around us as we share a common bond and purpose.”

- Read this with me this time
- What I’d like to do is break this definition into 3 parts
 - Fellowship starts with God and moves outward to those around us
 - Fellowship involves a common bond
 - Fellowship includes a common purpose
- First part of definition: ***“Fellowship, designed by God, is our spiritual act of worship in response to God’s love for us...”***
 - Ok, let’s stop there.
 - Fellowship starts with a basic understanding that God designed it.
 - Trinity is **the** example of perfect fellowship
 - 3 beings in one, sharing the same essence, bound together in love
 - I don’t really understand it very much, but I know this: those 3 have fellowship like we wouldn’t believe!
 - God’s desire is for us to have that kind of fellowship. ***“Holy Father, protect them...so that they may be one as we are one.” John 17:11***
 - Fellowship for us is a response to what we witness in the Trinity
 - Fellowship starts with God (introduce diagram)

- Vertical element
 - The vertical element represents our connection and interaction (fellowship) with between God and each of us on an individual level.
 - Since God is love, all love comes from Him; therefore it is only through receiving love from Him that fellowship with others is even possible
 - Our time with Him directly influences our capacity for fellowship with others
 - It must be **intentional, real, and frequent**
- Horizontal Element
 - Our communion/fellowship with other believers
 - Names of Campus ministries
 - CCF, CFF, IVCF, nlcf many include fellowship in the name
 - Horizontal fellowship comes as a direct result of strong vertical fellowship
 - Unfortunately, our idea of fellowship often tends to change taking on the meaning of simply engaging in common activities with other believers
 - Bowling night
 - Getting the small group together for 24
 - Pranks
 - Retreats
 - These things do not necessarily have anything to do with fellowship
 - Underlying problem: many believers become disillusioned with the Christian community because they finding only hanging out and fun, not fellowship
 - Horizontal fellowship is more than just fun: it is **intentional, honest, compassionate, and full of love**
- Wrapping up diagram
 - *³⁶Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" ³⁷And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸This is the great and first*

commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." Matthew 22:36-40

- Common Bond
 - Ok, back to definition: ***“Fellowship, designed by God, is our spiritual act of worship in response to God’s love for us, extended to believers around us as we share a common bond...”***
 - Fellowship involves sharing a common bond; can anyone tell me what it is?
 - Bonhoeffer quote from Life Together “Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. No Christian Community is more or less than this. Whether it is a brief, single encounter or the daily fellowship of years, Christian community is only this. We belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ.” (Pg. 21)
 - Friends, our common bond is Jesus Christ – He is the only thing that matters between us
 - We may share any number of common interests and activities (ultimate Frisbee?) but these are not strong enough to create and sustain fellowship.
 - (USE ILLUSTRATION HERE)
 - Strip away everything that we have and everything that we do and all we are left with is the only thing that really matters – Jesus Christ.
 - Non-believers engage in all sorts of activities with one another to try and gain this fellowship – everyone wants fellowship. But even the closest friends among nonbelievers cannot even come close to the bond that you and I share already simply because we believe in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.
 - Question: What is it that bonds you to other people? Is it a bond that will last?

- Common Purpose
 - Alright, let’s finish off this definition: ***“Fellowship, designed by God, is our spiritual act of worship in response to God’s love for us, extended to believers around us as we share a common bond and purpose.”***

- You all are probably starting to see that God is big on this whole togetherness/consanguinity thing
- vtONE is a big part of how we see the unity that God desires among his children on this campus, but it was not vtONE's idea, it was God's. He formed us for himself to have a directional lifestyle together, that both individually and as a group we could participate in common activities which He has defined for us.
 - Denominational differences
 - Ministries are here with different purposes at different time, but we are a body, and together the body moves in one direction.
- I'd like to look at 4 of these purposes right now
 - 1. We were created for his Glory
 - *In him we were also chosen, that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. 13And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory. (Eph. 1:11-14).*
 - *So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. (1 Cor 10:31)*
 - 2. We were created to love others
 - *"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor^[a] and hate your enemy.' 44But I tell you: Love your enemies^[b] and pray for those who persecute you, 45that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. 48Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matt. 5:43-45, 48)*
 - 3. We were created to be unified
 - *If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2then make my joy complete by being*

like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. (Phil 2:1-2)

- 4. We were created to reach the lost
 - *¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*
Matthew 28:18-20

Applications

- Bill Cosby “What’s An Ark?”
 - We have a picture of what fellowship looks like in theory...riiiiiight, what do we do with it?
 - The question is this: How do we, individually and collectively, fulfill these purposes in our lives and our ministries in a way that fosters fellowship?
 - I want to offer 3 categories of ways
- Levels of fellowship (adapted from The Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren)
 - Fellowship of Sharing and Studying God’s Word
 - Broadest Category
 - ¹⁹Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, (Eph. 5:19)
 - Small Groups, Large Groups, discipleship, mentoring
 - I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing. (1 Tim 2:8)
 - Intentionality is the bottom line
 - Ask deep questions
 - How’s your heart?
 - What are you struggling with?
 - What can I be praying for?
 - Expect for more than casual relationships

- Fellowship of Serving
 - We need to be doing the Lord's work together
 - Mission trips
 - Service projects
 - Why? We learn about one another in life situations – this is important

- Fellowship of Suffering
 - *I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.* (Phil. 3:10)
 - As we know Christ in all things, we are inherently drawn together! – We have Christ in each other!
 - It is in opposition that faith grows the greatest
 - Chinese Church Example (fastest growing church in the world)
 - 700,000 believers in 1950
 - Today, over 20 million (estimated)
 - Growth of 2857.14%!!!
 - One church in Harbin has doubled its attendance every year since the 80's and now has more than 10,000 attendees!
 - Another registered church in Beijing baptized over 400 converts in one year, that's more than one a day!
 - Bottom line: Fellowship grows with persecution and suffering – The American church could probably do with some persecution.
 - Question:
 - Are you being persecuted?
 - Is your ministry being persecuted
 - How closely are you following Christ?
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Conclusion

- So what?

- We've looked at fellowship abstractly, examined applications...what do we do now?
- 2 Things
 - Pray about your fellowship now
 - Go and do it! Be the Body!
- Pray to close