

► Introduction

What comes to mind when you hear the word “fellowship?” Christian gathering? Small groups? Bible studies? Eating meals together? Can all Christians do be considered fellowship? Fellowship comes from the Greek word *koinonia*, which has the meaning of “participation;” taking part in something, sharing something, contributing to something.

1 Cor 1:9 *God called us into the fellowship of his son.*

We share in Christ’s life, death, and resurrection; in his suffering and joy.

Throughout the letter, Paul emphasizes Philippians’ fellowship in the gospel with Paul.

Because of our sinfulness, we naturally do things for our own benefit. Our fellowship focuses on receiving. We think fellowship is good when we receive something.

True Christian fellowship involves receiving and giving.

Gospel fellowship is taking part in **receiving and giving for the advancement of the gospel.**

We will learn to evaluate what true gospel fellowship is by looking at what it looks like, where it leads to, and how it is possible.

Fellowship in the Gospel

1. What it looks like
2. Where it leads to
3. How it is possible

► What does fellowship in the gospel looks like?

☞ Gospel fellowship fills you with joy and thanksgiving

- v. 3 Paul can’t help but thank God every time he thinks of the Philippians.
- v. 4 Consequently, he prays to God with all joy. Why?
- v. 5 Because of the Philippians’ faithful fellowship in the gospel, from the first day until now.
- v. 7 They are partakers/sharers of grace with Paul, both in chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

The Philippians’ faithful commitment to the advancement of the gospel is tested and proven.

See the beauty of the giving and receiving from both sides:

The Philippians received Paul’s gospel, now they give themselves to support Paul’s mission.

Paul receives support from the Philippians, so Paul gives thanks to God and prays for them.

Partakers = *syn (together/with) + koinonos (partners) = co-partners, joint-partners, partakers.*

☞ Gospel fellowship unites you with other Christians

Those with whom we have true fellowship become intimate and dear to us.

- v. 7 Paul holds the Philippians in his heart,
- v. 8 Paul longs for them with the affection (bowels, the deepest part) of Jesus Christ.

☞ Gospel fellowship compels you to pray

It gives you more reason to pray, giving thanks to God, and also to intercede for our partners.

It fills our prayers with others.

Application: What is your prayer life like? What fills your prayers?

- Praying might be boring for you because it is all about you, your needs, and your wants.
- If you want to see more answered prayers, pray for mission work, the church, God's kingdom.

How can we intercede for our gospel workers?

Phil 1:9-10 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.

We pray that as we labor together, love abounds in knowledge and all discernment.

▶ **Where does fellowship in the gospel leads to?**

☞ Gospel fellowship leads us to abound more and more in love.

As we labor together, we grow in love that is grounded in knowledge & discernment.

In order to love, we need to know what is truly good and bad. We can know this only in God.

Without God, there is no absolute truth. Everything is just what we think or prefer.

Our sinful tendencies can easily lead us to dislike or resent our gospel partners.

That is why Paul prays for love to abound still more and more.

By laboring together for the gospel, God teaches us to love, to forgive, to discern our strengths and weaknesses, and how to complement one another for the sake of the gospel.

We can learn to love, to exercise our love to grow only if we have fellowship with the saints.

Application: Take part in the church life, share your life with us as we labor for the gospel.

If you feel that the church's fellowship is cold, God put you there to contribute; make it warm.

Fellowship is taking part in giving and receiving.

☞ Gospel fellowship leads us to holiness

By receiving, we learn humility, that we need each other.

By giving, we learn to sacrifice for others.

Paul asks the Philippians, if there is any fellowship in the spirit (Phil 2:1),

Phil 2:3-4 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Gospel fellowship purges our motives so that we may become pure—sincere (Phil 1:10).

As we labor amidst the saints in Christ, we will be transformed to be more like Christ.

Application: If you want to be holy, take an active participation in the gospel.

True fellowship holds you accountable, so that you are pure and without offense, holy.

☞ Gospel fellowship leads to the glory and praise of our God

The more we work for the gospel, the more reason we have to praise God.

He deserves to receive all the credit, he is the one enabling you, working in and through you.

► **How is this fellowship in the gospel possible?**

I am not holy; my motive is not pure, and my conduct is not blameless, my love is selfish.
How can this fellowship be possible? How can I be useful for the spreading of the gospel?

But JESUS made it possible.

v. 11 All these are **the fruits of righteousness in Jesus Christ.**

Jesus restores us to the original purpose of why we are created:

To have fellowship with God and with his saints,
And this is how we enjoy God and glorify him.

This Jesus does not only begin the good work in you, but will also bring it to completion!

Phil 1:6 *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

► **Conclusion**

True fellowship in the gospel is **not only** about what kind of activity.

Evangelism with the wrong motive can bring damage to gospel proclamation.

Church attendance merely to meet our craving for social interaction does not build others up.

True fellowship in the gospel can be any activity that is pleasing to God,
out of love grounded in knowledge and discernment,
equipping the saints to grow in love and holiness,
to be effective witnesses of Christ
for God's glory and praise.

Amen.

Philippians Outline:

1:1-2 *Greetings*

1:3-11 *Opening remarks*

1:3-4 Paul's thanksgiving in **prayer**

1:5 Continuing **partnership** with the Philippians

1:6 Reason: He who began will finish

1:7-8 Paul's longing for the Philippians, fellow partakers/**partnership**

1:9 Paul's intercession for the Philippians/**prayer**

1:10-11 Purpose: to the glory of God