

# QUANTOCK MINISTRIES

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*A Bible teaching and preaching ministry  
for the Christian community*

**D M HERRING**  
45 LUXBOROUGH ROAD  
BRIDGWATER  
TA6 7JN

01278 451297  
qmings@aol.com

## **CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP**

Acts 2 v 42 – 47. The Greek word used in the New Testament is “koinonia”, usually translated into English as fellowship, communion, or, in the newer versions, sharing or partnership. The immediate meaning is sharing something in common with others, but the basic idea is that whatever we are sharing is central to our coming together, and without such central elements we may not even desire to come together in the first place (1 John 1 v 3a). In other words, we are learning to love each other because we all start with our individual love for the common and central ingredients that have drawn us together in the first place. This is very different to the world’s concept of fellowship, where some hints of self-interest or mutual attraction are usually present as well. The concept of true Christian fellowship lies at the root of the description of the Church as a single body in 1 Corinthians 12 v 12 – 31. Without those central things that we share, the unity of the body would be impossible.

Central elements around which we have true koinonia:

1. The Lord Jesus Christ - 1 Corinthians 1 v 9. We cannot be in real fellowship with those who do not know the Lord Jesus. Without the reality of His central presence, we would simply be engaging in worthless religion. However diverse we may be as individuals, we are one in Him. This oneness in Christ, and His presence among us, is the great defining feature of Christian koinonia.
2. The Holy Spirit - Philippians 2 v 1. If the Holy Spirit is not present when we meet, there is no real koinonia. His presence may not be demonstrated in the same way every time, but we should be very aware of the spiritual presence of our triune God in our midst, making our meeting together quite different from any non-Christian association, and very much more worthwhile.
3. The Father - 1 John 1 v 3b. True koinonia should display the awesomeness of the Father’s presence. We are on holy ground; we stand in awe. So much chatter precedes many of our gatherings that we fail to sense the wonder of the Father’s presence in our midst, and we lose out in consequence. We should rather prepare ourselves to enter the “Holy Place”, wherever that may be.
4. The Truth (apostles’ teaching) - Acts 2 v 42. Central to our fellowship should be the Word. Again, many so-called Christian gatherings today are not true koinonia because the spiritual preaching and teaching of the Word is absent. I would argue that even “praise meetings” should have a time of listening to the Word; otherwise, we are not going to hear what God has to say to us and we may only ever hear the sound of our own emotional responses - Ecclesiastes 5 v 1 – 3.
5. Corporate giving - 2 Corinthians 8 v 4 & 9 v 13. Giving in unity of purpose should be a much more central feature of our fellowship. Deciding on priorities together, achieving agreed targets, and even sharing a meal as we give for a specific project is part of true koinonia. Tear Fund lunches are based on this idea, but why leave it there?

6. Christian service - Galatians 2 v 9. Service for the Lord is central to our fellowship, but we are not all called to do the same job. Instead of criticising those who serve in a different way, or whose service we do not understand, we should share reports of our various areas of service, with genuine interest, and then cover each other's service in prayer. In this way we will show fellowship by positive support and encouragement for all the areas of service represented.
7. The Gospel - Philippians 1 v 5. If the presentation of the Gospel (albeit in various ways) is not central we are not in true fellowship. The church that does not preach the Gospel will have its ability to do so taken away (its "lamp stand" - Revelation 2 v 5). However right social concern may be it can never take the place of the spiritual duty to declare God's redeeming love in Christ and the need for an individual response.
8. Christ's [present] sufferings [for the state of the world] - Philippians 3 v 10. Paul wanted to feel the inward pain that is upon the Lord's heart, sharing His ongoing suffering for a world in bondage to evil and deception together with all the dreadful consequences in personal misery and suffering. But this is a pain we should all share in common as we each desire to have a real heart of compassion for the condition of those around. We should also share a righteous anger at the satanic deceptions that lie behind such distress – Romans 1 v 18 - 32.
9. Remembrance of His death - 1 Corinthians 10 v 16 – 17. Our act of communion with bread and wine is a wonderful part of our fellowship as we remember that He died to make us one through His atoning death on behalf of each member of the body. Celebrating communion (koinonia) should be a joyful, meaningful occasion ("do this in remembrance of me") and not just treated as a quick afterthought.

When gatherings of the Church do not have these vital central elements there can be no really complete fellowship in the biblical sense of the word. Also, we need to recognise that any gifts that the Holy Spirit is pleased to bless us with are not an end in themselves, but given to enhance our appreciation of, and contribution to, these deeper ingredients of our united worship and service.

This understanding of fellowship also underlines why we cannot really be content to follow the Lord as an individual in isolation from the rest of the body (Hebrews 10 v 25), although it is sadly true that occasionally Christians have had no choice. Only when we are willing to meet in unconditional love with other Christians can the Holy Spirit powerfully manifest these central biblical and spiritual aspects that make true Christian fellowship one of the most wonderful experiences a human being can have here on earth.