



Living Hope Bible Church

Where hope comes to life, and the Son always shines.

February 2, 2024

Dear Church Family and Friends:

Despite the influx and influence of social media, we live in a very impersonal world. Sadly, today few people maintain strong, healthy relationships. Many circumstances contribute to this alarming trend. Our hectic work schedules, social media, and unhealthy fears regarding our transparency and accountability with others have all worked to slowly erode our social interaction. Tragically, this trend has also spread among God's people in the church today.

One of the greatest resources God has given us is our relationships with one another. These relationships, however, are often neglected and relegated as a secondary aspect of our lives. God created His church however, to be a place where we can grow in Christ through our interaction with one another. The body of Christ, like a human body, grows through its interdependence on each biological system. Each bodily system, whether it is the nervous system, respiratory system, or circulatory system can only function with the assistance of the others. This is also true for each member of Christ's church.

One of the key principles we often discuss as believers is the concept of fellowship. We often use this word but fail to really understand its meaning and significance. The English word "fellowship" is a translation of the Greek word 'koinonia'. Although this word carries several meanings, its basic idea is that of sharing. This word was used frequently by the first believers in the early church and how they shared their time and resources with one another. Acts 2:44 tells us "And all those who believed were together and had all things in common." The word translated "common" is the Greek word koinonia and literally means that they shared all things. This is further emphasized in Acts 4:32 where we are told, "but all things were common (koinonia) property to them."

The early church focused on, and stressed, their need for fellowship. This was expressed through their mutual worship, study, meals, and prayer they shared together (Acts 2:42). This not only provided needed encouragement, but it also helped to unite their spirits (Acts 2:40). Their fellowship, therefore, was an indispensable component to their individual and corporate growth in Christ. This fact stands in stark contrast with our culture and the typical church today. Normally fellowship is not considered essential but is rather designated as an additional or optional component of the Christian life.

It's important to understand the emphasis given to true fellowship in the NT. The Greek word koinonia is mentioned about twenty times in the NT and is used in two primary ways. First, it is used in the sense of sharing something with someone such as food, money, supplies, encouragement, time, and concern. It is also used in the sense of 'sharing in' something with someone, such as in a project, a success, a failure, a need, or a hurt. These two true dimensions of fellowship therefore can only be experienced in the context of Christ's church. There must be contact and commitment for this quality to be lived out and experienced among God's people.

In closing then, it is crucial to understand that God desires for His children to be personally and deeply involved in each other's lives. Our superficial and shallow relationships fall far short of fulfilling this mandate. To experience the full blessing of God, we must change our attitudes about fellowship and begin to prioritize it more in our lives. This new year will provide us with numerous opportunities to experience true fellowship and the authentic Christian unity God wants for His body. These fellowship opportunities will include our men's and women's fellowships and studies, our Mid-week study, Adult Sunday school, prayer group, and Sunday fellowship meals. This will also include a number of ministry opportunities as well, such as our new trustee team, youth and outreach ministries, our care ministry, and ushering and Scripture reading ministries.

I want to take this opportunity to challenge each of you to pray about opening your hearts and lives to others in our church family. This will entail both sharing our lives with others as well as in certain church needs and ministries. Some of us have isolated ourselves and therefore limited our personal growth and influence here at LHBC. It's time we get off the bench and get involved! It is my prayer that a spirit of true love and deep fellowship will increase here at LHBC in 2024.

May the Lord continue to bless each of you and use you for His glory and honor! Thank you and God bless!

Your Servant In Christ,
Pastor Mark

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