

KOINONIA:

More Than an Odd Word

The Heart of Christian Identity

We have a problem!

Within one generation, we have entered an era when our lifestyles have redefined Biblical truths and standards, and those “re-definitions” have become normalized. Marriage, sexual identity, and “Christian” are three fundamental Biblical concepts which have been redefined. The problem with these redefinitions is that the outcome, while self-affirming and accommodating, ultimately “misses the mark”—in other words, it is sin.¹

¹ The NT word for “sin” is *harmartia*: to miss the mark, the true end and goal of our lives, which is God.

The New Normal for “Church”

- While 60% of adults in the US claim an affiliation with a Christian church, only 30% actually attend any kind of religious service.
- Of the 25% who claim to attend weekly, according to cellphone tracking data, only 3% actually do.
- Regular church attendance is now defined as three Sundays within a two month period.

“*Historically, Nigeria ranked first as the nation with the highest church attendance. How does your attendance in the US compare to your attendance when you lived in Nigeria?*”

The Book of Words

- The Bible is, especially, a book of words. Those words and their definitions matter more than any other book of words.
- The words of the Bible possess eternal weight because they reveal the immortal God and His will for every person.
- Therefore, the understanding and practice of these words has eternal consequences for every person, and determines our present identity and worth to God.

Koinonia is not . . .

- Koinonia is not church attendance.
- Koinonia is not watching a church service online or joining a church-related Zoom meeting.
- In other words, you can do those things and still miss the mark just as much as if you don't do those things.

Understanding “Koinonia”

koininia: to share in; fellowship with; participation

- The first use of *koinonia* in the NT is found in Acts 2.42—

All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer.

- While all of these terms indicate what they did, the fact is that *koinonia* (or the lack of it) is a much deeper issue.

- The first thing to understand is that *koinonia* is rooted in the nature of the Trinity; it's not *what* they do, it's *who* they are.
 - ▶ The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit exist in infinite fellowship, sharing the same nature and life, being of one mind— all contributing toward the eternal purposes of righteousness. Although they exist individually, they do not exist independently of each other; they are One.

- The second thing to understand is that *koinonia* is at the heart of our relationship with Christ; we are in Christ, participating in His righteous life and having fellowship with God because of Christ's sacrificial work on our behalf.

God is faithful, who has called you into koinonia with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. (1 Corinthians 1.9 NIV)

Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a koinonia in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a koinonia in the body of Christ? (1 Corinthians 10.16 NIV)

- The third thing to understand is that *koinonia* is the result of and the evidence of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the koinonia of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (2 Corinthians 13.14 NIV)

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any koinonia of the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. (Philippians 2.1-2 NIV)

- The Christians of Acts 2.42 lived as they did because they were filled with the Holy Spirit. He is the member of the Trinity who imparts the life of the Father and the Son to those who are truly born again in Christ (cf. Galatians 4.4-6). The way that we live in relationship with other believers indicates the level and influence of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives.

After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness. All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. (Acts 4.31-32)

- Koinonia is not convenient, cheap, or optional; as seen in the work of Christ and the community of the believers in Acts, it is costly commitment.

And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. (Acts 2.44-45)

But when the Holy Spirit is the ultimate influence in our lives, koinonia will be manifested.