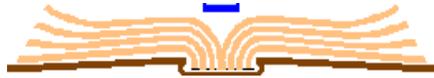


## BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR KOINONIA



The most important thing you need to know as a koinonia leader is the biblical foundation for your ministry. We'll look at the biblical roots and requirements, and then briefly consider additional facts that support the need for a Koinonia.



The Koinonia has a firm rock-hard biblical base. This firm foundation guards against the storms of change brought about by the many programmatic fads that blow through our churches. Although initially these fads seem exciting and potentially beneficial, they quickly subside because they lack clear biblical basis. A Koinonia is not one of these fanciful fads. In fact, of all the potential ministry formats available to the local church, *the koinonia have the greatest biblical support!* Consequently, it is important for you as a koinonia leader to understand and appreciate the rich biblical heritage that precedes you.

### Old Testament Roots

The basis of our Koinonia can be traced back to the Old Testament.

**The Koinonia begins with the very nature of God.** Genesis 1:1 launches the biblical record with a simple yet profound statement that God (*Elohim*) is the Creator of all that exists. The word *Elohim* is plural, designating or incorporating more than one person. Although interpreted as singular throughout the Old Testament, the word expresses the unity of three persons in the one-God – The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These share jointly in the same nature and majesty of God. – A unique relationship beyond our mere human comprehension. Yet the trinity pictures for us the pivotal concept of relationship within a Koinonia.

**The concept of Koinonia is pictured further in the Old Testament record of God's chosen people, the Israelites.** The notion and practice of koinonia groups was tightly woven into the fabric of their individual and corporate identities. From the entire nation down to the smallest family unit, a large and small group mentality permeated the Jewish existence.

**Nation** - The Israelites were a chosen people; God set them apart from all other peoples on the face of the earth (Deuteronomy 7:6). They were select and unique group within human creation. They were chosen not because they were large in number, but because they were few and God loved them (Deuteronomy 7:7-8). They formed a great family called the "house of Israel" (Exodus 40:38).

**Tribe** – *The house of Israel, by virtue of its descent from the twelve sons of Jacob, was divided into twelve subgroups or tribes* (Genesis 49). Tribes provided the leaders with a method of administer and guide the people. (Joshua 12-22).

**Family or clan** – Tribes were broken down further into groups of relatives known as clans or families. By the last year of the Israelites' wilderness journey, fifty-seven families existed among the twelve tribes. The families were found from Jacob's grandchildren and by the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the twelve heads of the tribes. Numbers 26:1-49 profiles the families with their associated tribes.

**Household** - This literally means, "house." The various clans were divided down into family subgroups or relatives living in the same dwelling, including servants and dependents. This is the idea when Scriptures speaks of "*the household of Joseph*" (Genesis 50:8) or "Pharaoh and all his household" (Deut. 6:22)

**Father or men** – A specific man, including his wife and children, was the smallest group within the Jewish identity. A single-family unit could exist as part of a larger household or a separate entity. Individual family units were the hearts of Jewish society – primary Koinonia.

### **Koinonia in the New Testament**

The Old Testament revealed God's grand design for Koinonia built with Him and among those who bear His image. Jesus, in His coming, transformed our relationship to a greater degree. Jesus came to show a closer fellowship with the Father is possible through Him. He revealed a personal waiting Father, a Father who knows and forgives, and a Father whom cares and give good gifts, a father who is always there to have fellowship with us. Jesus also transformed relationship among human being. He gave each of us the responsibility to care for one another, to love one another and to pray for each other. Jesus gave us a new understanding of what it means to have Koinonia with God and with others.

Jesus Christ is pictured as the greatest Koinonia leader in history. He is our model. Ephesians 5:1-2(NIV) admonishes us to, **“Be imitators of God... and live a life of love.”** Clearly, the primary idea of the Apostle Paul is becoming Christlike in our character. We should not only focus on the character but also seek to imitate Christ's walk – His behavior or actions that were marked by love. How does person become Christlike? How does one learn to walk in love? Let us see how Christ example Koinonia.

**Jesus spent most of His time – reserved most of His instruction for the twelve. Their fellowship during those three years involved a growing commitment to Christ and a growing commitment to one another. Devotion to Christ was not enough...They had to learn to live together, to love one another, to serve one another, to work in harmony.**

Richard C. Halverson  
*Somehow Inside of Eternity, 73*

1. Jesus began His earthly ministry by *establishing* His “Koinonia,” the disciples. Jesus' first step in beginning His public ministry was to form His small group (Matt. 4:18-22, Lk. 6:13-16). Matthew 10:2-4 lists the names of the group members, the twelve men Jesus chose. He elected them to establish and minister within a framework of interpersonal relationship.
2. Jesus was actively involved in both large and small group ministry contexts.
3. Will received (Mrk. 12:37) and spent considerable time with His special group, the Twelve.
4. We see that Jesus' ministry to large groups was preceded by and preceded out of His koinonia context. In the case of Jesus' public ministry, His small group emphasis preceded His large group involvement. Further, it was the Koinonia that provided the platform for Jesus' ministry to large groups of people.
5. Jesus spent the majority of His time with His koinonia. If it were possible to add up the actual amount of time Jesus spent with the disciples, likely the result would show that this group consumed the majority of His time.
6. The key statement about Jesus as a koinonia leader is that relationship and not organization were central in His method. Jesus gave little, if any, time and attention to building an earthly organization. The Kingdom He sought to proclaim was not a material organization, but rather a heavenly realm (Luke 17:20-21). He also emphasized on people and not program. He chose to spend time teaching, healing and praying for the people.
7. We see Jesus used koinonia to teach and model spiritual knowledge, attitudes, and behavior. Having formed His koinonia, Jesus' taught the modeled spiritual truth by simply drawing them close to Himself.

The Koinonia was Jesus' method for leadership training. He devoted Himself primarily to the task of developing a seller group of men, the Apostles. His goal was to equip his koinonia or small group of disciples to carry on the work of the gospel after He returned to the Father.

### **The Early Church as an Example**

From the very beginning koinonia were an integral to the church's development and success. This facts is not surprising given the background of the people involve, their social context, and the nature of the church. A majority of the first Christian were Jews. Only later did the Apostle Paul take the good news to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). As a result, the early church reflected a strong Jewish, Old Testament flavor, including its emphasis on small groups. The individual family unit was the center of Jewish religious and social instruction, and this practice was carried through into the New Testament era. It is no wonder that fellowship in a small group became a natural element of the early church. The home played an essential and critical role in Jewish society. It was the context for many family and community activities. The koinonia became a natural expression of this emphasis. In fact, apart from those referred to in a general geographic location, the only congregations mentioned in the epistle were those in specific homes. The churches that met in the homes of Priscilla and Aquila (Romans 16:3-5) and Philemon (verse 2) are examples.

**Acts 2:42-47** gives us a glimpse of how the Jerusalem household of God functioned. It was an exciting time. We are given an outline of their activities: "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (verse 42). A balance existed among instruction, fellowship, common activities (meals), and spiritual responsibilities (prayer). Let us briefly examine each of these following practices in Acts 2:44-47:



**Teaching** - The instruction came from the apostles, who in turn receive their information from the Lord Himself. The apostle's teaching was authenticated by miracle that God performed through them (v. 43b). As a result of all of this, "everyone kept feeling a sense of awe" (v. 43a).



**Fellowship** - The kind of communion the new believers enjoyed was that of mutual sharing. The Book of Acts recounts what they did: "**And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possession, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might he need**" (vv. 44-45).



**Eating** - We read in Acts, "**day by day continuing with one mind in the temple and breaking from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart**" (Acts 2:46). These young Christian ate together frequently. And when they did, they expressed joy and showed authenticity towards one another.



**Prayer** - They're gathering were marked by prayer of praise (v. 47a). They knew not only that the Lord had saved them but that He would also sustain and encourage their growth. "**Therefore, they raised their voices towards heaven and gave Him the thanks and honor that was due Him.**"



**Evangelism** – and the larger issue of discipleship – is greatly enhanced in the relational context of small groups. Groups provided a people-to-people setting rather than a program to people agenda. This is more natural, interpersonal context readily lends itself to sharing the gospel.

In Summary, the biblical support for Koinonia is overwhelming. Beginning in the Old Testament and continuing through the New Testament, The Koinonia is an integral part of believer's lives. But most significantly, we know that the Lord Jesus ministered in the context of a Koinonia. Consequently, a Koinonia is a necessity in the local church, not merely a programmatic option, but rather **a living organism to reach out to others and glorify God in the process**. Your leadership in this ministry format has deep biblical roots and is ideal for accomplishing the biblical mandate.