

## KOINONIA IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY



We have already established the biblical context for Koinonia. Now how do we define *Koinonia* or fellowship in a small group setting in the context of the church in the twentieth century? Having a definition is critical, because it identifies the characteristics of the activity you have agreed to lead.

### What is the Generic Definition of a KOINONIA?

***“KOINONIA is a fellowship in a small group setting within the ministry of the church, it is voluntary, intentional gathering of 3 to 15 people regularly meeting together with a shared goal of mutual Christian edification and fellowship.”***

Let us carefully dissect that:

- **Fellowship** – Koinonia is the Greek Word for fellowship. This simply means a gathering of believer in a common goal and that is to glorify God and edify the Body of Christ. (Acts 2)
- **Within the church-** it is a group within the context and the ministry of the church, the Body of Christ (Romans 12:5).
- **Voluntary** – People are not forced to join a Koinonia. Potential members must choose to participate.
- **Intentional gathering** – Koinonia is a planned gathering. There is a clear purpose of its existence.
- **Three to fifteen people** – When group members expand it becomes difficult to maintain effective interpersonal relationship and accomplish the group's goal. So we encourage the Koinonia to split into another group for them to effectively achieve its goal.
- **Regularly meeting together** – Meeting is scheduled for a specific length of time, on an exact day, at a definite time.
- **With a shared goal** – Members participating in a Koinonia must fit within the ideal definition understand, accept, and actively promote common goal.
- **Mutual** – Members of the Koinonia must accept the responsibility for the group's success. The leader and the members are accountable for the Koinonia's relationships, processes, task and goals.
- **Christian edification** – Evangelism, Bible study, prayer, sharing, and worship – everything should be aimed at building people up to know the love of Christ and serve Him only.

## DEFINING MY KOINONIA

<b>K</b>	<b>- KINSHIP</b> It speaks of our relationship with God and with one another. We belong to one family, that is, the family of God. We are brother and sisters in the Lord.
<b>O</b>	<b>- ONENESS</b> Our community is characterized by our oneness or "togetherness" in purpose.
<b>I</b>	<b>- INTERCESSION</b> Praying for one another and for other people.
<b>N</b>	<b>- NURTURE</b> There is instruction and equipping through the Word of God. Studying the Scripture
<b>O</b>	<b>- OUTREACH</b> Reaching out through the love of God. Evangelism and expression of faith
<b>N</b>	<b>- NEED</b> Sensitive in meeting the needs of other believers.
<b>I</b>	<b>- INVOLVEMENT</b> Participation and service in the ministry to one another.
<b>A</b>	<b>- ADVANCEMENT</b> Multiplication of members and Koinonias.

*Illustrated by Pastor Butch Yu*

### **Why the Need for a Koinonia?**

I have at least ten reasons why we need Koinonia:

1. **Koinonia promotes an avenue for evangelism.** It should be a most effective way of sharing the Gospel in an unthreatening environment. People are easily reached out, because it is done in a home setting and in their own neighborhood.
2. **Koinonia provides an opportunity to do good to the community.** Members a Koinonia are provided with ways to help their neighborhood, providing assistance and help to widows and the poor. I like what the Bible says in Titus 2:14; **“Our people must learn to spend their time doing good, and providing for real needs; they should not live useless lives.”**
3. **Koinonia provides opportunities for ministry and leadership training.** Because Koinonia is a shared task –each of the Koinonia members should find a suitable expression to exercise his or her spiritual gifts. The Koinonia is also a place for developing member for ministries in a local congregation. Talents and gifts are developed and used in a smaller group, then later encouraged in a larger group.
4. **The Koinonia is also a place where specific needs are identified and met.** In the church, it is difficult to know the needs of the congregation. As a co-pastor, it is difficult to know much more to even meet those needs. However the Koinonia, because it is small, needs are easily identified and met.
5. **The Koinonia is a place of affirmation and encouragement.** Members receive that extra loving care from each other. It is a place where you can be corrected, affirmed, helped and encouraged. There are no other alternatives.
6. **Koinonia is a place that provides sound and practical biblical teaching.** Here members can ask question and learn truths from the Word and from life application. It also helps us more to be like Christ and allow us to be humble servants, ready to forgive at any cost.
7. **Koinonia provides accountability in the church.** Being part of a Koinonia makes a responsible worker that is equipped to serve and at the same time accountable to Christ and the Church.

### **Factors Involving Koinonia**

Passing through time from the first century into the twentieth, we come to the contemporary scene of the local church, we find solid teaching, frequent eating, and habitual prayer times. But one key ingredient is conspicuous by its absence – *koinonia*, true Christian fellowship. In order to understand true Christian fellowship, let us probe further into some factors involving Koinonia and take a look at some of its most basic constituents.

#### **Love and Acceptance**

Agape love involves seeking the greatest good of the other person. At times, this may include giving reproof, encouragement, instruction, or even an embrace. But whatever the means of expression, the attitude conveyed is one of value and respect for the other individual.

#### **Honesty and Humility**

Of course love and acceptance cannot flower without genuine expression of honesty and humility. Truthful vulnerability and a servant's heart are crucial factors of true Koinonia.

**Concern and Restoration**

The Apostle Paul's word on this are quite clear: "*Brethren, even if a man is caught in trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ*" (Gal. 6:1-2). When other Christian struggle over, wander away from, or simply fail to keep God's directives, our primary goal should be to lovingly help steer them back in the right course.

**Confession and Forgiveness**

In an atmosphere of love, acceptance, honesty, humility, and concern, wrong can be freely confessed and graciously forgiven. And although sharing about sins committed can see threatening, failure to confess them can delay sought-after healing (James 5:16).

**Encouragement and Availability**

The biblical exhortation is that churches be composed of believers who "stimulate one another to love and good deeds" by "encouraging one another" towards this goal (Hebrews. 10:24-25).

**Informality and Flexibility**

The rut of the routine and highly structured can be fatal to a Koinonia. There is nothing wrong with procedures and program as long as they facilitate rather than hinder the spiritual development of God's people.

**Christian Edification**

The Greek words for edify (*oikodomeo*) and edification (*oikodome*) literally means to "build" or "building up." Add the word *Christian* and the meaning focuses on the idea of strengthening or reinforcing the spiritual lives of believers. Therefore, regardless of the group's specific purpose or activities – evangelism, Bible study, prayer, sharing, worship – everything should be aimed at building people up to know love, and serve Christ more and more.

**Fellowship**

Biblical fellowship carries the idea of communion with one another as an expression of our relationship with Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9). Fellowship was one of the key characteristics of the first church (Acts 2:42). In 1 John 1:7, we are told that if we "walk in the light" we have fellowship with one another. Koinonia provides the context for activity realizing this relationship.

Numerous different types, models, or application of small groups can fit our definition. There is no one right method or type of group. Nevertheless, most groups are able to fit within the general characteristic of the definition.