

What Is the Church Meant to Be?

by Mark Emery

Part 5: Fellowship Is Not Optional

Thank you for continuing this inquiry into what Scripture says the Church is meant to be. I hope it can ignite conversation, enthusiasm and vision as we grow together in Christ.

So far, we have considered the Church as a living body made up of a people called to action. People who live a life marked by freedom rather than fear, with a faith that produces visible fruit.

This leads us to another important question:

Is fellowship simply a nice extra in church life, or is it something much more central?

Scripture gives us a clear answer.

In **Acts 2:42**, we read:

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.”

Notice that fellowship is not presented as an afterthought; Not an extraneous activity.

In fact, it stands right alongside teaching, prayer, and shared worship as part of the life of the early Church.

And as the passage continues, we see a picture of believers who were deeply connected (**Acts 2:44, 46**):

“Now all the believers were together and held all things in common... Every day they devoted themselves to meeting

together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house.
They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts.”

This is not a picture of distant religious attendance.

It is a picture of shared life.

Meals. Prayer. Generosity. Gladness. Daily connection.

The early Church was not simply made up of people who believed the same things. It was made up of people who belonged to one another in love.

Jesus Himself shows us how central this is. In **John 13:34–35**, He says:

“I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

That is a remarkable statement.

Jesus does not say the world will know we are His disciples only by how much information we possess.

He says they will know by our love for one another.

In other words, love between believers is not only comforting to the Church. Jesus is offering it here as our primary witness to the world.

Yes, our relationships are part of our testimony. That’s worth celebrating. As the old, wise saying goes, “Preach the gospel at all times and when necessary use words.”

Praise the Lord, when we are fellowshiping, we are witnessing to the world.

Of course, this kind of fellowship is not always effortless.

It takes time.

It takes intention.

It takes humility.

It takes showing up for one another again and again.

But Scripture reminds us that this kind of bond is worth pursuing. In **Ecclesiastes 4:9–10, 12**, we read:

“Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their efforts. For if either falls, his companion can lift him up... And if someone overpowers one person, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not easily broken.”

God did not design us to walk alone. Nor did God design the Church to be sustained by teaching alone.

We need encouragement.

We need accountability.

We need friendship.

We need people who know our names, our burdens, our joys, and our struggles.

A Church shaped by biblical fellowship begins to look different.

It becomes a place where:

- people are known, not merely noticed
- burdens are shared, not hidden
- joy is multiplied
- love becomes visible

This is not secondary to church life.

It is part of the very fabric of it.

Takeaway:

Fellowship is not an optional extra for the people of God. Deep, loving, Christ-centered relationships are part of how the Church lives, grows, and bears witness to the world.

Questions to ponder:

Do I see love, fellowship, and genuine care for others as part of my witness for Christ?

Do I think of witnessing only as something I say, or also as something I live? In what ways might my daily relationships, kindness, and faithfulness preach the Gospel before I ever speak a word?

How might God use my personality, gifts, and presence to point others toward Jesus in ways that are authentic to who He made me to be?

Coming next...

◆ PART 6 — The Church Builds One Another Up