

## Christian Fellowship

### THE “KOINONIA” OF THE CHURCH

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In Acts 2, the church is born having an initial membership of something more than 3,000 men and women. The life of this group developed in four specific areas, described in ACTS 2:42. These areas were: (1) Doctrine; (2) Fellowship; (3) Breaking of Bread; and (4) Prayer.

These four areas of fellowship are described in two couplets, that is, doctrine and fellowship are linked together, and breaking of bread and prayer are linked together.

The Greek term for *fellowship* is κοινωνία (**koinonia**). The following is a brief word study on the meaning of **koinonia** as it relates to man. Fellowship with God, as described in 1 JOHN 1 is not included in this study.

#### Definition

The word **koinonia** carries the basic idea of having something in common. The word is related to κοινη (**koine**), meaning “common”, which we use to refer to **koine** Greek, the original language of the New Testament, which was common to many people at a certain time in history. JUDE 3 speaks of our “common (**koine**) salvation”, referring to a salvation known and shared by all believers. The best way to bring the meaning of **koinonia** into English is to speak of joint participation in something.

#### Areas of Joint Participation (Fellowship) in the Early Church

##### Koinonia in Material Things

ROMANS 15:26,27. The word “contribution” is **koinonia**.

2 COR. 8:4, “fellowship”

2 COR. 9:1, “distribution”

GAL. 6:6, “communicate with”

PHIL. 4:15, “communicated”

Note that in each passage there is joint participation in something material - money.

##### Koinonia in Suffering

PHIL. 3:10, “fellowship”

1 PETER 4:13, “partakers”. Here there is a God-believer participation in the suffering area.

##### Koinonia in Evil

2 JOHN 11, “partaker”

1 COR. 10:20, “fellowship”

In these two passages joint participation may be had in evil by expressing cordiality toward doctrinal error or by association with idolatry. MATT. 23:30 speaks of **koinonia** in murder.

##### Koinonia in the Incarnation of Christ

HEBREWS 2:14 shows that Christ became a joint participant with us when He took on a human body.

##### Koinonia at the Lord's Table

1 COR. 10:16 says that we have “communion” (**koinonia**) with the blood and body of Christ.

##### Koinonia in Spreading the Gospel

GAL. 2:6-9 tells how Peter, Paul and other apostles were given the “right hands of fellowship” indicating joint participation in the spread of the Gospel.

##### Koinonia in Salvation

2 PETER 1:4 says that by the Word of God we become “partakers” of the divine nature.

### **Koinonia in the Holy Spirit**

2 Cor. 13:14 and Phil. 2:1 both indicate a joint participation of the believer and the Holy Spirit.

### **Koinonia in a Common Effort**

Luke 5:10 expresses this where James, John, and Simon are called “partners” (**koinonia**). The joint participation was in the fishing business which they all shared.

### **SUMMARY**

Fellowship in the New Testament means joint participation in some area, defined by context. **In no passage is fellowship presented as a goal or end in itself** - it is merely the by-product of common goals or possessions. The more the believer discovers the salvation common to all other believers, the more fellowship occurs.