



WEEK FIVE: HOW TO EXPERIENCE FELLOWSHIP

June 24, 2012
By Carey Madding

Why is community so important? God made us to be in fellowship with others. He placed us in family groups; He created marriage; He instituted His Church. God created us to need people! Yes, God wants us to learn and practice the spiritual disciplines based on solitude and time alone with Him. But He also strongly commands us to participate in His family.

Hobby clubs or work associations are valuable for gaining knowledge from like-minded people. And there is a unique dynamic in team sports. Just as sports activities build character and discipline in youngsters, fellowship with other believers strengthens our spiritual muscle and our ability to withstand the world. Fellowship rubs off our rough edges and teaches us to love and serve others. Let's study this discipline of spiritual life together.

Where Am I Today?

- 1) Am I currently in a relationship where I am growing, and we both have permission to encourage or correct each other as needed?

Into the Bible

- 2) Fill in the blanks, based on your study for the following scripture verses.

- a. **I _____ in God's family with other believers.**
Galatians 6:10; Ephesians 2:19; Romans 12:5
- b. **I need _____ to grow spiritually.**
Hebrews 10:24-25, 3:13; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
- c. **I need _____ to grow spiritually.**
Proverbs 27:17; Galatians 6:1-2

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- d. **Jesus is** _____ **when we fellowship together.**
Matthew 18:20
- e. **There is** _____ **when people pray together.**
Matthew 18:19
- f. **Community is a** _____ **to the world.**
John 17:20-21
- 3) 1 Peter 4:10 (NLT) says: *"God has given each of you a gift from His great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another."* Read the verses below and note some of our obligations to other believers. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but just notice how much God expects us to love on and care for one another! Be prepared to share which of these comes easily and which is tough for you personally to practice within the family of God?
- a. **Galatians 5:13** — _____ one another
- b. **Romans 15:7** — _____ one another
- c. **Colossians 3:13** — _____ one another
- d. **Romans 12:10** — _____ one another
- e. **Romans 15:14** — _____ one another
- f. **Ephesians 5:21** — _____ one another
- g. **1 Thessalonians 5:11** — _____ one another
- 4) **Read Galatians 6:1-5.** Discuss why Life Groups are in a particularly sweet spot to assist with the commands found in this passage. Now look specifically at the differences in verse 2 and verse 5. Discuss with your group how your Life Group is applying these two verses in a real way.

How Does This Apply?

- 5) Have you ever seen believers in fellowship bring glory to God? If so, be prepared to share. Write down enough detail that you can retell the story to your group. It can be about how you were drawn to Jesus by the love within a group of believers, how your spouse or friend was won by the care provided to you by the family of God, or how you participated in an event that was a testimony to others.

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- 6) **Read Acts 2:42-47.** Make a list of activities or things the early home churches did together. Now read this passage together in your group. Discuss the elements your Life Group does routinely. How can you more fully participate and contribute to your group to add to the experience of authentic, life-changing fellowship? Are there areas where you are holding back or not fully committing to the fellowship?

- 7) *"And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."* Acts 2:47 (NIV 1984) At The Cove, we are very intentional about inviting friends to experience what we have found in Christ. It's the first part of our mission statement. Is your Life Group intentionally preparing to reach others and add them into the fellowship? As a group, are you inviting and open to new people attending? Are you preparing and sending out new leaders to start new groups?

- 8) The weekend messages were based on the first part of Philippians 2. But immediately following verse four, Paul tells us exactly how to live in community, what kind of attitudes we'll need, and what types of actions we will do. In fact, he says, "Be like Jesus." **Read Philippians 2:5-11.** What does this passage show you about what you need to work on in your own life to have real fellowship with God and with others?

Digging Deeper: Going Further on Your Own

- 9) In some Christians' minds, attending and committing to one particular church family is just not that essential. A personal, mountaintop worship experience suffices for them ... not occasionally, but all the time. Other believers are adamant that worshiping together—the gathering of the Body of Christ—is essential. Dr. Ray Ortland states, *"The Christian who is not committed to a group of other believers for praying, sharing, and serving, so that he is known, as he knows others, is not an obedient Christian. He is not in the will of God. However vocal he may be in his theology, he is not obeying the Lord."* Strong words! But what does the Bible say about committing to one fellowship? Why does The Cove have membership and consider Cove Class 101 to be one the new believer's very next steps? Read the following passages, and discover what God is speaking to you about membership and commitment to His Body.

Read: Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Ephesians 2:18-19; Colossians 1:2