

Core Values Series
Core Value #5 – Experiencing Biblical Fellowship
As image bearers of God, we are designed for fellowship
2016-10-30

Scripture Memory Passage - [Deuteronomy 6:4-5](#) Scripture Reading Passage – [Ephesians 1:3-14](#)

Introduction In the movie Cast Away the main character Chuck Noland, you may have noticed, never calls out to God, instead of seeking a closer relationship with the Creator, Chuck Noland gets lost in his own world. The interaction observed between Chuck and his volleyball show us the strong desire we have as humans to be with others, to have relationship, to live in community.

This observation is helpful for us as a church, as Christians, we know we have been designed by a Triune God: I say Triune because God is one, yet manifested, that is revealed, in three persons, those three being the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. A Creator who from eternities past has had perfect unity and fellowship within His very being ([John 17:5](#)). Because we are image bearers of our Creator we have **designed into us, programmed into us**, a desire for and really a need for fellowship. God did not create us to go and live in isolation, but to live in community. He desires most earnestly that we would commune with Him through our Salvation in Jesus Christ **and** with the community of believers who likewise have put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ in order to be redeemed from the eternal consequences of sin and who have been adopted into the family of God.

Now that I mentioned sin of course we have all experienced the hurt caused by others, and if we are honest with ourselves the hurt we have caused to others when we have sinned against them. But even in our sinful state, or when we were still unsaved, unregenerate, we had or if that is you still, have a desire to be with others. But that desire is just a foreshadow of fellowship, fellowship the way God has designed it to be. I say that because fellowship, what we call Biblical Fellowship, here at Pillar Bible Fellowship and the core value we are working through today, Experiencing Biblical Fellowship is, as one author writes, “a uniquely Christian relational experience. No one but those born of the Spirit of God can have fellowship...” REPEAT. This morning, with this explanation of fellowship in mind I will show you that **as image bearers of God, we are designed for fellowship**. We are to be experiencing Biblical Fellowship.

Scripture Passage: [John 17:22-24](#), [Acts 2:42-47](#), [1 John 1:3,7](#), [2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1](#)

Fellowship Amongst the Trinity Is the Model

1. First it is important to see where we even get the concept of fellowship. Asking the question, where did fellowship originate? Is a good place to start and then from there understanding how God designed us to be like him in respect to our affinity for fellowship.
2. Church when you think of fellowship, what comes to mind as the first place fellowship might have occurred? Do you automatically think of the Godhead? I want to us examine the Triune nature of God to more fully appreciate fellowship. Jesus in the hearing of his disciples prayed a prayer that is recorded in [John 17:22-24](#). *“The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be **one** even as we are **one**, I in them and you in me,...”*
 - a. In this passage Jesus, who is fully God, is praying to the Father who is also fully God, and in this passage Jesus speaks of the Father’s love of Him before the foundation of the world. As we see in scripture God is **one**, he is indivisible and yet presents himself as three distinct persons. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Jesus in speaking to the Father in this prayer mentions how they were in fellowship before the foundation of the world. So church, if God is one, and yet manifests himself as three separate persons what kind of unity and fellowship do you think occurs in the Godhead? Is it constant strife and jockeying for position? No, the passage from John 17 says that Jesus and the Father are **one**. The idea being presented is **perfectly one**. The oneness demonstrated in the Godhead is also the desire Jesus has for his disciples, that by extension is us as we draw a line through the ages of those who have held to the mystery of the faith that we to this day would be one

3. **1 Peter 1:2** *“according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.”* As believers we benefit from every aspect of God, as Peter writes we are reminded that each member of the Godhead has had tremendous influence on our lives as believers, and yet we worship One God. Just as I hope you are affirming this truth from our scripture memory **Deut 6:4-5** *“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is **one**. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”* Fellow Christian, this is our goal and our motivation to worship the one True God with all our heart, and soul, and might.
4. If you ever wonder how this is even possible, it is possible because God designed us, made us, saved us, and empowered us. Consider your likeness to God by remembering the creation account. **Genesis 1:26-27** *“Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...”* So our original purpose was to reflect the holiness of God upon his creation and to each other in perfect fellowship and harmony apart from sin.

Transition: But when sin entered in, all was not lost. No God in his divine love for us and zeal for his glory provided a way for redemption and fellowship through his Son Jesus Christ.

Fellowship Amongst the Church Is the Goal

1. If God designed us to be his image bearers we can expect, that even in our sinful and fallen state that we would have a propensity for fellowship as that which exists amongst the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
 - a. *That is why we find ourselves sympathizing with the long lost island dweller, Chuck Noland and his faithful sidekick Wilson. But as we think biblically and critically about the situation presented in the movie, we realize that even a hundred Wilsons by Chuck’s side would not fulfill his God given desire for fellowship.*
 - i. In fact, I have to take some time to describe why we call this core value Experiencing Biblical Fellowship. Fellowship, in our New Testaments is from the Greek word koinōnía, [koy-nohn-ee'-ah]. The word means fellowship or communion, we get our word community from the root of this Greek word, but in large part it has been **hijacked** to mean any type of gathering of people. As this core value was being drafted the word Biblical was placed in front of Fellowship in an effort to qualify what is meant by this core value, and to reclaim it for the church.
 - ii. A book we used early in the life of the church, titled Why Small Groups? Defines fellowship as: “participating together in the life and truth made possible by the Holy Spirit through our union with Christ. Fellowship is sharing something in common on the deepest possible level of human relationship – **our experience of God himself.**”
2. When as a church we embrace this core value, when we long for time together with other believers, so that we can share our experience of God together in worship, well then I would say we are behaving as we will when the sin that so easily entangles us is done away with and we are forever before our Lord and King.
3. **Acts 2:42** *“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the **fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”*
 - a. This is the goal, that as a church we would foster this type of fellowship as found in the early church. A fellowship that encourages growth in faith through good and proper teaching, being together without hindering each other seeking a deeper relationship with God together, participating in the Lord’s Supper as we will after this preaching hour, and devoting ourselves to prayer. Church, this doesn’t happen by our own will, but it is a work of the Spirit. We as a congregation went through **Ephesians 1** as our scripture reading today and **vv13-14** say, *“In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised **Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.**”* Prior to these two verses we had read that all things are united in Christ. Our fellowship is built fundamentally upon these truths.

Transition: But like all good things distortions and distractions abound and it is important that we are watchful, remaining vigilant, and on guard against those things that would compete for us Experiencing Biblical Fellowship

Road Blocks to Fellowship

1. One of the biggest road blocks to experiencing Biblical Fellowship is not realizing that fellowship is only able to occur amongst believers. Many churches today go out of their way to fill their gatherings with unbelievers, by making all that they are about appealing to the world, in an attempt to draw them in. That strategy will only backfire, it will corrode the called out body of Christ and make it indistinguishable from the world. **2 Cor 6:14-7:1** *“Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness?...”*
 - a. As we know from studying God’s word, this passage does not mean we are to have nothing to do with unbelievers. No, we must live in the world but remain separate from it. We reach out to our co-workers and neighbors, our family members with the love of Christ. The warning here is about being joined unnecessarily in a significant way to an unbeliever. **This would include marriage for those who are still considering marriage in their future, God would not have for you to seek out a future spouse that is not a believer. It most certainly would mean a long term business relationship that would possibly put your convictions to the test. It would also pertain to places of higher education, parents, help your children make wise choices about where it is they might go off to for college. Be critical of the atmosphere of the college town, research the places of worship, and equip your children in the disciplines of Christianity.**
2. Here in our own midst are testimonies of where these road blocks to Christian fellowship were known about but considered minor bumps in the road and they have brought about the hurtful and difficult experiences of being unequally yoked to an unbeliever.
 - a. **Of course if you are one of those that have found yourself in such a situation and you are languishing under the burden. Don’t despair. As Ben preached last week on Shepherding the local church, your elders are here to serve you, counsel you, and encourage you in whatever situation you may be facing. Don’t hesitate to reach out to us, we are here for you, and would love to strengthen you from the wisdom of God’s word.**

Transition: Now that we have touched on briefly some of the road blocks to experiencing Biblical Fellowship, let us return to why God has granted us this wonderful blessing in the first place as we explore the testimony of the gospel that occurs when we fellowship as believers.

Fellowship Amongst Believers Proclaims the Gospel

1. We can have fellowship because of what we know about Jesus atoning work upon the cross. The perfect sacrificial Lamb, gave of himself so that we might have life. Believer you live because you have been given life. We just recently finished 1 John and I am reminded of what John wrote in **1 John 1:3** *“that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have **fellowship** with us; and indeed our **fellowship** is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”* As well as a few verses down **1 John 1:7** *“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have **fellowship** with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”* When we walk in our cleansed state we are empowered to serve one another, bear one another’s burdens, encourage one another, and stir one another up.
2. In scripture a treasure trove of one another statements can be found, in a way to apply this core value of Experiencing Biblical Fellowship I’m only highlighting four.
 - a. **Serve one another.** When we see the church as Christ sees the church, as the object of his love, it becomes so much easier to devote ourselves to serving each other. **Galatians 5:13-14** says, *“For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.””* **If you would appreciate it being done for you take the opportunity to do it for your brother or sister in Christ. Think about the wonderful opportunities husbands you have to do this in your homes.**

Serving your wife and children as Christ loved the church, serving the church and sacrificing his very life for the church. Husbands, can you think of any ways you can serve your wife in a sacrificial manner this week?

- b. Bear one another's burdens. This one another means we show love to each other by coming along side and helping to lift a burden that is being borne by someone we know. **Galatians 6:2** says, "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." This can be simple, like next weekend helping one of the many mothers who will be here without their husbands simply keeping an eye on the kids or assisting in getting to and from the car. Bearing one another's burdens can be labor intensive, stocking wood for someone who will otherwise go without. It can be emotionally draining, sitting with someone as they mourn the loss of a loved one. Allow your mere thinking about taking action, turn into action and this blessing will abound in the church and the love of Christ will be evident.
 - c. Encourage one another **1 Thess 5:11** says, "Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing." Take notice church of what is happening in the lives of others. If you are older and have raised your children, remember what it was like to be young parents and encourage the parents of Pillar Bible Fellowship to continue the long and sometime arduous task of training little ones in the home. Don't fall back on clichés, when you speak words of encouragement but be thoughtful, specific, and biblical with your words. They will not go unnoticed and God may use you in just the right manner. Encouragement can also be conveyed in doing a loving deed. Dropping off flowers for someone who is suffering is one that I know was an encouragement given in the recent past.
 - d. Stir up one another **Heb 10:24** "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works," I admit when I think of the core value of Experiencing Biblical Fellowship, I cannot but think of how stirring up another is like a catalyst to deepen our fellowship and subsequent worship of God together. Do you know that simply by being here on a Sunday morning regularly in attendance with the saints is doing this? Attendance is not only helpful for others but vital for the believer to take in a steady diet of God's word preached and delivered for the building up of the body. **Heb 10:25** continues with, "not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." If you have a tendency to drop away for a bit and then hop back in when you are feeling spiritually low, using the Sunday morning worship service for a pick me up, you are doing exactly what the author of Hebrews warns against. In light of the teaching from last week on Shepherding the Local Church it also makes it that much harder for the pastors of the church to look after you and care for you.
3. The fellowship of believers is one of the most powerful witnesses of the gospel that the Church possesses. Listen, I'm not just talking about the occasional visitor to a Sunday morning worship service who takes in the sermon and who hears the gospel proclaimed from the pulpit. What I am referring to is the witness to the gospel we have as we interact with each other. **When we show the love of Christ to each other in the way we speak, in the way our eyes light up when we greet each other, the way we exchange handshakes or hugs. The conversations we have that are at their core encouraging, not self-promoting or self-seeking. All of those interactions when taken in by a non-believer or a Christian family looking for a church home are proclamations of the gospel.**

Transition: This is what we should be desirous of as a fellowship of believers, vibrant, powerful interactions that proclaim the mighty work of Jesus Christ as we love one another through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

Acts 2:42-47 "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers...." Church, these early Christians had been rescued from the dim light of seeking God through unending religious rituals, burdensome laws, and offering sacrifices that appeased at best. Do you see the stark difference? I want to ask you today, do you feel like your Christian experience is similar to Jews seeking God prior to the revelation of Jesus Christ. Consider that these early Christians recorded in Acts 2 were freed from their burdens when they became united

in Christ. **As image bearers of God, we are designed for fellowship, fundamental to fellowship is accepting the atoning work of Christ which grants us fellowship with God and ushers in our fellowship with other believers through Christ - who unites all things and seals his own, he seals you and he seals me, with the Holy Spirit.** Experiencing Biblical Fellowship is beautiful, God designed it! Let us rejoice as we fellowship together.

Family



Table Talk

October 30, 2016

Family Discussion

1. What would it be like to be left all alone, with absolutely no interaction with anyone else? Pretend like all your physical needs would be met (food, water, and shelter) – what would you miss most? Did God make us to be in isolation?
2. Did you ever stop to think that God has designed you to be like Him; to have the ability to interact with others, in fellowship, the way fellowship takes place between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit?
3. God has gifted each one of us in special and unique ways. Have you considered how to use what God has gifted you with to serve your family? To serve the church?
4. One of the greatest examples of Christian fellowship is recorded in Acts 2. Read Acts 2:42-47 as a family and note the way God used these early Christians to care for one another as Christ cared for the church by giving up His life for the church.

GOD'S TRUTH

As image bearers of God, we are designed for fellowship!

Key Verse

"The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me."
John 17:22-23

TABLE READING

Lead your kids into God's Word...

1. Jonah 2:1-9
2. Genesis 1:26-27; John 17:22-23
3. Romans 12:3-8
4. Acts 2:42-47; 1 John 1:3,7



SCRIPTURE MEMORY:
DEUTERONOMY 6:4-5

"AND THESE WORDS THAT I COMMAND YOU TODAY SHALL BE ON YOUR HEART. YOU SHALL TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY TO YOUR CHILDREN, AND SHALL TALK OF THEM WHEN YOU SIT IN YOUR HOUSE, AND WHEN YOU WALK BY THE WAY, AND WHEN YOU LIE DOWN, AND WHEN YOU RISE. YOU SHALL BIND THEM AS A SIGN ON YOUR HAND, AND THEY SHALL BE AS FRONTLETS BETWEEN YOUR EYES. YOU SHALL WRITE THEM ON THE DOORPOSTS OF YOUR HOUSE AND ON YOUR GATES." - DEUTERONOMY 6:6-9 (ESV)