



CONVICTIONS &
COMMITMENTS

"COMMUNITY"

FELLOWSHIP & COMMUNITY

INTRODUCTION

God did not intend for us to live and labor alone. You, your staff friends, student laborers and volunteers form a team, which is joined to a larger community of believers and in turn is connected to a movement of making followers of Jesus Christ all over the earth.

As Navigators, we believe that healthy fellowship is essential to fulfilling our calling. These studies are designed to help you understand what fellowship is, how it is developed, and the role fellowship plays in the process of making disciples.

OUTLINE

- I. The Call to Fellowship
 - What is Biblical Fellowship?*
 - How are we to relate to each other?*
- II. The Place of Fellowship
 - What does the environment of our Fellowship look like?*
 - What activities and organization define the Fellowship?*
- III. The Quest for Fellowship
 - What hinders or destroys Biblical Fellowship?*
- IV. The Kingdom and Fellowship
 - How does our Fellowship relate to the Mission?*
- V. Personal Application of Fellowship

THE CONTEXT OF FELLOWSHIP

A biblical view of fellowship is a broad topic. Its application will touch on many areas of your life. Church, recreation, the area you live in, your family and your sphere of ministry constitute the various environments where fellowship might be experienced. We will be focusing on the areas which directly relate to our role as Navigator staff.

STAFF TEAM: This includes Nav Staff, EDGers, alumni, and other volunteers with whom you are laboring together to advance the Gospel in your city, and/or Nav Staff in your region with whom you relate.

YOUR CITY MINISTRY: Your city ministry is an environment where you can foster fellowship. Biblical fellowship needs to be experienced not only on your staff team, but by the laborers with whom you minister. From you, they can learn and understand what fellowship is and model it for a lifetime.

AMONG THE LOST: We live and disciple among the lost. We will wrestle with how to model our fellowship among the lost. We will seek to understand how to extend the borders of our ministry so that the lost can be a part of our fellowship.

I. THE CALL OF FELLOWSHIP

First, we will look at what fellowship is and why we are called to fellowship.

In your own words, define each of the following terms. What characterizes each, and what makes them differ from the others? Are there current cultural or social realities that strengthen or weaken a biblical view of these terms?

- Fellowship
- Community
- Team
- Unity
- The Church
- Interdependence

From your own experiences:

- Describe some of your experiences in fellowship or on teams.
- What were some positive experiences and why?
- What were some difficult experiences and why?

A. FELLOWSHIP DEFINED

From these passages, what do you learn about the Body of Christ? What do we share in common and why do we need each other?

- Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
- 1 Corinthians 12
- 1 Peter 2:9-10

B. FELLOWSHIP DISPLAYED

In the following passages, what do you observe about the relationships within the Trinity of God and between God and man?

- Genesis 1:26-30
- Genesis 3:8-9
- Leviticus 26:9-13
- John 14:9-21
- John 16:5-16
- Acts 2:42-47
- Acts 4:32-37
- 1 Thessalonians 1
- Revelation 21:1-4

How do your observations impact the way you view fellowship?

FELLOWSHIP DEFINED

(The following excerpt is from the original book, Crisis in Caring – Recovering the Meaning of Fellowship by Jerry Bridges; pages 16-21, copyright 1985 by Jerry Bridges, Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing. It is currently in the process of being revised and re-released by NavPress.)

The Greek word for fellowship is koinonia. It is translated several ways in the New Testament: for example, “participation,” “partnership,” “sharing,” and, of course, “fellowship.” These various uses of koinonia convey two related meanings: (1) to share together in the sense of

join participation or partnership, and (2) to share with in the sense of giving what we have to others...

Each of these two meanings can be further divided under two subheadings. To share together in sense of joint participation refers primarily to a relationship that we as believers have in Christ... Fellowship is sharing a common life with other believers, a life that we together share with God the Father and God the Son. It is a relationship, not an activity.

Koinonia also means to share together in the sense of partnership. Both Greek writers and New Testament writers used koinonia to refer to a business partnership...Whereas relationships describes believers as a fellowship, partnership describes them as the principals of an enterprise. A business is always formed in order to attain an objective, such as providing a service to the public at a profit for the partners. In the same way, the concept of a spiritual partnership implies that it is created with the objective of glorifying God.

The second primary meaning of New Testament koinonia is to share with others what we have. Just as sharing together has two sub-meanings..., so sharing with has two sub-meanings. The first of these can be called communion with one another. Although we usually use the word communion as a term for the Lord's Supper, it is here used to mean communicating intimately or sharing with one another on a close personal and spiritual level. It may be the mutual sharing among believers of what God has taught them from the Scriptures, or it may be a word of encouragement from one believer to another. As we examine the account of these early believers' attitudes, however, we see that they did not limit their concept of koinonia to sharing with one another only spiritual things. They also shared their material possessions with those in need.

Sharing our possessions with others should be a natural consequence of our realization that biblical fellowship denotes both a relationship and a partnership.

C. FELLOWSHIP REDEFINED

1. The New Testament word frequently translated as fellowship is the word koinonia. What does it really mean?

2. The following verses contain the word koinonia (koinwniva) and its variants. Read the following verses. Observe what is said and what it means. How does this expand your view of fellowship?

- 1 Corinthians 1:9
- 2 Corinthians 8:1-7, 9:13
- Galatians 2:9
- Philippians 1:5, 2:1, 3:10
- Philemon 6
- Hebrews 10:33, 13:16
- 1 Peter 1:5
- 1 John 1:3-7

3. Based on what you studied, how would you define fellowship?

D. TAKE IT TO YOUR CITY

1. How would you explain what fellowship and fellowship is to the laborers you relate to?

2. How could you model it for them?

II. THE PLACE OF FELLOWSHIP

In John 1:17, Jesus is referred to being full of "grace and truth." Both of these qualities need to be demonstrated, modeled, expressed, felt, and experienced in our Navigator ministries. God wants staff teams and ministries to have the opportunity to grow, the freedom to fail, and to be safe and vulnerable with one another. We want to speak truth and love one another well. We want to live together in the light.

As grace and truth are felt and lived out in our staff fellowship, that same environment should be experienced by those to whom we minister. We want the place of fellowship to grow so that those who do not know God might experience His grace and truth through us.

A. ONE ANOTHER

In true fellowship we work together interdependently. We play a vital role in the lives of one another. Romans 12:10 says, "Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor."

1. Study some of the "one another" passages in the Scriptures. Use cross-references or a concordance to find 8-10 passages that use the phrase.

- a) What do you observe about how we should relate to one another?
- b) In what areas do you need to extend more "one anothering"? In what areas do you feel you need to receive more "one-anothering"? Why?
- c) How about your team?
- d) What might your ministry look like if these elements were more consistently lived out in your fellowship?
- e) Is there any element that seems particularly missing from your team or Nav group?

2. We value both grace and truth in our relationships and therefore in our fellowship.

- a) How should the grace of God in our lives shape our fellowship?
- b) How should the truth of God in our lives shape our fellowship?

3. Read Matthew 18:21-35. What are some key principles regarding our relationship with God and how we reflect that towards others?

4. Write out John 13:34-35 in your own words. Why and how is this to be the hallmark of the fellowship in which you live and work?

B. IN THE LIGHT

We want an environment where grace abounds. We equally want to create places where truth is clearly evident.

Study the following passages. Write down your thoughts concerning truth in fellowship.

- 1 John 1:5-2:11
- John 8:44
- John 8:31-32
- 2 Corinthians 4:1-2

C. FOR THOUGHT AND REFLECTION

1. What is the role of leaders in creating the environment of a fellowship?
2. What is the relationship between creating a safe place, exercising tolerance, and speaking truth in the context of fellowship?
3. Can someone grow in Christ without being a part of fellowship? Explain.

D. TAKE IT TO YOUR CITY

1. What will it take to help your ministry be a place where laborers can be vulnerable and allow God to speak truth into their lives?
2. Could those who do not follow Christ be a part of your fellowship? Explain.

III. THE QUEST FOR FELLOWSHIP

Fellowship doesn't just happen. It requires work and takes time to grow. There are many things which can erode and destroy the fellowship we are trying to build.

A. EXAMPLES FROM SCRIPTURE

1. Study the following passages. Look for things which impacted the various fellowships both positively and negatively. What can you discover about God's perspective on fellowship?

- Joshua 7 (with 5:13-6:27 as a background)
- Acts 15
- Mark 3:1-6

2. Summarize your discoveries.

B. FOR THOUGHT AND REFLECTION

Take some time to think and pray through the following questions:

1. I feel loved and accepted by others when_____
2. What are some ways you have negatively influenced a group of people?

3. How is your own understanding of the Gospel influencing the way you relate to others?

C. FOR TEAM DISCUSSION

1. What if your team focused only on one of these? Implications?
2. What are the realities of holding these in tension?
3. Where is your team weak/strong?
4. What adjustments do you need to make?

IV. THE KINGDOM AND FELLOWSHIP

How does our thinking about fellowship and community impact the way we live out our relationship with Christ and our Calling?

A. THE MISSION

The Navigators Mission Statement: “To advance the Gospel of Jesus and His Kingdom into the nations through spiritual generations of laborers living and discipling among the lost.”

B. FELLOWSHIP AND THE GOSPEL

Look at the following passages:

- Matthew 28:19-20
- Acts 13:1-3
- 1 Corinthians 5:9-13
- Philippians 2:14-15
- Colossians 4:5-6

1. How do they relate both to our Calling and to developing Fellowship?
2. How do these passages portray local fellowship of believers penetrating society with the Gospel?
3. What do you think contributes to a fellowship losing visibility to the non-believing world?

C. TAKE IT TO YOUR CAMPUS

1. What role does fellowship play in seeing our Calling fulfilled in today's cities?
2. What role will your fellowship play in:
 - Reaching the lost?
 - Discipling laborers?
 - Equipping student leaders?
 - Seeing these students walk with God and embrace fellowship for a lifetime?
3. What is the most significant new passage or principle for you from this study and how will you incorporate it into your life and ministry?

V. PERSONAL APPLICATION OF FELLOWSHIP

What has God revealed, clarified or affirmed regarding my...

CALLING (Who I am in Christ, Who we are as Navigators)

CONVICTIONS (What I know and believe)

CHARACTER (Who I'm becoming as I follow and imitate Christ)

COMPETENCIES (What skills I already have and/or need to develop)

CONTRIBUTION (How I minister and serve- now and/or in the future)

What additional step(s) is God prompting me to take as a result of this study in any of these 5 areas?

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