

Cherish This Fellowship

by Sam Caldwell

This sermon emphasizes the importance of cherishing fellowship within the church community, focusing on the spiritual, intimate, and deliberate aspects of building strong relationships. The speaker outlines a plan for the next two months, highlighting key areas like prioritizing prayer meetings, ministering to one another, and emphasizing the new birth. The message encourages active participation, getting to know each other by name, and engaging in prayer and service together to deepen fellowship.

Scripture: 1 John 1:1, Acts 16:13, Matthew 18:20

Topics: "Fellowship in the Church", "Building Strong Relationships"

Description

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Transcript

Let's read the Epistle of 1st John, Chapter 1, verses 1 through 3. That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life, for the life was manifested. And we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us. That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you.

Ye also may have fellowship with us. And truly, our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ. And truly, our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

Amen? Amen. The title of this sermon today is, Cherish This Fellowship. Cherish This Fellowship.

And today, we're going to start a series of sermons that should last about the next two months. So, approximately eight sermons. I have them planned out, but you know, man plans his steps, and the Lord directs his ways, right? So, I don't know where the Lord is going to take us exactly.

But I want to talk in the next eight weeks about this. The lifeblood of the church. The lifeblood of the church.

And what do I mean by that? By lifeblood, I mean things that are absolutely necessary to our well-being as a church. I want to talk about eight things that we must focus on. And I'll just give you a little preview of those right now.

Here are those eight things that we're going to head toward in the next two months. Today, cherish this fellowship. Then, exalt Christ.

Then, go to the Word constantly. Did you know that if we're going to be a healthy church, we have to go to the Word, and go to the Word, and check with the Word constantly. Then we'll talk about prioritize prayer meetings.

Prioritize prayer meetings. Then, minister to each other. That's going to be so crucial that we'll learn that the biblical pattern is not that I just minister to you, or that one or two of us minister to a congregation, but that we all minister to each other.

Amen? And then we're going to talk about giving like Jesus, stressing the new birth, and finally, pulling souls out of hell. I want us to end with that. That in this day and age, as the world is raging around us, we are called to pull the souls of Portland, Maine, out of hell, and into the kingdom.

So that's where we're headed in the next two months, and I'm really, really excited to study these things with you. I pray that you are too, and I pray that you would pray for this sermon series. Amen? Today, here's my exhortation to you all.

Here's the substance of this sermon. Cherish this fellowship. And let's pray one more time.

Father, you're so good to us. You're so good to us, Lord. And you've brought us right here into fellowship.

You've brought us here to look at each other, and to meet each other face to face, and to shake hands. But you've done all of it, Lord, because this eternal life, Christ Jesus, has been manifested toward us. Lord, I ask that you would open every one of our hearts, every one of our ears, every one of our eyes, to see the kingdom today.

To see what true fellowship is today. Lord, give us clarity in this sermon. And I also ask, Lord, that you get me out of the way.

That people do not hear from Sam today, but that they hear from Christ today, Lord. Send your spirit, please. Speak to us, Lord, through your word.

Speak clearly, Lord. Speak powerfully. Challenge us.

And comfort us, Lord. I bless your name, Lord. I bless you.

We bless you. We praise you. We praise you, Lord, forever.

Amen. Look again at verse 3, right before you. Chapter 1, verse 3. That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us.

And truly, our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are in a crucial hour right now as a church. We've just merged two church bodies together.

Pastor Don has just retired last week, and I thought that was such an honorable and a wonderful day for him. No? Hallelujah. That was a beautiful day.

And now, some guy named Sam is coming on as pastor. And we've come together. And right outside these doors, the world is raging.

The world is not coming together. Horrible things have happened across the seas. People are hating one another, and hateful.

The devil is raging. The devil wants to take control of all of Portland. He wants to tear souls down.

So what are we doing here, looking at each other, loving each other? We're creating fellowship, which is the most powerful thing we have to bring against the enemy forces in this crucial hour in church history. And I'm not just talking about our church's history, but all of church history. In 2023, we need to band together.

We need to be a fellowship. We need to love one another, so that we shock the world with the sort of love that we have. Amen? Let's start by defining fellowship.

Can anyone tell me, what does that word, fellowship, in verse 3 mean? Fellowship. Amen. Coming together.

It literally, in Greek, means community. Community. Or having things in common.

And I think if we define fellowship with these first three verses of 1 John 1, we would get something like this. Fellowship is a community built on the fact that Christ has come. Look at those first two verses, and what did John talk about? He said, John is saying, I met Jesus.

Jesus came into my life. I was that beloved apostle who lay on his chest. I got up really close to Jesus.

He loved me. And then on that basis, he says, verse 3, We're going to declare these things to you, so that you have fellowship with us. So I think that's the definition of fellowship that we want.

It's a community built on the fact that Christ has come. Has Christ come into any of your lives? Has Christ come to you? When Christ comes to us, and he breaks into our lives, and he shows us this new love that we've never experienced before, what's the next thing that happens? It makes us want to love others. It makes us want to break out of our shell, and break out of our introversion, and try to love other people around us.

Fellowship is a community built on the fact that Christ has come into our lives. Now I want to, for the remainder of this sermon, define fellowship in three more ways. So please follow me.

We're going to look at these verses, and then two other verses in the letters of John. Three points for us today. First, fellowship is spiritual.

Secondly, fellowship is intimate. And third, fellowship is deliberate. Fellowship is spiritual, intimate, and deliberate.

Look again at verse three, right before us. John writes, There are two things he says about fellowship, right in this verse. First thing is that it is the purpose of his message.

Do you all see that? He says, that. That means, so that. He's saying, that ye also may have fellowship with us.

That means John is talking about a purpose. He's saying, my main purpose as an apostle is that we all would have fellowship. We should ask ourselves right there, is that your main purpose? When you got saved, when you walk around as a Christian, do you say, my main purpose is to get fellowship going.

To have fellowship in this life. And let me ask you this. Does John say, we declare these things to you so that we could have a business in this church? Does he say that right here? No.

Does he say, we declare these things to you so that we could set up a power structure. And I, as the apostle John, could rule over you. Does he say that? No.

So are we supposed to have a power structure in this church? Where we're ruling over one another? No, absolutely not. Does he say right here, in verse three, we declare these things to you so that we could be professional. And so that you could have a professional pastor up here.

We could all dress properly, but never really talk to one another. Just look good. Does he say that? No.

What does he say? And we declare these things to you so that he also may have fellowship with us. Isn't that beautiful? Just as a side note, I've been so honored that many of you at this church call me Pastor Sam. It's very honoring and I do appreciate it.

And at the same time, I want to say, you're also free to just call me Brother or Sam. You see? Because we want to have that fellowship going at the same time. I am a pastor.

I desire to be a pastor for you all. And I also desire to be your brother. Amen? Amen.

And then look what John does right here. He says, and truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. I feel like John almost gets whiplash right there.

He said that ye also may have fellowship with us. And then he goes, oh, wait, wait. I just mentioned fellowship.

I have to define my terms. You all see that? He says, and truly. It's like he has to add something.

He didn't quite make himself clear. What does he add right here? Truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with Jesus Christ. He's telling us that fellowship is spiritual.

Fellowship is spiritual. So, again, I ask you, does John say right here, truly, our fellowship is meant to be a social club? Does he say that? No. No, he says our fellowship, we're supposed to get together so that we bring in the Father and we bring in Jesus Christ so that our fellowship is distinctly Trinitarian, distinctly Christian, distinctly based around the love of our God.

Does John say right here, truly, our fellowship is a Disney World attraction to try to attract people? Does he say that? No, he says, truly, it's a mysterious spiritual thing with the Father and with the Son. Does he say, truly, our fellowship is a performance of the priesthood of the Catholic Church where they're going to do everything for you and you just receive from them? No. He tells us this is a spiritual fellowship where everyone in this room, we get together, we love each other so that we all have this access to the Father and to the Son.

Amen? Amen? How do we make our fellowship spiritual? This is a crucial question and just think about this first point with me a little bit more. Fellowship is spiritual. Okay, how do we make it that way? We ought to bring God deliberately into our fellowship whenever we can.

Has anybody ever experienced that? You're just with another Christian, you're talking, you're chatting, you're talking about the weather, but then someone is daring enough to mention God and bring God into the conversation. It happened to me a few days ago. We had moved out of our apartment and I was, if I'm going to confess to you, I was stressing about some things and I couldn't figure out what was going on and why things were going haywire.

And I'm talking to my wife and just talking about it sort of at the level of the flesh. And then she sort of stops me and says, But honey, or whatever she called me that day, what do you think the Lord's doing in this? And I was like, boom, I was stopped dead in my tracks. Oh man, I'm just thinking about this in human terms and I'm getting worried.

But what did my wife do? She brought the Lord in. That made it truly fellowship. True fellowship.

What does John say? Truly our fellowship is with the Father. I want to tell you briefly about my first mentor in Jesus Christ. When I was saved, his name was Clifford Holder.

He was a very dear man from Barbados up in Toronto. And Cliff took me by my neck like this and basically said I'm going to meet with him and he was going to disciple me. And I couldn't resist it basically.

He said you have to come meet with me. He was a very forceful but very loving man. And he was about this tall.

He started discipling me when he was 88 and he died at age 93 a few years ago. He was a very special man. How did Clifford Holder bring spiritual fellowship into my life? We'd be talking and he had two phrases that he would just throw in there.

I would say, Cliff, how could it be that I'm a Christian and I'm still, I'm feeling sad today? How could it be? I'm slipping back into depression, Cliff. How could it be? And Cliff would always say, Samuel, God's sovereign will. Samuel, God's sovereign will.

And he was a very theatrical guy. But he would say it just like that. Samuel.

Whoa, you mean I can be sad and it's still God's sovereign will? What was he doing? He was bringing the father and the son into that conversation. And then I would say to Cliff, Cliff, but I just sinned again. I just sinned again.

I thought I was saved. I thought I was washed by the blood of the cross. I'm sinning again.

I'm still tempted to do that. I keep going back to that. Brother Cliff, what's going on? And he would say, Samuel, the blood of Jesus Christ, God's son, cleanseth from all sin.

And he would always repeat that whole phrase. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's son, cleanseth from all sin. And what did that do? It gave me spiritual fellowship.

You all see what I'm talking about? We need to deliberately bring God into our fellowship. We need to remind each other, brother, have you forgotten the father? Have you forgotten what the son has done for

you? Secondly, fellowship is intimate. Would you please turn with me to the next scripture there, 2 John.

And 2 John doesn't actually have chapters. It's just one chapter. And the second thing I want you to remember today is that fellowship is intimate.

We've said spiritual. Secondly, fellowship is intimate. Look at 2 John and let's read verse 12.

John writes, having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink, but I trust to come unto you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. Did you notice right here that John really desires fellowship? John right here could have said, you saints over there in that church, I've written the Gospel of John. I've written Revelation.

And now I've written a pretty amazing letter, 1 John, and now I'm writing 2 John, and I'm going to write another one. He could have said, I'm writing the Bible. Just read what I say and do it.

But what does he say right here? He says, I want more. He says, I don't want to keep writing with paper and ink. I trust to come unto you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

Isn't that beautiful? Do you all hear the heart of John right there? He's not saying, I'm up in an ivory tower, and I'm an apostle, and I'm going to tell you what to do. You go have fellowship with one another. No, he says, I'm going to come down and meet with you.

I'm going to meet you, and we need to speak face to face. I find that so, so beautiful. And John is actually taking an expression from the Old Testament right there, face to face.

Do you all remember when Moses would meet with God? Moses was a man who met with God as a friend meets with a friend, face to face. I want to teach you that Hebrew expression right now so that you always remember it. In Hebrew, it's penim al penim.

Everyone say that with me. Penim al penim. Let's say it one more time.

Penim al penim. That means in Hebrew, faces to faces. It means that Moses met with God, and God showed him all of his faces, all of his character, all of his attributes.

And Moses showed God all of his faces, all of his character, all of his attributes, his meekness, his struggles, his trials. Face to face. Isn't that a beautiful reality? Now, what does John say right here? He says, just writing is not enough.

I need to see you face to face. And my second point for us today is simply this. Fellowship is intimate.

Fellowship in this church, we need to meet each other face to face. Right? We go out into that room. We go outside.

We go downstairs. We shake hands. We look at each other.

We get to know each other. And then look what he says right here. That our joy may be full.

You all see that in verse 12? He says, I want to speak to you face to face that our joy may be full. Let me just ask you, why is our joy made full when we meet each other face to face? I think it's made full in two ways. One is, you know there are certain people, even in this room, you just really want to see them.

Right? You look at them and you say, I want to see him on Sunday. I want to see him at prayer meeting. I want to talk with him more.

Right? Amen? I hope you all have people like that in this church. And from that, our joy is made full. But then there's a second phenomenon.

Does anybody ■■ I'm not going to ask for hands here. But sometimes there are people in church where we say, I don't really want to see that person on Sunday. I'm quiet.

And he's really loud. I'm loud. And she never talks.

And I don't really have any desire to meet with her face to face. I'm not going to ask for hands. But that happens, doesn't it, in church? That's where the rubber meets the road.

And that's where we truly get fellowship. So I want every one of you to think right now in your mind, who is that person in church? Who are those two or three people where you say, I'm never going to get along with them? I actually can't stand them. And I would ask you in the coming months, break through with them.

Have fellowship with them. Confess something to them. Share a bit of life with them.

I was at the hospital recently with a very, very dear brother. And as we were driving to the hospital, I realized, this guy is totally unlike me. We're different heights.

If we were fruits, I would be like a lemon and he's like an avocado or something. We're totally different from each other. And I realized at the hospital, everyone was looking at us and saying, what are these two doing together? They're totally unlike each other.

And we were just like chatting it up and having a great time. And I could see people, what's going on? That's the beauty of Christian fellowship. When we get to that place where we can say, honestly, the only reason I'm talking to this person is that Jesus Christ came into my life.

If we were just in the flesh and I didn't know Jesus, I would never have a friendship with that guy or with that woman. And that's where we build true love and true fellowship. When we break down those walls and we have sacrificial loving fellowship.

Amen? That was my second point, that fellowship is intimate. Final point, fellowship is deliberate. Deliberate.

Look at 3 John. So go to the next chapter, the next book in the Bible. 3 John.

And look at verses 13 and 14. I want to end by telling you that fellowship is deliberate. What do I mean by that? I mean that we have to work at it.

We have to do fellowship. We have to put some elbow grease into it. We have to work on it.

Look what John says right here, verse 13. He repeats himself. I had many things to write, but I will not rethink and pen right unto thee.

But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Amen. You all see him repeating himself? The same heart.

He's saying, I have to get down there. We have to have fellowship. And then he says, peace be to thee.

Our friends salute thee. Friends by name. Let's end with that commandment right there.

Did you know that that's a commandment in the Bible? Greet the friends by name. You know the other commands, right? Honor your mother and father. Love your enemies.

Love your neighbor as yourself. Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul, and strength. What about this command right here? Greet the friends by name.

Isn't that beautiful? John is telling us we have to get to know each other by name. I would ask you all to make a resolution in your hearts to try to learn each other's name. As our two churches have come together, as we are one church right now, could I challenge you all that by January we all actually know each other's name? Amen.

It might be hard. I'm still my mind is boggled. I'm trying to figure it all out.

Right? But let's say we got a few more months here, and by the end of that time we want to be able to fulfill this commandment where we can greet each other by name and call each other friends. Let me ask you this. What is a name? Why does a name even matter? Did you notice in Don's testimony last week, he mentioned at one point he said, then a big man came into the church.

He said there was a big man. And did you notice that big man turned into a name? Can I mention the name? Howard. Right? And then Don came to know that man, Howard.

And what is a name? A name is a peg that we can start to hang stuff off of. And you start to realize, oh, that man has children. That person likes coffee.

Right? That person has this burden. That person has this burden or calling in the church. That's where it really matters to know people's names.

Not just the name, but what hangs on that name. Oh, that sister wants to serve the poor. That brother wants to pray.

That brother wants to evangelize. And then our fellowship turns into something incredibly powerful. I'm going to quickly close with seven ways that we can cherish this fellowship.

Okay? Don't worry, it's not another seven points. Follow me here. Seven ways that I want us to cherish this fellowship.

First of all, show up. If you want to heed the message of today's sermon, then come next Sunday. If you want to truly cherish this fellowship, come every Sunday.

Come to the prayer meetings. Come to the community dinner. Get to know people.

Right? Show up. When I first moved back from Toronto, I joined Redeeming Grace Fellowship, and the planter of that church, Mac Tomlinson, I called him and I said, Mac, what can I do? What can I do for the kingdom? I want to be useful. Let me do something, Mac.

And he said to me, in his Texan accent, well, brother, why don't you just start by showing up? And I was like, yeah, that's good advice. Who are the people we can really have fellowship with in this church? It's

those who we're going to see next Sunday. Right? If you're here just this Sunday, we're not going to have fellowship with you next Sunday.

I beg you to show up and keep showing up and cherish this local fellowship. Amen? Secondly, stick around. And we're going to practice that today.

Stick around after the service. If you're not used to sticking around after a church service, could I plead with you, just give us 15 minutes of your time. Stick around.

Get to know two people today. Right? But we need to start that process of greeting the friends by name. Third, I've already said, learn everybody's name.

And that's our deadline, January. Okay? Fourthly, contribute to the women's group or the men's meeting. We have a men's meeting happening on Friday evenings.

And right now there's no women's meeting. But I'll tell you, there's a glorious chance on the horizon for the women to just get to know each other, have fellowship. Just get coffee together.

Do something organically right now. I'm thinking of Lydia in Acts chapter 16 and verse 13. She's out at the river praying with other women.

To all the women in this church, open Titus chapter 2. Open Acts chapter 16. And just let the Lord lead you into a women's fellowship. Amen? Fifth way that I want us to cherish this fellowship, please, go outside your comfort zone.

Go outside your comfort zone. As I've been preaching today, maybe some of you have brought up this huge elephant in the room in your mind. What is it? Introvert and extrovert.

Has anybody ever thought of that in this sermon? Sometimes we think the Bible wants me to have fellowship, but I'm an introvert. I just want to tell you, those two terms, I don't think it's sinful to use them. But you know who invented them? Carl Jung, who was Freud's student.

And both Sigmund Freud, the psychoanalyst, and Carl Jung hated Jesus Christ. They hated Jesus Christ. And Carl Jung popularized the term introvert and extrovert.

Again, I'm not saying you're sinning if you just speak those terms. But sometimes we can bind ourselves so much into those, I'm an introvert, so I'm just not going to talk to them. I'm an extrovert, so I'm not going to be quiet and I'm not going to pray.

I don't know what you say, but we can bind ourselves in those terms. What does the Bible say? Does it say there are introverts and extroverts? No, it says we are children of God. It says our God is the God of the impossible.

It says our God could move someone who's very shy to go and evangelize those 25 people down the street. God can do anything. He can break through our introversion or our extroversion.

So I don't want us to get caught in that. Go outside your comfort zone. Take risks.

Amen? Sixthly, pray together. Pray together. I've been working with Tim DePaulo and Tim Brandon.

We've been working together and talking about how the churches are coming together. And then just a few days ago, they were at the prayer meeting, and we prayed together. It was like we went into a totally different... You can be working with people, but you go into prayer, and you step into a much deeper fellowship.

You really learn that person's heart. So the sixth thing I want to tell you is pray together. Please, let's just start praying together.

Amen? Seventh and finally, I think we could sum up what we've talked about in this way. My dream for our church is that we would get together, work together, and weep together. Think of that vision, face-to-face.

Let's get together. Our faces come together, and we say, Hi, who are you? Hi, who are you? Face is me. Secondly, we work together.

We turn outward, and we say, Now let's serve the community together, brother. And finally, what do we do? We weep together. We pray.

We praise. We live life together. Please, brothers and sisters, cherish this fellowship.

Fellowship is spiritual. It is intimate. And it is deliberate.

Let's pray. We praise your holy name, Lord. We praise you for this fellowship here.

And Lord, we ask you to make it so sweet, Lord. Help us to combat the forces of this world by having a sweet, loving, beautiful fellowship right here among us, Lord. Open these scriptures to us.

Help us to go home and think about these things. And Lord, help us now to praise you. We lift you high, Lord.

We lift you high so that we might have fellowship with one another. In Jesus' name, amen.

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