

A Vision for Disciplemaking
Key Men's Conference

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The Joy of Fellowship
R. Kent Dyer, Jr.

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Hebrews 10:24 - "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

I. What Is My Purpose as a Believer?

- A. To Love God - Prayer, the Word
- B. To Love Others - Fellowship, Witnessing

II. What is Christian Fellowship?

- A. Fellowship is sharing your life in Christ with other believers. Acts 2:42 - "*All the believers were together and had everything in common.*"
- B. Fellowship has three levels.
 - 1. Sharing - worship, Bible study and prayer
 - 2. Serving together - missions trips
 - 3. Fellowship of suffering - sharing areas of struggle, pain

Encourage one another by sharing "shoe spoons" of God's grace in our Life.

"My contentment in life is seeing Him and knowing that all is right between us." (J.V.D. Hough)

- C. Fellowship is not level one conversation.
- D. Fellowship only happens when we are willing to take risks and make personal sacrifices.

III. Through fellowship I learn what it means to love others unselfishly.

Galatians 5:14 - "*The whole law can be summed up in one command: love others as you love yourself.*"

- A. Life can be thought of as a gigantic laboratory experiment.
- B. Fellowship is an opportunity to learn unselfishness by loving imperfect, irritating, and often frustrating people.

C. This kind of love is not learned in isolation as a spiritual hermit. It is learned within the community of believers.

D. Are other believers a complicating factor in my life or a welcomed interruption, a divine opportunity to experience fellowship?

IV. Fellowship involves a sacrifice of time.

A. Time is my most valuable possession. It cannot be replaced.

B. Love is defined in terms of time:

1. Time with my wife,
2. Time with my children
3. Time with other brothers and sisters in Christ.

I John 3:18 - "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth."

C. The best time for reaching out in fellowship is NOW. Do not procrastinate!

D. Ideas for reaching out in fellowship.

1. Don't be afraid to "drop in" periodically.
2. Pick up the telephone. This is an excellent tool.
3. Look and listen for special needs of other believers in your fellowship group.
4. Do not wait for others to ask you. Take the initiative to reach out and meet needs, if you are able.

V. What are benefits of fellowship?

A. Fellowship brings refreshment to your spirit.

1. The Holy Spirit rejoices in the presence of like-minded believers.
2. Lack or loss of fellowship grieves the Holy Spirit.

B. Fellowship brings a sense of belonging.

Romans 12:5 - "So in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."

C. Fellowship moves me away from self-centeredness.

I Corinthians 12:26 - "If one part of the body suffers, all the other parts suffer with it or if one part of the body is honored, all the other parts are share its honor."

I learned to care about and become connected with other believers through fellowship.

D. Fellowship is essential for spiritual growth.

Proverbs 27:17 - "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."

I need more than the Bible in order to grow. I need other believers inputting into my life.

E. I am a light to the world.

John 13:34-35 - "A new command I give you, love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this, all men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another."

People are drawn to Christ because the fellowship of believers is different.

F. Fellowship helps prevent backsliding.

1. I am capable of any sin given the right temptation.

Jeremiah 17:9 - "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure."

2. God has brought others into my life to help keep me on the right path.

3. Accountability - I need others who are walking with the Lord to come along side and encourage me in difficult areas.

4. Satan's goal is to create detached believers who are isolated from God's family and unaccountable. This makes me vulnerable to his attacks.

VI. What kindles Godly fellowship?

A. Fellowship with others begins with my own walk with the Lord.

I John 1:3 - "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his son Jesus Christ."

1. Am I having regular fellowship with God through quiet time, Bible study, and prayer?

a. I have something of value to share with others only as God speaks to me personally in a particular area of my life.

I 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 purifies us from all sin."

b. My life will radiate God's love towards others as I walk in His light on a daily basis.

2. "Memory Stones" are designed to be shared with others.

B. Right priorities concerning time

1. Am I allowing busyness (tyranny of the urgent) to define my priorities regarding the use of time?

OR

2. Am I making time for investing in the things that are most important to the Lord (i.e., people)?

C. Take the initiative in building relationships with believers.

1. It is our responsibility to initiate relationships. Do not wait for the other person to reach out to you or to reciprocate.

2. Don't be easily angered, upset, disappointed or offended when believers do not meet your expectations because they will consistently fail in this area.

3. Being easily offended is a manifestation of my "old" nature (the self life) which is concerned primarily with building up my own ego.

Galatians 5:22 & 24 - "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control . . . Those who belong to Jesus Christ have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires."

D. Fellowship requires authenticity and vulnerability.

1. Fellowship is not superficial chitchat but is a genuine heart-to-heart sharing.

2. Authenticity requires courage to face the fear of being rejected or hurt when I share struggles with others. (*Daily with the King*, January 12)

E. Fellowship requires a sympathetic heart.

1. The old adage "no one cares about how much you know until they know how much you care" is true. I must communicate to others that I care before real fellowship is possible.

2. The deepest level of fellowship is the fellowship of suffering.

3. Others need to feel that they are understood and that their feelings are being affirmed.

4. I must "enter into another person's feelings." (Hal and Dee Denny)

5. We are to bear one another's burdens. Galatians 6:2 - "Carry *each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*"

6. Self-pity and self-preoccupation (MY problems, MY worries) prevent fellowship from developing.

7. Humility is not thinking less of myself. It is thinking of myself less.

F. Fellowship demands mercy.

1. Forgiveness must be immediate and complete when you are offended.

Colossians 3:13 - "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."

2. Time does not erase a hurt. Time only leads to bitterness.

3. Grace maintains fellowship and heals hurts.

(I must continually extend grace to others who disappoint me.)

4. Dealing with "difficult" people.

VII. Restoring Broken Fellowship - "The Purpose Driven Life" (Rick Warren)

A. God has given us the ministry of restoring relationships.

B. Broken fellowship should not be allowed to continue. It is a poor testimony to unbelievers and ultimately affects my relationship with God.

Matthew 5:23 - "If you *are offering your gift at your altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother, then come and offer your gift.*"

C. The Holy Spirit will frequently convict if forgiveness needs to be solicited or given. Listen to the prompting of the Holy Spirit!

D. Steps to forgiveness.

1. Talk with God first. Resist the temptation to confront immediately. "In your anger do not sin." 2. Always take the initiative.

a. Don't wait for the other person to come to you. Go to them first and do not procrastinate.

b. Do not meet if you are tired or rushed.

3. Sympathize with their feelings.

a. How did that make you feel?

b. Don't attack or retaliate.

c. Try to overlook the offense with patience.

Proverbs 19:11- "It is to His *glory to overlook an offense.*"

d. Confess your part in the conflict. Don't make excuses for yourself.

e. Attack the problem, not the person.

f. Cooperate as much as possible. Don't insist on your own way, but be willing to cooperate with others.

g. Seek reconciliation. We may not be able to resolve differences, but we can still receive each other in love.

h. Don't judge another person's motive or attack his character. We really do not have all the information to be able to make this judgment.