

Communication is Essential

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In writing to his friend, Philemon, Paul says, " *I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers, Hearing of thy love and faith, which thou hast toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints; That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus*" (4-6).

The Apostle tells us much about the **sharing** in this text. He is **writing** a letter. He **prays** to God. He **heard** about Philemon's goodness. He says the man's faith will become effectual through more **communication** of his good deeds.

The Greek word for "communication" is *koinonia* (koy-nohn-ee'-ah). It comes from a word that means partnership. Thus it refers to participation, sharing, or (social) interaction. The word is often translated "fellowship" in our Bibles.

Communication is a key element in marriage. Couples can have problems because they do not communicate. The small problems grow bigger because they do not communicate. Men and women are very different, and if they do not discuss things they will never understand one another. Peter tells husbands to dwell with their wives according to knowledge (1 Pet. 3:7). Husbands must spend time sharing with their wives in order to learn what their needs are and how they can best fulfill them. Often men do not like to talk, to open up, or to share feelings. Women are usually just the opposite. A woman's silence means she is upset while a man's silence means nothing. In Deut 24:5 Moses gave a command that would strengthen the marriage relationship. *When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken.*

If the wife is given attention in the first year and her husband learns about her in that time; then the rest of their lives together will likely be one of growing love.

What about the church? How well are we sharing with one another? What can we do to increase our communication with one another in the congregation? We often limit fellowship to the idea that we agree on doctrine and can therefore be members of the same congregation. This is important, but I am thinking of the day to day sharing that should go on with members who love each other.

A number of devices have been employed to help get the word out when something needs to be shared. This **bulletin** has a list of announcements on the front page. **Announcements** are made at every worship service. We have a **phone tree** where each member passes information along. There are **minutes** kept from each business meeting and posted on the bulletin board. Letters from preachers we support are **posted on the bulletin board**. In addition some have email, Facebook, Twitter, and other social media methods to impart information.

With all these devices we still find some members who do not know what is going on. Do they attend? Do they listen when announcements are made? Do they read the bulletin? The reasons may vary but the truth remains. Some members are not sharing in the lives of others. Some wish to be private. Some do not want to get involved. Some are around so seldom that they miss out of every opportunity to hear about a brother's needs.

The problem of communication reduces the effectiveness of church discipline. There is little change for some when a person is withdrawn from. A member who seldom attends, gives nothing, shares nothing, and is aware of little; one day receives a letter. His participation with the congregation is already nothing! What will change in his life if he is put out of the congregation?

It is not only the removed brother who feels little effect. The congregation will not miss someone who was never around either. This is a sad commentary on a congregation of the Lord's people. What does this say about our closeness? How much are we really in fellowship with one another?

Acts 2 speaks of the first 3000 people who became Christians at the preaching of the Gospel. 42 *And **they continued steadfastly** in the apostles' doctrine and **fellowship**, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.* 43 *And **fear came upon every soul**: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.* 44 *And all that believed **were together**, and **had all things common**;* 45 *And **sold** their possessions and goods, and **parted** them to all men, as every man had need.* 46 *And they, **continuing daily with one accord** in the temple, and **breaking bread from house to house**, did eat their meat with gladness and **singleness of heart**,* 47 ***Praising God**, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*

These first Christians spent time together sharing. They agreed upon the Apostles' doctrine and had respect for the word of God. They worshipped and ate common meals together. Those who were able, shared financially with those who were in need.

Do we resemble the New Testament church in these activities? We do not share our needs with others. We do not share our wealth with others. Some will not worship with us very often. Some will not ever go over to another's house, and some will never invite another over to their house.

All our modern methods of communication do not seem to improve our communication. We never finish a face to face conversation because our cell phone rings. We stop sharing in something meaningful to engage is something trivial. We increase in information but decrease in communication. Some will not even turn off their cell phones when they are in Bible class. I guess they will not let God share with them either.