



# 40 Days of Purpose

BibleTract.org

## Week 3 – Fellowship: You Were Formed For God's Family

Notes: This Bible Study is taken from the 40 Days of Purpose Weekly Lessons guide available from [www.purposedriven.com](http://www.purposedriven.com). The Scripture references in this Bible study are taken from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to session three in our study of *The Purpose Driven Life*. Did you know you were made for relationships? In fact, Jesus once summarized the entire Bible in two principles: loving God and loving other people.

Last week we looked at the first purpose: loving God, which is called worship. In this session, we'll look at God's second purpose for your life: loving other people. God is love and He wants you to learn to love just like He does.

#### **What is the laboratory God established on earth where we can practice learning to love each other?**

That place is called the Church... The Christian life involves more than believing; it also involves belonging. God wants you to be part of His family, the Church.

#### **What do we call our opportunities to learn to love each other in the Church?**

The task of learning to love each other is called fellowship. In our time together we will look at how you build the kinds of relationships that provide deep, satisfying, meaningful fellowship with others.

The Greek word for fellowship in the Bible is the word *koinonia*, which means being as committed to each other as we are to Jesus Christ. That's what real fellowship is all about.

#### **Where can we learn about how we may experience genuine fellowship with other people?**

Certainly the Bible helps us with this...

1 Timothy 3:14, 15 (NCV) – "...I am writing these things to you...[so] you will know how to live in the family of God. That family is the church of the living God...."

Circle the phrase, "how to live." This is what we're going to look at together. How do you live in the family of God?

How do you develop and deepen relationships with other believers?

### II. FIVE BUILDING BLOCKS FOR FELLOWSHIP

Romans 12:9-16 reveals a number of characteristics of genuine fellowship. In our study today we'll look at five:

Romans 12:9-16 (NIV) - "*Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.*"

#### **A. The first building block for fellowship is AUTHENTICITY.**

**What building block of fellowship is represented by the beginning of verse 9 where it says, "*Love must be sincere*?"**

True fellowship is genuine. People in fellowship don't wear masks. Verse 9 in the New American Standard says, "*Love is without hypocrisy*"—in other words, without a mask.

In the culture of the time in which this verse was written, the word "hypocrisy" most commonly referred to Greek actors who wore masks on stage. To play a character, an actor would wear a mask. Then he would go backstage, put on another mask, and come out again in a different role. Actors were called hypocrites because they kept changing masks.

#### **So, the first building block for fellowship is AUTHENTICITY.**

**What does 1 John 1:7-8 have to say about the impact of wearing masks on fellowship?**

1 John 1:7-8 (NCV) - "...if we live in the light as God is in the light, we can share fellowship with each other... [But] if we say we have no sin, we are fooling ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

In real fellowship you share your true feelings. We're not fooling other people; we're just fooling ourselves. Be authentic and admit where you're weak, where you have sins, where you've blown it. Deep intimacy occurs not in the dark, but in the light. In the dark we hide things; we don't want people to see our faults, failures, or flaws. In the light we're out in the open and fully visible just as we are. That's called authenticity.

### **Why is being authentic with each other necessary for fellowship?**

If we're living in the light of God's truth, we don't try to hide our faults. Recovery ministries have a saying that you're only as sick as your secrets. Revealing your feeling is the beginning of healing.

### **How may we build authenticity in our lives?**

The quickest way to build authenticity in your life and in your group is through studying and applying the Word of God...

Hebrews 4:12 (NLT) - "...the word of God is full of living power. It is sharper than the sharpest knife, cutting deep into our inner most thoughts and desires. It exposes us for what we really are."

It's not pop psychology, therapy or ooey-goey sentimentality that makes you authentic. It's coming into contact with the Word of God. When we look at the Word of God and let it touch our soul and show us where we don't measure up and where we need to grow, then we are forced to be authentic.

## **B. The second building block for fellowship is COURTESY.**

### **What building block of fellowship is represented by Romans 12:10?**

Romans 12:10 - "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love."

In the Greek language, the word for "brotherly love" means a family relationship. It says we as believers are to be devoted to each other with a family kind of love.

### **If we are devoted to each other, how are we going to act toward each other?**

Being devoted to each other means that we will be sensitive to the needs of each other. **So the second building block for fellowship is COURTESY.** Fellowship is built on courtesy.

### **What does it mean to be courteous?**

Being courteous means that in fellowship we show respect even when we disagree with each other. We can disagree without being disagreeable...

Titus 3:2 (GW) - "Believers shouldn't curse anyone or be quarrelsome, but they should be gentle and show courtesy to everyone."

In the Army, we were taught to show respect for superior officers by saluting them. We were expected to salute even when your superior officer was incompetent and did not deserve honor. But what we really were saluting was the rank, not the person's flaws. Likewise, we should show respect to each other in the Church honoring their position in Christ.

## **C. The third building block for fellowship is MUTUALITY.**

### **What building block of fellowship is represented by Romans 12:12?**

Romans 12:12 (NIV) - "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer."

Fellowship means that we help each other grow. Together we're stronger than we are alone. You cannot be what God wants you to be without other people. **So the third building block for fellowship is MUTUALITY.**

### **What does Ecclesiastes 4:10 have to say about how mutuality helps us?**

Ecclesiastes 4:10 (NLT) - "If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But people who are alone when they fall are in real trouble."

Fellowship is built on the principle that we all work together. We build each other up in mutuality. There are three parts to mutuality...

## **1. Mutual ENCOURAGEMENT.**

### **What aspect of mutuality is represented by Romans 1:12?**

Romans 1:12 - that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

Here Paul was talking about his looking forward to being with the church at Rome so they he could encourage them and be encouraged by them. This is referring to **mutual ENCOURAGEMENT** that comes from our fellowship.

### **How do we mutually encourage each other?**

The key to mutual encouragement is responding to the needs of others through offering comfort, encouragement, prayer and help. We are to help those around us along their spiritual journey.

## 2. Mutual HONORING.

### What aspect of mutuality is represented by Romans 12:10b?

Romans 12:10b (NLT) - "...take delight in honoring each other."

A second kind of mutuality is mutual honoring.

### How may we honor each other?

Praising each other for a job well done is rendering honor. We should all get in the habit of telling others what we appreciate about them.

## 3. Mutual ACCOUNTABILITY.

### What aspect of mutuality is represented by Hebrews 10:24?

Hebrews 10:24 (NIV) - "...let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."

We should give consideration to one another in order to help them do the right thing. This means that we are accountable to each other... so we have **mutual ACCOUNTABILITY**.

### What is mutual accountability?

Mutual accountability means having a spiritual partner—someone whom you're personally encouraging in his or her quiet time, faith, and spiritual growth, and who will do the same for you. This is someone with whom you meet regularly and commit to checking up on each other. This will help you grow faster than if you don't have anybody encouraging you.

## D. The fourth building block of fellowship is HOSPITALITY.

### What is the fourth building block of fellowship in Romans 12:13 where it says, "Practice hospitality?"

The fourth building block of fellowship is **HOSPITALITY**.

### What does Acts 2:26 tell us about the kind of hospitality practiced in the early church?

Acts 2:26 (LB) - "They worshiped together regularly at the temple each day, (daily) met in homes for communion, and shared their meals with great joy...."

Notice the phrase "shared their meals." They didn't just worship together each weekend, take communion together, or meet in small groups; they ate together regularly. This still works to deepen the fellowship of any small group. It works so well that I'm afraid that the term fellowship has just about become synonymous with church meals.

### A study of Jesus' ministry will reveal that He often taught while people were eating. Why did He do that?

Because when people are eating, they're relaxed. And when they're relaxed, they're more open, their barriers are down, they're less afraid, and they're more responsive to communication. You need to hang out and have fun with the people with whom you want to develop relationship—not just meet every so often.

## E. The fifth building block of fellowship is UNITY.

### What is the fifth building block of fellowship addressed in Romans 12:16?

Romans 12:16 (NIV) - "Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited."

To live in harmony with one another means that we live as one body in Christ. **The fifth building block of fellowship is UNITY**.

When the New Testament talks about unity, it refers to two elements of unity...

### 1. Unity of Purpose

**What element of unity is addressed in the first five chapters of Acts where it make multiple references to: "They were of one accord." "They were unified." "They were all together." "They were of one heart."?**

The first is unity of purpose, not unity of personality. You can have unity without uniformity. God created us to be different so He does not expect us to be alike but He does expect us to be unified in our purpose.

1 Corinthians 1:10 (NLT) - "Let there be real harmony so there won't be divisions in the church. ...be of one mind, united in thought and purpose."

### 2. Humility

### What element of unity is addressed by Romans 12:16?

Romans 12:16 - Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

The second element of unity is humility. We need to understand that we don't understand everything.

**What is humility?**

Humility is being willing to admit when we've made a mistake because we all do. Humility enables us to say the four most difficult words, "I need your help"; the three most difficult words, "I was wrong"; and the two most difficult words, "Forgive me."

**What does James 4:6 have to say about why humility is so important?**

James 4:6b (NIV) - *"God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."*

Most of us can say we want God's grace in our lives on a daily basis. This verse says that God will bless those who have humility in our lives.

**How do we demonstrate humility in our relationships with other people?**

- You do it by accepting others' weaknesses. You don't expect people to be perfect because you aren't perfect either. You accept the fact that they have weaknesses like everybody else. By accepting others in spite of their weaknesses, you express humility toward them.
- You do it by accepting your own weaknesses. We all have a lot of weaknesses.

**SUMMARY**

These are the five building blocks of real community. Every one of us wants them. We desire a place where we are able to share our true feelings (authenticity); differences are respected (courtesy); we are encouraged to grow spiritually (mutuality); we spend time with people getting to know them (hospitality); and we find support for our purpose and are accepted despite our weaknesses (unity).

Let's close in prayer.