

The New Lifestyle - Koinonia



Relationship with God's People (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again. This week I've been sharing on the basics of personal relationships. We have seen that the scriptural basis for every enduring personal relationship is a covenant. On the vertical plane, with God Himself; on the horizontal plane, with God's people. Those who enter into covenant with one another are thereby required to lay down their own lives and then to find a new life in living for those with whom they are in covenant.

Entering into covenant with others in this way brings us into a distinctive, new lifestyle. In New Testament Greek, there is a special word used to describe this new lifestyle. It is koinonia. In most English versions, this Greek word is translated "fellowship." One or two versions translate it not by a single word but by a phrase such as "sharing in a common life." Actually, the Greek noun koinonia, is derived from an adjective koinos, a very common adjective which means "common." Simply and literally, koinonia means "having things in common."

Today I'm going to show you the kind of lifestyle that koinonia describes. I'm going to turn, first of all, to 1 John 1:3, where John says this:

> "what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship [koinonia] with us; and indeed our fellowship [koinonia] is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." (NAS)

When John says, "what we have seen and heard," in the context, what he's really saying is, "the record that we apostles have left with you." The New Testament record is what he's speaking about. And so we have a very important statement here, we have the end purpose for which God made available to us the New Testament record, the testimony of the apostles. What was God's ultimate purpose in making this record, in making the New Testament itself available to us? The answer is: "that you also may have fellowship [koinonia] with us [that's the apostles]," and then he goes on to say, "and indeed our fellowship [koinonia] is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."

So I believe it's correct to say that ultimately the gospel is an invitation from the Godhead to share the fellowship, the koinonia, the lifestyle, of the Godhead. It's so important to see that this is what God really desires because in religious activities many times we get so taken up with "means" that we lose sight of the "end." But "means" that do not achieve the desired end are just a waster of time and effort.

Let me say, frankly, as a preacher, preaching is not an "end," it's a "means." It's only successful if it achieves the desired end. What is the desired end? Koinonia, fellowship, sharing of life together with God and with one another. I'm of the impression that in many religious groups, if they were to ask themselves what are we really aiming at? and then ask themselves, are the means that we are using really achieving what we're aiming at? It might be that they would completely change their whole procedure. I remember once being in a church where I preached on a Sunday morning and there was a beautiful, warm atmosphere at the end of the message and the pastor stood up and said, "Now, there's a beautiful sense of God's presence here. Don't go home too quickly. Stay and have fellowship with one another. Shake hands with half a dozen people." And I thought to myself, "Dear God, is that fellowship? Shaking hands with half a dozen people? Is that the ration of fellowship of which your people have to live?" Surely, that's not the kind of relationship there is between the Father and the Son in the Godhead. It goes a lot further than just shaking hands on Sunday morning.

Let me picture you some things that Jesus said about His relationship with the Father, bearing in mind that all this is koinonia. In John 10:30, Jesus said:

> "I and the Father are one." (NAS)

In other words, there's unity or union. Then, speaking about the coming of the Holy Spirit, in John 16:14–15, He said:

> "'He [the Holy Spirit] shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you…' [But then He went on to say quickly:] 'All things that the Father has are Mine…'" (NAS)

You understand why He said that? Because He wasn't laying claim to have anything in His own right. He said all that I have comes from the Father. It's only Mine because the Father has given it to Me. In other words, Jesus did not claim to have anything uniquely as His own, independent of His relationship with the Father. All that He had depended on His relationship with the Father. That's koinonia. And then, again, in John 17:10, Jesus is praying to the Father and He says:

> "All things that are Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine…" (NAS)

That's perfect koinonia, perfect "having in common." Everything I have is yours and everything you have is mine. That's the divine level of koinonia. That's the lifestyle of the Godhead. And I want to tell you this: God is not going to bring koinonia down to the level of humanity but He is willing to lift humanity up to His level of koinonia, the divine lifestyle of the Godhead.

A little further on in the same first chapter of the first epistle of John, John returns again to this theme of koinonia. In fact, koinonia is one of the main themes of this epistle of John. In verse 7 he says:

> "but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, [that says Christ is in the light and notice that's the standard of koinonia, it's always God's standard and not man's] but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship [koinonia] with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." (NAS)

It's important to see that in the beginning of that verse we have that little word "if." "If" sets a condition. "If" we do something, then certain results follow. What is the "if"? It is, "if" we walk in the light, then two results follow: First of all, we have fellowship (koinonia) with one another. Secondly, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. I want to point out to you that the cleansing of the blood of Jesus is not under our control. It's only available when we meet the condition. What is the condition? Walking in the light. If we walk in the light, two results follow: We have fellowship (koinonia) with one another, and we are cleansed by the blood of Jesus.

This applies the other way around. If we are not walking in the light, we do not have koinonia, we are not being cleansed by the blood of Jesus. So an essential condition for receiving the continual, on-going cleansing of the blood of Jesus is walking in the light. And if we are walking in the light we have koinonia with one another. If we are not having koinonia, if we are out of fellowship, then we are out of the light. And if we're out of the light, we're no longer being cleansed by the blood of Jesus. So you see how central and essential this fact of koinonia is.

All right, then. What are the conditions for koinonia? I want to suggest to you that there are two. The first is covenant commitment. Only those who are willing to make the commitment of a covenant to one another can be in koinonia.

Covenant commitment is the door to koinonia. There is no other way to get in. That's the initial requirement.

And then there's an ongoing requirement for koinonia. The ongoing requirement is walking in the light. What's meant by "walking in the light"? Again, I want to suggest to you that it covers two things. First of all, obedience to God. Disobedience is darkness. The moment we step out of obedience, we step out of the light into darkness. The moment we infringe divine law, we are no longer in the light. But the second aspect of walking in the light is that we have to be completely open and honest with one another. No secrets, no reservations, no criticisms or evil thoughts in our hearts or minds, but complete openness and honesty with one another. Somebody said about walking in the light, it means this: Roof off and walls down. Well, perhaps some of us wouldn't mind having the roof off and letting God look in but when it comes to taking the walls down and letting our fellow believers look in, that's where we want to draw the line. And yet, if we draw the line there, we're not in koinonia. Koinonia is only possible as we walk in the light.

Look at this statement about the early church in Acts 4. I want you to see the connection. Verse 32:

> "...neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." (KJV)

What's that—having "all things common"? It's koinonia. The very word koinonia comes from the Greek word "common." What was the result? Look on to verse 34:

> "Neither was there any among them that lacked..." (KJV)

You see, God's blessings are on His people when we're in koinonia. Then we have all we need and more. But out of koinonia is out of the light. Out of the light, no longer being cleansed by the blood of Jesus. This is one of the divine ultimatums. God invites us to koinonia but He sets the conditions.

All right. Our time is up for the day. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be speaking about the covenant meal, the divinely-ordained symbol of koinonia.

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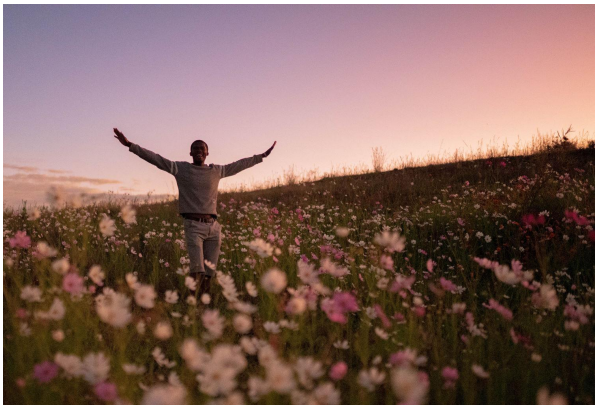

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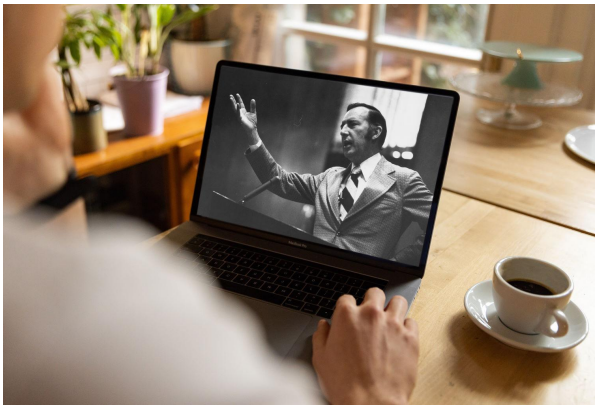

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