

The Value of Fellowship: It's Better Together

God so loved the world including all of us in it. That love embraces His fellowship with us and hopefully generates our active fellowshipping with Him. Our lives continually document that human beings are overwhelmingly social in nature. The family unit, begun in marriage, grows from the primary husband and wife, then children into an expanded family unit that usually includes many relations. Socially, humans organize into teams, sometimes opponent to opponent, but regardless there is always interaction. Some of our old western movies and literature have extolled the individual riding off into the sunset but that end is an idealized exception. There is also the demonstrably false belief that for one's creativity to flourish, he or she must of necessity dwell in isolation.

The American Heritage College Dictionary defines fellowship as the condition of sharing similar interests, ideals and experiences as by reason of profession, religion, or nationality. The definition goes on to state that fellowship embraces the companionship of peers in a congenial atmosphere; a close association of friends sharing similar interests. Friendship, comradeship. This description accurately describes the relationship Yahushua had with his disciples, and peers during His three-year ministry on earth.

Fellowship was inherent within Yahushua as He walked among us. His fellowship as the The Word remains with us as a crucial part of His love conveyed to us. Fellowshipping lies within us as evidenced in our dealings with each other and in our worship of God because God created us in His own image. Yah and Yahshua, eons before their creative effort, exist in a relationship of pure love. That divine, changeless love by its very nature, must serve, nurture and nourish. I believe it was their upwelling of divine love that prompted the magnificent creative effort of the cosmos that included us and all that we can imagine.

Ultimate fellowship lies in establishing our relationship with the Father and with His Son, Yahshua, Jesus the Messiah.

1John 1:1-7

. . . From the beginning, we have heard, we have seen with our eyes, we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. . . that your joy may be full. This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Adam wandered amid the perfection of a splendid creation that was filled with all types of plant species most having edible delectable fruits, along with a bounty of animals and fowl, pure air

and water, the perfect environment. Yet despite God's remarkable association with him, Adam, as a human being, felt a void, being unable to share his life with someone like himself. Something was needed to compliment him. Yah realized Adam's feeling and obliged him by taking Adam's rib to create an ideal partner. Yet we all know this ideal couple through their disobedience lost their setting of perfection. Yet as God has preplanned, they were emotionally and physical built to start a family and thus marked the beginning of the human race.

Yahushua likewise was born into a family unit and grew up in it with many brothers and sisters. Jesus developed dear friendships with John, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Although Yahushua began His ministry alone, He soon assembled 12 disciples which grew to 70 and beyond that eventually attracted thousands of believers. During His public ministry, Yahshua developed a relationship with His disciples described in Proverbs 18:24 as being "closer than a brother." This relationship was poignantly displayed in those last few days, hours before his betrayal and death.

A working ministry was required since the inception of God's church. And the young church flourished in a fellowship dedicated to the common need and support of each member.

Psalms 133:1

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

Acts 2: 41-47

Then they that gladly receive his word were baptized and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And there came upon every soul: and even wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. 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, Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

As in our life, fellowshiping, involving interaction with others, fosters topical discussions with the "iron sharpening iron effect" prevailing where ideas are refined in keeping with scriptural intent providing understanding that keeps one on the straight and narrow road. This method offers protection, not allowing the believer to become vulnerable alone when contending with Satan or his cadre of evil spirits, manifest in inflicting self-made desires that can lead one astray into accepting the carnality of this world. The process of iron sharpening iron in fellowship literally sharpens, or clarifies the content of collective understanding. Fellowship allows us to function as one body, like a symphony orchestra does, or any well-rehearsed singing or musical group does as each individual talent blends into a beautiful concert. The same spirit must exist in the planning of a great skyscraper or bridge-highway infrastructure project. Likewise in athletics,

each team member contributes to the whole to achieve victory. In the military theater each member of a platoon, or entire division must trust each other, working as a team to achieve decisive victory. In active fellowshiping all members act as one body regardless of their disposition and talent.

Psalms 119:63

I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep your precepts.

Romans 12:4-18

For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

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. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

1Cor 1: 9,10

God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Thus, fellowship produces a family of worship tightly bound that carries one individually or collectively through our greatest trials. Why? Because in fellowship, we are not physically nor emotionally alone in comparison to what happens to others who desert their faith in God. Fellowship strengthens individual and collective belief, the sinew that provides ultimate living value in this world, the purpose for our existence on earth in preparation for our next life, eternal life as servant to the Most High God in His Kingdom.

Music provides an important tool in worshipping God. Music brings individuals together. As mentioned previously, unity must exist for singers and those playing instruments to blend together in a song or hymn. The Psalms were sung requiring singers, musicians and an audience, all key ingredients for active fellowshiping within a ministry conveying the message of God's love and purpose to believers.

Thus, the Bible has much to say about fellowship, especially concerning our relationship with God the Father and Son. Hours before His death, Jesus spoke to his disciples as related in the Book of John about their relationship, having now completed living together in ultimate fellowship for nearly every day during the last three and one half years. Yahushua earnestly desires to summarize His ministerial purpose to his disciples for coming here, sacrificing both His Godly state and shortly His human life in His ministry to us. Yet despite this prolonged association, the disciples, during most of their shared time with Him, did not understand who Yahushua was, His divinity, especially His Godly-relation to the Father as evidenced by Philip's questioning in Chapter 14: 6-11.

John 14: 6-11

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him." Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves."

Yet by the end of Yahushua's discourse in these chapters 14 through 17, the disciples had gained a lucid understanding of Yahushua's divinity. Yet a few hours later, they were not able to remain awake when He entreated them. Then, a short time later, they scattered when He was taken prisoner with Peter cursing in denial of ever having had any contact, let alone daily fellowshiping with Him. Should we ever think ourselves immune from such an abrupt compromise? Never? Really? Yet by failing to daily read and study scripture to implement His written Word into our lives, we fail to establish a daily fellowship with Him. Thus we stand fully vulnerable to be scattered, well on the way to lose our daily connection to the Father and to our Savior. Daily fellowship with our Savior coupled with fellow believer association remain essential in sustaining and augmenting our essential spiritual connection with our Savior.

In John 14, Yahshua stresses that despite His absence, our pivotal role remains to maintain a loving obedience to His commandments.

John 14:18-21

"I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

In John 15, using the analogy of a vine, Yahshua explains His spiritual life supporting function he provides to all believers and the special intimate fellowship He will have with those exhibiting a genuine faith in Him, a faith that produces the fruits of action, obedience to his commandments. Each believer being refined into a new creation.

John 15:1, 3, 5, 7-11, 14-16, 18:

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.

No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another. If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you."

In John 16, Yahshua foretells the often-overwhelming difficulties, trials which will come upon believers after His departure and how paramount it is for them to advantageously receive The Helper, the Holy Spirit, the power from His Father that will provide continuous spiritual fellowship to support those spreading His Word, the gospel. Yahshua, Jesus, again stresses the

special relationship believers then and now will have with the Father-Yahshua, literally offering anything to those possessing genuine faith according to His Plan of Salvation!

John16:2-4, 16-20, 27-29:

"They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me. But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you. But now I go away to Him who sent Me, and none of you asks Me, 'Where are You going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you. A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father. Then some of His disciples said among themselves, "What is this that He says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'; and, 'because I go to the Father'?" They said therefore, "What is this that He says, 'A little while'? We do not know what He is saying." Now Jesus knew that they desired to ask Him, and He said to them, "Are you inquiring among yourselves about what I said, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'? Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you. And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father. In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God. I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father. His disciples said to Him, "See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech!"

In John 17, Yahshua prays asking the Father to credit His disciples and members of the early church lauding their deep faith and difficulties they will encounter during their ministry. These believers as was the case with Yahshua were no longer allied to the world and its value system. Listen Yahshua says, stating that the glory that the Father gave Him, Yahshua, now gives to them so that they may be one just as we are now one with Him. Can there be any fellowship more consummate than this! Also, in verse 20 Yahshua says, **“I do not pray for these (early believers alive at the time of Christ) but also for those (US!) who will believe in Me...”**

John 17:5-26

"And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.

May we all realize the exalted position Yahshua has created for us out of His ultimate act of love—His very life. We have been given this priceless possession, the Father’s Holy Spirit, our

spiritual Helper has given us precious knowledge coupled with a potential that even the angels will not ever achieve which fuels the envy of that once glorious angel, (Hebrew name), also known as the Dragon, Lucifer, Satan. Now we must in this latter, humanistic age enhance our connection, our fellowship through Bible study with our Creator! Yet there is no substitute for a fellowship of worship with like-minded believers which remains the proven, exclusive ingredient of active loving obedience to the Creator just as it was for His original disciples. It's better together!