

Caring

Koinonia: For Christians to be assimilated into the body, they must experience koinonia.

What Is *Koinonia*?

Koinonia (Acts 2) is more than social interaction. *Koinonia* addresses the concept of fellowship, fellowship in its truest sense of intimacy. It is the concept of "having things in common" or of "sharing." It is a basic ingredient of the Christian community, the church. To give one an idea of the intimacy involved this is the root word for the "communion" (often used to refer to the Lord's Supper). Communion, as it is practiced in our assembly, is to be a participation in the death and life of Jesus and the life of his body on earth. Where true fellowship (*koinonia*) is practiced there is real participation in the life of another.

Koinonia is a Greek word that is about having things in common.
It is usually used to refer to what we call _____ .

This is a relationship that can withstand crisis and differences of opinion. The intimacy required is more difficult to experience in a middle-sized or larger group. It is much easier to develop in a small group setting. Where there is such a relationship,

- people going through separation or divorce have someone who will listen and help
- bereaved families find prepared meals on their doorstep
- parents in pain have people with whom they can share their fears and pray
- those who are ill or hospitalized receive calls, visits, cards, and needed assistance
- Christians in the midst of a faith crisis can share their struggles with a fellow believer
- the doubtful seeker discovers a place where they are allowed to explore faith questions
- the returning prodigal finds a home where she/he is loved and accepted

Getting to Know You

For caring to take place relationships must be built. The leader's job is complex. Not only is he working to build his relationship with group members, but he is also encouraging and facilitating group members as they build relationships with each other.

The level of relationship that we are seeking is known as *primary group interaction*. For primary group interaction to develop, communication must be progressing into deeper levels of self-disclosure. Trust is built as relationships are deepened within the context of the group experience. This deepening trust provides each member with the permission to reveal more about herself, her needs, thoughts, and true feelings. These have often never before been shared with anyone in the body.

There is a certain amount of danger involved with this level of relationships. There is also the possibility for greater rewards as individuals can now respond to needs that have been revealed and aid one another in their personal relationship with God.

Warning. As small groups develop, members will begin to share their struggles. Some will be tempted to offer advice. Resist this temptation, if at all possible!!!

Offering advice, especially when unsolicited, can destroy your group.

Four Levels of Communication:

1. **Cliche conversation.** Discussing "safe" public information takes place during the first few minutes of a meeting. Topics include the weather, family and friends, and current affairs.
2. **Sharing information and facts.** People talk generally about events, ideas and facts, but not about themselves, their commitments, and their beliefs about Scripture.
3. **Sharing ideas and opinions.** This deeper level of communication involves a willingness to talk about personal ideas and opinions. There is some risk-taking at this level.
4. **Sharing feelings.** People are willing to risk telling group members what they feel, not just what they think. Members are less protective and more open.

Why be concerned about developing deeper levels of communication? Why do we seek self-disclosure?

Self Disclosure

The goal is to spur one another to self-examination and, ultimately, to enhance spiritual formation.



Dropping Your Guard

Our culture values radical individualism (independence) and privacy (isolation). For relationships within a small group to develop beyond the safety of superficial interaction, members must be encouraged to *drop their guard*.

When group members drop their guard, they can begin to practice what is called *self-disclosure*. This cannot be forced nor should it be manipulated. The effective group leader will gradually introduce self-disclosure into the life of the group by modeling it in group interaction. For the sake of the health of the group, this concept must be introduced gradually and in appropriate increments.

Through self-disclosure we are attempting to build an atmosphere that gives permission to bring struggles and burdens to the group so that they might be shared and genuine caring might be encouraged. In such an atmosphere the biblical imperative to “bear one another’s burdens” might be practiced and all group members may then realize the God-ordained benefits.

Self-disclosure is the process of:

- deliberately revealing information about yourself
- that is significant and
- that would not normally be known.

The value of self-disclosure-

- Builds relationships (personal sharing attracts us to one another)
- Validates self (discovery of strengths and abilities)
- Clarifies self (opportunity to discuss leads to personal processing)
- Practices God’s love (rejoice and mourn together; bear one another’s burdens)

Self-disclosure is a process. Two keys to remember:

1. _____
2. _____

Caution: As a leader you have the opportunity to model self-disclosure. Take your time. Disclose as it becomes appropriate. Help others in recognizing limits. Your challenge is to make sure that the process of self-disclosure progresses without becoming threatening to others.

Pray for the Spirit’s guidance and be prudent!

Caring for One Another

The New Testament scriptures contain several references to the individual Christian's responsibility to the other members of the family of God. These instructions were not delivered as suggestions to be accepted or rejected at the whim of the hearer but as commands. The imperatives of these "one another" and "each other" passages should be viewed as being no less binding than any other that calls for a response.

The **Caring** emphasis of the small group ministry indicates our desire to practically apply and practice these imperatives. These passages address how we are to act towards one another. All indicate that our participation in the lives of others is to be practical and for the express purpose of building them up in Christ. This emphasis upon caring relationships is a reflection of the royal law that states, "love your neighbor as yourself" (James 2:8).

Here is a list of some passages that directly address the subject of our responsibilities to one another.

Accept	Rom. 15:17
Agree	Phil. 4:2
Bear with	Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:13
Concern for	1 Cor. 12:25
Confess sins to	James 5:16
Encourage	1 Thes. 4:18; 5:11; Heb. 3:13; 10:24, 25
Forgive	Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13
Greet	Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Peter 5:14
Hospitality	1 Peter 4:9
Kind and compassionate	Eph. 4:32; 1 Thes. 5:15; 1 Peter 3:8
Live in peace	1 Thes. 5:13
Love	John 13:34; 15:12, 17; Rom. 13:8; 1 Thes. 3:12; 4:9; Heb. 13:1; 1 Peter 1:22; 3:8 4:8; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12; 2 John 1:5
Pray for	James 5:16
Serve	Gal. 5:13
Submit (humility)	Eph. 5:21; 1 Peter 5:5
Teach (instruct, speak)	Col. 3:16; Rom. 15:14; Eph. 5:19

Activities to avoid:

- Biting, devouring, destroying Gal. 5:15
- Causing others to stumble Rom. 14:13
- Envy Gal. 5:26
- Grumbling James 5:19
- Judging Rom. 14:13
- Lying Col. 3:9
- Provoking Gal. 5:26
- Slandering James 4:11

Evangelism

Groups Reaching Out to the World: G.R.O.W.

Most groups experience some difficulty in going beyond assimilating and caring. While there is the aspirational goal of being evangelistic, it has often not yet become a core value. For evangelism to become a core value there must be a strategy for implementing (e.g., small groups) and incorporating evangelism into the life of the church and the leadership in order to guide and encourage the process.



Effective Evangelism

For many, evangelism is a canned, confrontational presentation. This model may have worked in the past, but in each generation there is a need to seek those forms which will be most effective in reaching the world for Christ. In today's culture evangelism focuses more upon relationships than a single event. Small group leaders are to model an evangelistic emphasis in their lives.

Evangelism: Today vs. Yesterday

- More _____ than verbal
- More _____ than talking
- More vocalized suggestions than _____
- More of a _____ than an event
- More of a _____ effort than an individual pursuit

Learning to S.E.E. like Jesus (Strategic Emphasis on Evangelism)

Small groups provide one of the most effective means for moving evangelism from an aspiration to a core value of the church. Within the small group, evangelism can be emphasized and realized as it is made a part of every meeting's agenda. *The agenda is the single most effective way for maintaining an emphasis on evangelism.*

Groups will move in the direction of the most dominant thoughts. Effective leaders will model, discuss, and display this emphasis on evangelism in creative ways. Small groups provide a conducive atmosphere for evangelism. Therefore, small group members should be constantly seeking individuals to invite to their group meetings. In addition to friends, family members, and neighbors, guests to our assemblies, classes, seminars, and other activities are candidates for an invitation to a small group meeting.

This emphasis can be demonstrated at each small group meeting with the presence of an *empty chair*. This reminds everyone of the group's goal to reach out to others. The chair serves as a silent witness to the group's purpose, their agreement to seek others, and the possibilities that surround them each day.

Groups move in the direction of their most dominant thoughts.



Remembering that a small group includes five to fourteen adults, each group should begin with some stated **expectations** as it relates to growth and evangelism. A guiding principle is that each group is expected to grow numerically and spiritually. Small groups will normally begin with eight to ten members. As these groups grow the members should be prepared to give birth to a new group when they reach fourteen in attendance. The new group should be formed within one month of reaching this milestone.

Other expectations should include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. A “receptive individuals” list being drawn up at the pre-meeting
2. A group commitment to invite at least one guest each week
3. A group commitment to strive to grow by at least one member each quarter
4. A group commitment to give birth to a new group at least every other year
5. A group commitment to have social events for guests at least once a quarter
6. A time set aside each meeting to plan and report on outreach activities
7. A time set aside each meeting to brainstorm about future possibilities
8. A time set aside each meeting to pray for the harvest

Maintaining an Emphasis on Evangelism

An emphasis on evangelism can be maintained if the group leaders constantly model and support this as a “core value” of the group. There are several activities that can be planned to reinforce this emphasis. Group leaders can:

- pray for someone to occupy the empty chair
- pray for a lost world
- specifically pray for mission works that the Grand Central church supports
- plan a Christmas party, Super Bowl party or Fourth of July picnic and invite his friends
- collect medical items or other supplies for a specific mission work
- sponsor or mentor a child in need
- have members participate in World Bible School and discuss their progress in meetings