

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 1-15-12 AM NOTES
"KINGDOM CHALLENGE 2012: PLANK ONE"
VARIOUS SCRIPTURES
#2 in Series, "Kingdom Challenge 2012"

Kingdom Challenge 2012, Plank One: Develop and deepen relationships through fellowship in the First Baptist family.

John 17:24 (NKJV) "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."

Genesis 2:18 (NKJV) "*It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.*"

I. The Meaning of Fellowship

Fellowship (*koinonia*) – Partnership in a common goal, mission, or endeavor

Acts 2:44-47a (NKJV) "44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. 46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people."

Acts 2:47b (NKJV) "And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."

"The church is more than a classroom for spiritual instruction. It is more than a theater for spiritual performances. It is more than an organization to carry out spiritual programs. The church is an organism designed to enhance spiritual relationships. When authentic, biblical fellowship is missing, the church becomes a sterile, empty place. But when *koinonia* is occurring, the church is a dynamic, pulsating environment in which people find themselves alive."

- Tony Evans

II. The Missing of fellowship

A. Sin

Acts 5:1-5 (NKJV) "1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. 2 And he kept back *part* of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of *it*, and brought a certain part and laid *it* at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back *part* of the price of the land for yourself? 4 While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.' 5 Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things."

B. Isolation

C. Refusal to Get Involved in the Mission

Luke 19:10 (NKJV) "for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

John 20:21b (NKJV) "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

III. Practical Application

A. Start 12 New Adult Sunday School Classes in 2012

B. Increase the Percentage of Worship Attenders Involved in a Sunday School Class by 5%.

C. Provide Two Opportunities for Special Outreach Days through the Sunday School

D. Provide Three Opportunities for Church-Wide Fellowships

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[Read 1 John 1:3-7]

Our God is a relational God. God has never known what it is like to be alone. God is a triune being. He is one God in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. In eternity past before the angels were created and before man was created, God was in relationship within Himself. Admittedly, we are treading on ground that we can know little about when we talk about the relationships within the Trinity, but we do know that relationship was real before anything was created. **John 17:24 (NKJV)** "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 [God the Father] loved Me [God the Son] before the foundation of the world.**" I don't know all that it means when the Bible says that God created man in His own image, but I believe being in His image included the fact that He created us to be relational beings. It is interesting that God said that everything He made was good, but when it came to Adam God said in **Genesis 2:18 (NKJV)** "*It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.*" God exists in relationship and He created us to live in relationship.

The most important relationship is our relationship with God. Because of sin coming into the world and because the curse of sin was passed to all of Adam's descendents we are born out of relationship with God in a state of spiritual death which means that we are separated from God from birth. We have sin to thank for that. But God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son to take our sins and the wrath those sins justly demanded. Whoever will repent of their sin and savingly believe on, rely completely on, and trust in Jesus Christ and His atonement on Calvary's cross have their sins washed away and their nature changed so that they might live in a love relationship with God. Christianity is not about keeping rules and regulations to earn our way into God's favor; it is living in love relationship with God that is made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on our behalf. If you view becoming a Christian as just affirming as true the facts of the Bible, repeating a prayer, being baptized, joining the church, and then getting on with your life and your goals knowing that you have your ticket to heaven when the time of your death comes, you have been deceived and you are not saved. Becoming a Christian means that the barrier has been removed between us and God, and we are now new creations (2 Corinthians 5:17) and partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). When we are united with Christ, we are in relationship with the God who created us to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever.

While our relationship with God is the most important relationship, it is not the only relationship that salvation opens the door to. Being united to Christ (in Christ), we are now in relationship with every other person who is united to Christ as a new creation with a divine nature. Those relationships find expression through the church. Let me connect here the concept of relationship and fellowship. Godly relationships find their highest expression in Christian fellowship [we will define that in a moment]. That is why plank one of Kingdom Challenge 2012 says: Develop and deepen relationships **through fellowship** in the First Baptist family. Relationships that honor God and fulfill Christians come through genuine fellowship. The text we read in 1 John tells us that we can have fellowship with one another when we are in fellowship with God and evidencing that fellowship by walking in the light as He is in the light. When we are walking in fellowship with God and with other believers, our joy is full (1 John 1:4). Genuine fellowship builds and deepens our love relationship with God and also our relationships with other believers.

I. The Meaning of Fellowship

“Fellowship” is another of those words like “love”, “faith”, and “hope” that we take the world’s definition and apply it to the Scriptural word. That gets us in real trouble. The English dictionary defines fellowship as, “companionship; friendly association”. Is that all that biblical fellowship is? While Biblical fellowship involves companionship and friendly association, it is way more than that. The Greek word translated “fellowship” is “koinonia”. The simple **definition of koinonia is partnership in a common goal, mission, or endeavor**. We read in **Philippians 1:5 (NKJV)** “for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now”. In the ESV, HCSB, and NIV it is translated “partnership”. The same root word is translated “communion” in 1 Corinthians 10:16 and “sharing” in Philemon 1:6. Biblical fellowship then is partnership with, communion with, sharing with others in the pouring out of ourselves in a common mission for a common purpose. The concept of a “Lone Ranger” Christian is unbiblical. Even the Lone Ranger had Tonto! The Bible tells us that we are not only to believe, but we are also to belong. We who are united to Christ share so much! We share a common life (Christ’s life which is eternal life), a common purpose (to glorify God), a common love (to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and our neighbor as ourselves), a common mission (making disciples from every tongue, tribe, people and nation), a common lifestyle (to walk in the light as He is in the light), a common worldview (a Biblical worldview), and a common destination (heaven). When a group of Christ saturated people with a common purpose, a common love, a common lifestyle, a common worldview, and a common destination all unite to accomplish a common mission, we see a powerful church like the first century church in Acts that turned the Roman Empire upside down. Just like the church in Acts there are relationships established with one another that are so strong that people are willing to sell their belongings to make sure their partners in this common mission have their needs met. We read in **Acts 2:44-47a (NKJV)** “⁴⁴ Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, ⁴⁵ and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. ⁴⁶ So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people...” When the church was experiencing this kind of fellowship that was producing this kind of relationships, look at the result in **Acts 2:47b (NKJV)** “And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”

When the church begins to experience genuine fellowship, it gets the attention of the world. Those without Christ are longing for genuine relationships, but the world doesn’t realize that genuine relationships are developed only through true fellowship. Even when people aren’t aware of it they long for relationships. The pollster George Gallup says that Americans are among the loneliest people in the world [Andy Stanley, *Creating Community*, Page 22]. We used to have front porches with swings and now we have back decks with privacy fences! Instead of face to face interaction, we have Facebook. Instead of old fashioned courting, we have matchmaking computer services that match us “scientifically”. In a world like ours, what an opportunity the church has to show what genuine relationships are like as we experience God saturated fellowship. I love this quote by Tony Evans: **“The church is more than a classroom for spiritual instruction. It is more than a theater for spiritual performances. It is more than an organization to carry out spiritual programs. The church is an organism designed to enhance spiritual relationships. When authentic, biblical fellowship is missing, the church becomes a sterile, empty place. But when koinonia is occurring, the church is a dynamic, pulsating environment in which people find themselves alive”** [Tony Evans, *What Matters Most*, Page 172].

II. The Missing of Fellowship

When we read about the early church and see how much they accomplished with so little and then we look at the church today (our church) and see how little we accomplish with so much, we have to ask the question, “What is different today?” In other words, what causes us to miss this genuine fellowship? I’m not sure I know the total answer and I am still seeking the Lord as to the reason, but I believe I know some of the answer. What causes us to miss this first century like fellowship and the resulting relationships that come from the fellowship?

A. Sin

Sin is to relationships what cancer is to the body. Unless the cancer is eradicated, the body is at best crippled and at worst the body dies. When there is cancer in the body, you don't mess around in dealing with it. You take radical action through surgery, chemotherapy or radiation to eradicate it. That is the way we are to treat sin in the church which is called "the body of Christ". We see an example of that just a little later in the book of Acts. As people were making these great sacrifices to meet one another's needs, there was a couple who wanted to look good in front of other church members, but there was also the desire to personally profit from a sale of property. **Acts 5:1-5 (NKJV)** "1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. 2 And he kept back *part* of the proceeds, his wife also being aware *of it*, and brought a certain part and laid *it* at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back *part* of the price of the land for yourself? 4 While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.' 5 Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things." Later Ananias' wife, Sapphira came in and told he same lie and she too was struck dead. God dealt this severely with sin in the early church because pollution here in the infant church would have been devastating to the fellowship and the mission of the church. It would have been like polluting the spring from which the water comes. God still treats sin seriously in the church and that is why He has given some very clear steps to be taken in church discipline when there is unrepented of sin in the body that is bringing reproach on Christ and the church. Church discipline as we so often say is not because of the sin committed, but because of the refusal to repent of the sin.

Because cancer is so devastating to the physical body, we are told that we often need screenings at certain times of life – a colonoscopy, PSA test for men, mammograms for women, and others. In the same way, the church needs to have times that we examine ourselves to see if there is sin that we have pushed back into the darkness. Like cancer, that sin will eventually make itself known. Individual Christians should examine themselves daily, but the Lord's Supper is a special time where we as a body examine ourselves collectively to make sure there is no sin that results in our treating the Lord's body and blood in an unworthy manner.

B. Isolation

Relationships cannot develop in isolation. Over the 25 ½ years I have been here I have watched something that I see as a pattern. Some people will come to the worship services for awhile and then join. They might try a Sunday School Class once or twice and didn't feel real comfortable, but some never go. After a few years they still haven't gotten involved in a ministry or a Sunday School class and I will notice that their attendance in worship begins to wane. One day we get a notice from another church that they have joined or their deacon goes by to visit them and they say something like, "We joined another church because we have friends there and we just didn't connect at First Baptist" or "we are going to start visiting other churches because we just feel like our church has changed". How are you going to connect when you are not involved in a ministry and you don't attend Sunday School? That is not to say that we don't sometimes drop the ball, and we are constantly trying to make our Sunday School classes more relationship friendly and open, but the majority of time when I look up Sunday School records it shows they have never attended or haven't attended but a few times in the last several years. When you isolate yourself from other believers, you will not establish or deepen relationships because there is no true fellowship happening.

C. Refusal to Get Involved in the Mission

Jesus gave us His mission in becoming flesh and dwelling among us on earth. He said in **Luke 19:10 (NKJV)** "for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." We read what Jesus said just before He went back to heaven in **John 20:21b (NKJV)** "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." When a person is not in some way involved with going to the lost with the gospel, there will be no deepening of relationships because that comes through fellowship and fellowship is being a partner in a common mission. If you are not involved in making disciples of Christ in a direct or supportive way, you

are not experiencing genuine fellowship and thus you are not deepening in genuine relationships with others. That means you really are not connecting and I would ask you whose fault is it really?

There are certainly other barriers that cause us to miss fellowship, but those three are at the forefront.

III. Practical Application

In this point, I want to get real specific as to how we are going to go about developing and deepening relationships through fellowship within the FBC family. Before the specifics, let me encourage you to fight for fellowship. Don't just give it a shot and then back off because it seems like it is not happening. If you are a member experiencing fellowship, be on the lookout for others to drag them into fellowship if that is what it takes. Here are some specifics for 2012.

A. Start 12 New Adult Sunday School Classes in 2012

Several new classes started last week and more are to come. The goal of our Sunday School classes is to see believers come to spiritual maturity and to encourage and equip them to become involved in the mission. As a result, there will be a deepening of relationships because they will be ministering to one another and encouraging one another, getting involved in ministries with one another, and just loving one another in whatever way that needs to be done.

Every member ought to be a part of two and in some cases three fellowship groups in the church. First, there is the **congregation**. This is what we call the worship service. There is corporate worship, celebration, and a message from God's word. We see people joining the body, being baptized, and we hear testimonies of what God is doing. The congregation is exciting and helpful, but there is little relationship developing and deepening. Second, there is the **class**. The class can be any size – 7, 20, or we have several adult classes over 50 in average attendance. The primary purpose of the class is an in-depth study of the Word and ministry. For example, one of the classes provides meals for and people to help with the Sunday afternoon New Member's Class. Another class helped build a home for some from our church who had been called to work in a children's camp. Another class furnished our second mission house where missionaries live while on stateside assignment. One senior adult class has adopted a children's ministry and spends thousands of man (and woman) hours a year to assist this ministry of bringing children to Christ. Other classes have adopted one of the mobile home park churches to help in the ministry there. Other classes do special one time projects. I think you get the idea. The third group is the **cell**. The cell usually goes under the name of "care group" The cell is usually about 10 or 15 people maximum. In a smaller class of 8 or 10 people, the class and cell are the same, but when the class grows to 12 or 14, it would probably be good to start 2 cells or care groups within the class. The cell is where prayer and personal ministry takes place. The cell groups pray together, minister physically to members of the cell, and other such activities.

B. Increase the Percentage of Worship Attenders Involved in a Sunday School Class by 5%.

Right now we have hundreds of adults who attend worship on Sundays who are not in a Sunday School class. We want to reduce that number significantly.

C. Provide Two Opportunities for Special Outreach Days through the Sunday School

Study after study in the USA shows that the majority of people are open to an invitation to attend church if they are given an invitation by someone they know. These are not "High Attendance Days"; they are simply two Sundays where classes are praying and being intentional about what they ought to be doing every week.

D. Provide Three Opportunities for Church – wide Fellowships

As a church grows larger, it is difficult to get everyone together, but with the FLC and the ball fields, we now have a place big enough to do that. You will be hearing about these opportunities as 2012 goes by.

CONCLUSION

As we expand our base in 2012, we are going to do it by developing and deepening relationships through fellowship in the First Baptist family. (3156)