

WHAT DO WE LOSE WHEN WE FAKE IT BY JUST PLAYING CHURCH? 1st Corinthians 10:16-17

For a moment think of Jesus with me--Jesus *founded* His Church, *purchased* His Church, and now *ever lives* for His Church. Jesus is *all about the Church*. And what is Christ's complete focus at present? He is building His Church.

So Christ's priority, Christ's focus, Christ's activities are all centered upon the Church. That is where the action is. That is what is important to Him.

Now for a moment think of us who are here--Jesus loved us, bought us, saved and cleansed us—and now He wants us to focus our attention on what He thinks is worthy of all His attention—His Church.

How are you doing at building your life, your priorities, your schedule, your time, your investments around what Jesus says is MOST IMPORTANT—His Church?

The reason I am asking you that is that our Lord Jesus Christ says we lose something when we are not engaged in what He thinks is most important.

To help us keep His focus, Jesus left His Church an ordinance (definition: an authoritative command or order).

What are we gathered to celebrate this morning?

The Lord's Table, the Lord's Supper or—what is that other word we most often use for this celebration? The word we use is Communion, right?

Turn with me to the only place in the Bible where what we are doing this morning is called communion, and that is 1st Corinthians 10:16. Look with me at the two times the word communion is used and just exactly what that word means.

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the **communion** (Gk. *koinonia*) of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the **communion** (Gk. *koinonia*) of the body of Christ? (1 Corinthians 10:16 NKJV)

Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a **participation** in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a **participation** in the body of Christ? (1 Corinthians 10:16 NIV)

Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a **sharing** in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a **sharing** in the body of Christ? (1 Corinthians 10:16 NASB)

This morning we affirm that we are in partnership with Christ and with each other. This is based upon this word ***koinonia*** or communion, which Paul uses to describe the Lord's Supper.

Every time we come together we are gathered as partners; and every time we celebrate communion we are reminding ourselves of the sacred duties and responsibilities of our shared partnership with all other born again believers.

Greek word Strong's # 2842 *koinonia* translated in the KJV as- fellowship 12, communion 4, communication 1, distribution 1, contribution 1, to communicate 1; 20 times used in the New Testament. This word in the Greek dictionary means: fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, the share which one has in anything, participation; intimacy.

The instant you and I were saved we were joined to Christ's church. Not just the visible local assembly where you attend—but His Church, His Body, His 'general assembly of justified ones... enrolled in Heaven' as Jesus calls us in Hebrews.

Gathering as local assemblies is part of our obedience; but His Church we didn't join—He placed us there at the instant of salvation.

And all through our lives as believers, our eternal rewards are closely tied to how we invest our time in relation to Christ's Church.

This morning I have a question for each of us who are saved to answer in our hearts and minds.

What do we lose when we FAKE IT by JUST Playing Church?

Jesus Christ warns us that we will lose our rewards at His Judgment Seat if our time we were given on earth to invest in His Church is wasted.

The whole message of Paul to the Corinthians was invest in Christ's Church (1st Corinthians 3:5-18). His message is about building our life upon the foundation of Christ by serving His Church. When we fail to do that our time is wasted, whatever else we do with our life just burns up, and turns to soot and ashes!

God has a big plan for you and me in His Church; He wants us to make something out of the time He gives us by investing it in His Church.

Time like electricity flows around us and remains unseen and useless--unless it is captured and harnessed into usefulness.

A lifetime for each of us contains a lot of time.

Jesus left a long list of things to do with our time, while He was away building a home for us. That list is the New Testament. In the New Testament we find three broad categories of our responsibilities.

- **Evangelism:** is the part of the list that involves going and making disciples all over the world for His Church.
- **Consecration:** is another part of that list, and is all about each of us individually staying in His Word, staying close to Him, and staying away from sin.
- **Fellowship:** is the rest of that list, and is all about our responsibilities to the other members of Christ's family. And that happens to be the vast majority of all that the New Testament instructs and commands us to do.

Each day a river of time flows all around us. When life is measured in minutes it can be seen as a constant flow of time traveling by us minute by minute.

Here is the summary of time we each get in our lives:

- One year is a ½ million minutes.
- Your teen aged years last for just under four million minutes.
- A child from birth to heading off to college at eighteen was with you for 9 ½ million minutes.
- An entire average lifetime lasts for forty million minutes.

So before most of us head to Heaven 40 MILLION MINUTES will have flown by us in a steady stream, day in and day out.

I hope you are investing your life minute-by-minute in what Jesus Christ is most interested in. It is those tiny fractional investments in Christ's Church that will pile up for eternity.

One of the most clearly commanded investments we can make of our time is in Christ's Church. And time invested, minutes and hours given to Christ for His Church He said will never lose their reward.

Rewards are what is produced by my life that will last forever. Rewards flow from all three general lists He has left for us in His Word. All of those lists revolve around Christ's Church.

As part of His Church He wants and expects prayers from a clean heart, worship from a consecrated life, time lived under the direction of the Holy Spirit, acts of devotion prompted by His love, souls won to Christ, saints edified for Christ, suffering endured for Him, sacrifices made for Him.

But if we don't share His priorities for His Church, what happens? What do we lose when we FAKE IT by JUST Playing Church? We lose our rewards; our time we were given on earth just burns up, and turns to soot and ashes!

May I remind you of the incredible challenge each of us face? According to what Jesus said in the verses before us, all that will last of your and my life on Earth will be the time **we give Him** while we are alive on this planet. Everything else of ours--will either burn, rust, or rot. Have you paused lately and looked around all that fills up the minutes of our lives?

Everything we spend our minutes on will turn to rust and ashes except for what was transformed by Christ into rewards--all else attached to our lives Jesus Christ has promised He will burn away at the BEMA SEAT JUDGMENT.

How do we best fulfill our calling as Christ's church? By our communion, our fellowship, our partnership with Christ and each other!

We are connected in life by marriages, by family ties, by shared schools, shared work, shared communities where we live, by cell phones, email, postal mail, radio, TV, and shared experiences.

But what makes us this morning really closer than any other association? It is what we celebrate. Christ's death made us one with Him and each other. The only need is for us to live out the reality of what we have.

Please look again at 1st Corinthians 10:16-17.

Christ died to make us—ONE. We are to be united and share the fellowship that He bought and paid for.

Stand and follow along as I read these verses.

1 Corinthians 10:16-17 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the **communion** (Gk. *koinonia*) of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the **communion** (Gk. *koinonia*) of the body of Christ? 17 For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread. NKJV

This morning before we partake in the symbol of connection to Christ called communion—carefully decide whether you are really all here, really engaged to Christ, really emptied of self, really filled with the Holy Spirit—and truly committed to investing your life in Christ's Church. Before we even start let's offer a personal prayer of renewal to Jesus.

PRAY

This morning as a born again believer you are part of the most powerful group of people that could ever gather on Earth. Why is that? Because when we were born into Christ's family, we became a part of the Church of the Living God.

Since we have the same Lord, the same Book, the same Spirit as the early believers had, how can we also so fully serve the Lord?

Perhaps we need to simplify our understanding. We have so much truth, so much information, so many facts all swirling around inside our heads. How about looking at what people who did not have their own written copy of God's Word—understood what Paul and the other apostles had taught them? It can all be distilled down to one word—***koinonia*** our sacred partnership or fellowship.

We think it is optional, they knew it was essential. We have many avenues of encouragement and support, they had only one and that was each other.

Sometimes we speak of the early church in such nostalgic, glowing terms. We hear and talk about their fervency, their focus, the love that they expressed and displayed before a hostile world. Then we sit back and think that we can't be like that. It is impossible and unattainable...or is it?

Have we forgotten that they were just playing by the rules?

Do we forget that what they did is just living out what Christ and His apostles taught?

Do we forget that it is the same Lord, the same Word, and the same power that we all share?

One of the greatest dangers we face in Christ's church today is just playing church. It is the danger of just coming to a place, going through the expected motions and then escaping back to our real world.

Faking it in Christ's church is when we find this gathering for communion something we often don't fit into, don't really get into.

Faking it is coming to Church and leaving ***un-satisfied by the all sufficient Christ; un-edified by the all sufficient Word; and un-mortified by the all sufficient Spirit.***

The New Testament describes fellowship as the spiritual duty of believers. It means that all who belong to Jesus Christ are engaging in active involvement in the lives of other believers.

Often the joy that comes through fellowship with other believers is frequently lost because of our sinful neglect of our sacred duties. The Bible never describes the Christian life as one lived apart from other believers. Each of the members of the universal church, Christ's Body, are to be actively and intimately involved in the lives of other believers gathered in local assemblies.¹

¹ Adapted from MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

This spiritual fellowship, this sacred partnership or communion that stimulates others to holiness and faithfulness is most specifically expressed through the “one anothers” of the New Testament. ²

The New Testament contains over 30 positive and negative “one anothers”. But most frequently appearing is that call 15 times repeated to love each other³ The one command that seems to sum up all of the others is that we as believers must love each other. In one of Paul’s earliest epistles, we see that loving each other was one of the basics of the Christian life.

1 Thessalonians 4:9 But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another;

There are three common Greek words for love. But only one is the constant command of Christ for us to exercise towards each other.

- Usually *eros* is the love that takes. A person who exhibits *eros* often loves someone for what they can get out of that person. It’s the love typical of the world—sexual and lustful with a bent toward self-gratification.
- Often *phileo* is the love of give and take. In other words, I love you because of what I get from you *and* what I can give to you. It’s the give and take of friendship.
- But always, *agape* is the love that sacrificially gives. There’s no taking involved. It is completely unselfish. It seeks the highest good for another no matter what the cost, demonstrated supremely by Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf.

Can you imagine what would happen if most believers actually lived out Christ's love? We would certainly see entire cities and states overwhelmed by the same power as swept the Roman world of the early church.

- ***Love should be cultivated as a debt we owe.*** When we owe a debt to someone, every time we see them we think of it—so may we look on this world with God’s love (Romans 13:8).
- ***Love changes our definition of who our neighbor truly is.*** Christ's story teaches us that our neighbor may be someone not like us, but whom God puts in our path for us to help! (Luke 10:25-37)
- ***Love gives us urgency.*** We know the time is far spent, and that today is the day of salvation. We live knowing that it is—“later than it has ever been before.” (Romans 13:11-14) ⁴

What are duties of partnership? For a moment think back in life--have you ever been asked to stand and hold onto the bottom of a ladder while someone climbed up? How

² See Rom. 12:10, 16; 13:8; 14:19; 15:5, 7, 14; 16:16; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 4:2, 25, 32; 5:21; Phil. 2:3; Col. 3:9, 13, 16; 1 Thess. 4:9, 18, 5:11, 13; Heb. 3:13; 1 Peter 1:22; 4:9, 10; 5:5, etc..

³ See John 13:34, 35; 15:12, 17; Romans 12:9-10; 13:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 2 Thess. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 John 3:11,23; 4:7,11, 12; 2 John 5.

⁴ Adapted from Hughes, R. Kent, *Preaching the Word: Romans—Righteousness From Heaven*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books) 1997.

about to watch their bags while they stepped away for a moment? How about at camp when you went to the water front and were assigned a buddy that you always were to keep your eye on so that no one got out t deep in the water?

All of these are partnerships. Each has an agreed upon duty that needs to be fulfilled.

- If that duty of partnership is unfulfilled the ladder may slip and they will fall and injure themselves.
- If that duty of partnership is unfulfilled the bags may be stolen and their entire trip ruined by loss of all their vital gear.
- If that duty of partnership is unfulfilled the swimming buddy may get out over their head and nearly drown.

What do the sacred duties of our partnership look like? A survey of the New Testament gives us a good picture. Jesus Christ has commanded us to watch out for our buddies, for the fellow members of His family.

The longest list of our duties as believers in the New Testament is often called the one another statements. These are areas that we have a sacred duty to uphold for our fellow member of Christ's Church.

Let me trace them again for you so you can mark down in your Bible what Jesus Christ rewards, and what He is going to use as the standard for which He judges our investment of our 40 million minutes of our lifetime.

Here are the major duties from the 30 New Testament commands to share the sacred partnership of fellowship.

1. *We have entered into a sacred partnership to: **edify each other*** (Rom. 14:19).

Romans 14:19 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

2. *We have entered into a sacred partnership to: **counsel each other*** (Rom. 15:14).

Romans 15:14 Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

3. *We have entered into a sacred partnership to: **serve each other*** (Gal. 5:13).

Galatians 5:13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

4. *We have entered into a sacred partnership to: **bear each other's burdens*** (Gal. 6:2).

Galatians 6:2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

5. *We have entered into a sacred partnership to: **submit to each other*** (Eph. 5:21).

Ephesians 5:21 submitting to one another in the fear of God.

6. *We have entered into a sacred partnership to: **bear with each other*** (Col. 3:12–13a)

Colossians 3:12-13a Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another...

7. *We have entered into a sacred partnership to: **forgive each other*** (Col. 3:13b).

Colossians 3:13b ... and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

8. *We have entered into a sacred partnership to: **teach and admonish each other*** (Col. 3:16). ***We gather to share experiences for the mutual benefit of all***; our testimony may prevent someone else from making a similar error and suffering as we have done in our ignorance.

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

9. *We have entered into a sacred partnership to: **comfort each other*** (1 Thes. 4:18).

1 Thessalonians 4:18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

10. *We have entered into a sacred partnership to: **encourage each other to do good*** (Heb. 10:24–25). ***We gather to strengthen other family members--*** even if we do not need help (or just think we don't) fellowship was our responsibility left us by our Lord. We owe it to other family members to give fellowship to them; as we obey, we too are blessed.

Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

11. *We have entered into a sacred partnership to: **confess our trespasses to each other*** (James 5:16a).

James 5:16a Confess your trespasses to one another...

12. *We have entered into a sacred partnership to: **pray for each other*** (James 5:16).

James 5:16b ... and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

13. *We have entered into a sacred partnership to: **be hospitable to each other*** (1 Peter 4:9–10).

1 Peter 4:9-10 Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. 10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

How do we best fulfill our calling as Christ's church? By our partnership with Christ and each other! We are connected in life by marriages, by family ties, by shared schools, shared work, shared communities where we live, by cell phones, email, postal mail, radio, TV, and shared experiences.

But what makes us this morning really closer than any other association? It is what we celebrate. Christ's death made us one with Him and each other. The only need is for us to live out the reality of what we have.

Christ died to make us—ONE. We are to be united and share the fellowship that He bought and paid for.

It was as He was teaching the disciples the observance of the Lord's Supper that Jesus made this clearest of all the expression of who we have become in Christ. This is what He said in John 13:35

"By THIS shall ALL know that YOU are MY disciples..."

What was it that would be the acid test of discipleship? By knowledge? By zeal? By productivity? No, no the way others would universally see Christ was in His disciple's LOVE!

1. ***We gather to encourage one another through the hard times of life.*** The longer you live and serve Christ's Church the more that we realize that some smiling faces are covering aching hearts and burdened souls. We gather to come alongside and make their load a bit easier.

*Romans 15:4 for whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience **and comfort of the Scriptures** might have hope. NKJV*

2. ***We gather to let others know our joys so they may rejoice with us.*** When we gather we should seek to find out and thrill over answered prayers. And as we glean those evidences of God's power we find we are encouraged, and we encourage others to keep praying.

Psalms 50:15 Calls upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." NKJV

Acts 4:18 so they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. NKJV

*Acts 4:23 and being let go, **they went to their own companions** and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. NKJV*

Acts 4:31 and when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. NKJV

3. **We gather to share our burdens with others so we may weep with them that weep**—God calls us to a fellowship of tears, a sharing of sorrow and a compassion with suffering.

Romans 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. NKJV

James 5:13-16 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. 16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. NKJV

4. **We gather to enlighten others by the light of God's Word.** When we learn a truth from God's Word, and share it with another—that truth gets impressed on our mind and we desire to learn more.

1 John 1:7 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. NKJV

5. **We gather to exhort the backslider to return to the Lord;** your offer of fellowship may remind him of happier days and create a longing to return to the Savior and blessing.

*1 Thessalonians 5:14 Now we exhort you, brethren, **warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.** NKJV*

Titus 1:13 This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, NKJV

Serving the same boss. FELLOW SLAVES Col. 1:7; 4:7=Our Shared Master. 4889-SUNDOULOS-Sharing Same Master (Not Service). TYCHICUS—*The Man With A Message*. That word "minister" seems to denote that he was acting as a sort of personal servant to the apostle, a kind of valet, a reliable person ready at hand to do any job, to

run any errand for him. A servant of his master; and, at the same time, a “fellow-servant” of the Master—the two Greek words are different. In the New Testament original, there are no less than eight different words for the idea of service.

1. The ministering servant, *diakonos*.
2. The household servant, *oiketes*.
3. The subordinate servant, *uperetes*.
4. The confidential servant, *therapon*.
5. The public servant, *leitourgos*.
6. The temple servant, *latreuo*.
7. The responsible servant, *oikonomos*. And, most frequent of all,
8. The bond servant, *doulos*. It is the first and last of these words that are used here of Tychicus. He is not the slave of Paul, he is the *diakonos*, the ministering servant; but he is the *sundoulos*, the fellow-slave, with Paul “in the Lord”. The inspired New Testament is so exact in its use of words.

UNDER ROWERS

1. Rowed to Captains Beat=Submissive
2. Worked Together-Sensitive
3. Trusted Captain-Trusting
4. Committed For Life=Dedicated
5. Received No Honor=Humble

Revelation 4:10 – Worship the Lord thy God = command

Revelation 4:10 - Worship Him who bought us = our eternal pursuit

John 4:24 = object of God’s desire

Romans 12:1 = starts in a yielded mind!

We gather because we share the same **rules of conduct**. Philippians 3:20 = fellow citizens All have the same: language, dress, law, home, king, customs.... Philippians 3:20 – We have a shared code of conduct because we are fellow citizens – shared goal, love, dress

What does it mean? #4847 – Sumpolites(N) Ephesians 2:19 But fellow citizens with the saints; Politeuomai(V) Acts 23:1 I have lived in all good conscience; Philippians 1:27 Let your conversation be; Politeuma(N) Philippians 3:20 For our community(Lit) is in heaven; Polites = citizen of same town= Spiritual Communion; Christ’s Righteousness; Loving each other; Following God’s Word

Commuting to the same place. FELLOW CITIZENS Ephesians 1:29⇒Philippians 3:20=Our Shared Rules of Conduct: #4847-SUMPOLITES(N) Ephesians 2:19 But Fellow Citizens With The Saints; POLITEUOMAI(V) Acts 23:1 I Have

Lived In All Good Conscience; Ph. 1:27 Let your Conversation Be; POLITEUMA(N) Ph. 3:20 For Our Community(Lit) Is In Heaven; POLITES=CITIZEN OF SAME TOWN

1. Christ is building the church – Matt. 16:18
2. We are the church/Christ's body – 1 Corinthians 12:27
3. We belong to Him – Heb. 13:20-21

Now if you are Christ's body with God's power and enablement, what should you be doing? The New Testament describes that in word pictures.

We gather because we share the same **labor union**. As a church we are all in a shared labor union or we are working together for God. Fellow Workers Romans 16:3,9,21 = our shared labor union. I Corinthians 3:9 – We are in a shared labor union because we are fellow workers without (I Corinthians 3:9), lifting lowly work (Philippians 2:25), for truth (I Thessalonians 3:2) producing joy. Sunergos(adj.)

Working the same shift. FELLOW WORKERS Romans 16:3, 9, 21=What's That? Our Shared Labor Union. SUNERGOS(ADJ): Romans 16:3, 9, 21 My---; I Corinthians 3:9 We Are---With God - Working With God; 2 Corinthians 1:24 Are--Of Your Joy-Produces Joy In Christ. 8:23 My Partner And---Concerning You; Philippians 2:25 My Brother And--Lifts Lowly Work to High Calling; 4:3 Other My---Reflects On Our Eternal Design; Col. 4:11 Focus On Kingdom Task; I Th. 3:2, Phile. 1,24; 3 Jn. 8 Laboring for Truth

- 1. Romans 16:3,9,21 My ----
- 2. working with God 1 Corinthians 3:9 We are ---- with God
- 3. produces joy in ---- 2 Corinthians 1:24 Are --- of your joy
- 4. focusing on O/A 8:23 My partner and ---- concerning you
- 5. lifting lowly work to high calling Philippians 2:25 My brother and ---
- 6. reflecting on our eternal design 4:3 Other my ---
- 7. focusing on kingdom task Col. 4:11
- 8. Laboring for truth 1 Thess. 3:2, Phil 1:24, 3 John 8

Also we have shared rules of conduct or in other words fellow citizens.

We gather because we share the same **fellowship** is the third facet of our lives together as a church. Let's go over familiar ground and be reminded of the elements God emphasizes of that fellowship. Philippians 1:7 – We share a marvelous fellowship because we are fellow partners. Fellow Partners/Partakers in Philippians 1:7 – our shared fellowship; also Acts 3/6. Sugkoinonos (N) Ephesians 5:11 Have no --- with the unfruitful works; Negative Sin Philippians 1:7 You were --- in defense and conf; Positive Grace; Rev. 18:4 Be not --- of her sin;

Eating at the same table. FELLOW PARTNERS/PARTAKERS Philippians 1:7=And That? Our Shared Fellowship. SUGKOINOONOS(N) Ephesians 5:11 Have No—W/The Unfruitful Works Neg. Sin; Philippians 1:7 You Were---In Defense & Conf.-Pos. Grace; Rev. 18:4 Be Not---Of Her Sin;

The book of Acts gives us 7 key elements to check our fellowship by – All these elements were the passions the early church held dear –

1. 1:14 – fellowship of praying
2. 2:1 – fellowship of being together
3. 2:46 – fellowship of worshiping together
4. 4:24 – fellowship of waiting on God together
5. 5:12 – fellowship of identifying with Christians
6. 8:6 – fellowship of responding to God's word
7. 15:25 – fellowship of following scriptural leadership

We gather because we share the same **struggle** as fellow strugglers/athletes: Philippians 1:27 – Our shared struggle – because we are on the same team sunathleo. sunagonidzomai – Romans 15:30 = in prayer; sunathleo – Philippians 1:27 = striving faith gospel; 2 Tim. 2:5 = strive; Philippians 4:3 = shared Paul's struggle; agonidzomai – struggle/fight; 1 Corinthians 9:25 = every man that striveth; Col. 1:29 = striving according; Col. 4:12 = laboring fervently in prayer; 1 Tim. 6:12 = fight the good fight; 2 Tim. 4:7 = I have fought.

- **Facing the same struggles.** FELLOW SRUGGLERS/ATHLETES=Our Shared Struggle. SUNAGONIDZOMAI Romans 15:30 In Prayer; SUNATHLEO Philippians 1:27 Striving Faith Gospel; 4:3 Shared Paul's Struggle

Erich Saver paints a picture of the Roman world and Christians. The Chief Different Kinds of Games. The Race (Gk. Stadion). Of the different games the New Testament mentions three: racing, boxing, and wrestling. The race is mentioned most frequently. In each of the three pictures of athletic life as employed in the New Testament there is prominent a special view-point of the spiritual life and effort. The race looks forward to the heavenly goal, to the "high calling of God in Christ Jesus," to the realm above (Philippians 3:14). Boxing points to our opposition to the enemy in us. Paul at least so employ it: "so fight (lit. box) I, as not beating the air: but I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage" (1 Corinthians 9:26-27). Wrestling refers to our fight with the powers of darkness around and beneath us. Thus Paul says: "Our wrestling (Gk. Pale) is against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness" (Ephesians 6:12). So – Why do we struggle, fight and contend in this spiritual race course?

- The Wreath of Incorruption – steadfast runner. "In a race all run, but one receiveth the prize...Now they do it to receive a corruptible wreath; but we an incorruptible" (1 Corinthians 9:24-25). *Can the racer be crowned who failed in running?*
- The Wreath of Rejoicing – unselfish laborer. "What is our hope or joy, or wreath of glorying? Are not even ye before our Lord Jesus at His coming?" (1 Thess. 2:19). Can he be crowned for turning many to righteousness (Dan. 12:3) who never turned one?
- The Wreath of Glory – example to flock. "The elders therefore among you I exhort...Tend the flock of God... and when the chief shepherd shall be

manifested ye shall receive the wreath of glory" (1 Pet. 5: 1-4). Can a disciple be rewarded for shepherding the flock of God who never did it?

- The Wreath of Righteousness – victorious fighter. "I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the wreath of righteousness...and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4: 7-8). Can the wreath of watchfulness be given to him who never watched?
- The Wreath of Life – faithful unto death. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the wreath of life" (Jam. 1:12). *Can he be crowned for resisting temptation who succumbed to it?*

We gather because we share the same **Experience, Sympathy and Concern**. I Peter 3:8 – to learn about our shared concern or sympathy – literal sum patheo / sumpasko = to experience the same. This verse lists five characteristics desirable in Christians. It is worthy of note that they are all social, and have to do with Christians' relations to one another.

- **Having the same symptoms.** FELLOW FEELERS I Peter 3:8=OUR SHARED CONCERN/SYMPATHY. #4834-SUMPATHEO; SUMPASKO=To Experience The Same. BRAND AND YANCEY

Using the same medicine. FELLOW COMFORTERS/STRENGTHENERS Romans 1:12=Our Shared Strength and Comfort. 4837-SUMPARAKALEO-CONSOLE JOINTLY

1. *Of one mind, homophrones*, means 'minding the same things.' Note the use of the corresponding verb 'to mind' in Mark viii. 33, RV (AV 'savourest'), and Romans viii. 5. A man's character is determined and revealed by the things to which he gives his mind. Christians, Peter insists, should be united by a common interest and outlook; they should all 'mind' the things of God and of the Spirit, and thus imitate the mind of Christ (cf. Philippians.ii 2,5). Just as Christians have a common 'confession' (*homologia*; see Hebrews iii. I, iv. 14, RV), i.e. they all say the same thing, so they should have a common mind, a mind informed by God's Word and Spirit. What Peter describes and desires, therefore, is not just human agreement together, but agreement reached by each and all receiving the truth of God (cf. Ephesians iv. 13-15).
2. The word *sumpathesis, having compassion*, means 'suffering together', having responsive fellow-feelings, e.g. rejoicing with those that rejoice, and weeping with those that weep (Romans xii. 15; cf. Hebrews xiii. 3). At its deepest level this should follow the preceding characteristic. Those who are united by a common spiritual mind, should be moved by, or be sensitive to, the same spiritual emotions. This is why Christians can unite with fervor in singing hymns which confess the faith, or give God praise, etc.
3. Love as brethren, philadelphoi, implies loving one another because we are now related as fellow-members of God's family. Again, it is the Godward

reference that gives the word its deepest and distinctive Christian meaning (cf. I Thessalonians iv. 9).

4. *Be pitiful, eusplagchnoi*, RV 'tenderhearted', means being affectionately sensitive, quick to feel and to show affection. The Greek word refers to the good condition of man's 'inward parts' or 'bowels' (see Philippians ii. 1). While the Greeks associated these with courage (cf. our colloquial use of 'guts'), so that to them this adjective might mean 'brave-hearted', the Hebrews associated them with feeling or affection. Here, therefore, the adjective means 'tenderhearted.' In our day, with so much tragic news broadcast so frequently and so widely, we have become too accustomed to hear of other people's sufferings, and so tend to be superficially hardened and not so easily or so deeply moved; or we do nothing about it. There is all the more need for the free, full and practical expression of such deep feeling among Christian brethren, issuing in corresponding action.
5. *Be courteous translates philophrones*, 'friendly'. The preferable reading, followed by RV, is tapeinophrones, 'humbleminded.' Humility or lowliness of mind is a peculiarly biblical virtue, not appreciated as such by the Greeks. Such an attitude corresponds to the facts of life. We are weak, dependent, finite creatures, with bodies of 'humiliation' or 'lowliness' (Philippians iii. 21 RV). This, therefore, is the right spirit in which to live before God. It was the spirit exhibited and inculcated by Jesus (Matthew xi. 29). It is the spirit which God rewards – with sustaining grace and consequent exaltation (v.5,6).

To share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us" (I Thessalonians 2:5-8). Someday we shall all be at the receiving end – you can count on it. We shall be the ones in need of affirmation, encouragement, a gentle touch of tenderness. It's like the time-worn counsel of the good doctor Thomas Sydenham, the "English Hippocrates" (1624-1689). Addressing himself to the professionals of his day, Dr. Sydenham wrote:

- *It becomes every person who purposes to give himself to the care of others, seriously to consider the four following things: First, that he must one day give an account to the Supreme judge of all the lives entrusted to his care. Second, that all his skill and knowledge and energy, as they have been given him by God, so they should be exercised for His glory and the food of mankind, and not for mere gain or ambition. Third, and not more beautifully than truly, let him reflect that he has undertaken the care of no mean creature; for, in order that he may estimate the value, the greatness of the human race, the only begotten Son of God became himself a man, and thus ennobled it with His divine dignity, and far more than this, died to redeem it. And fourth, that the doctor being himself a mortal human being, should be diligent and tender in relieving his suffering patients, inasmuch as he himself must one day be a like sufferer.*

And that applies to ten-year-old with a bellyache, eighty-year-olds with a backache, anybody with a headache...and everybody with a heartache.

Greek Dictionary Defines Sum as

- 1) to express association
- 2) to combine persons / things
- 3) in compound words to alter / intensify meaning

That's it this is super shared comfort Paul says we have one time in New Testament.
How do we do it?

By Holy Spirit

What is it?

It is the Spirit empower desire and action to –

Draw near to God through His Word. The Spirit of God is our PARAKLESIS (#3874) as seen in Acts 13:15 “word of exhortation” is speaking God’s word

Romans 12:8 = ministering in power of Holy Spirit

Romans 15:4 = enduring quality of God’s word

Romans 15:5 = consolation comes from God

The final portrait of this life of encouragement is Barnabus in Acts 4:36

-He is sharing his finances in Acts 4

-He is following humbly in Acts 13

-He is reclaiming as failure (John Mark) in Acts 15

Abstain from all fleshly lusts

1 Peter 2:11

Abstain from all appearances of evil

1 Thessalonians 5:22

Avoid profane and vain babblings

1 Timothy 6:20

Avoid false science

1 Timothy 6:20

Be wise as serpents	Matthew 10:16
Be harmless as doves	Matthew 10:16
Be reconciled to a brother	Matthew 5:24
Avoid troublemakers	Romans 16:17
Avoid foolish questions	Titus 3:9
Avoid arguments about the law	Titus 3:9
Do all to God’s glory	1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians
Give no offense	1 Corinthians 10:32
Take the Lord’s Supper	1 Corinthians 11:24–26
Let everyone examine himself at communion	1 Corinthians 11:28
Be children in [avoiding] malice	1 Corinthians 14:20
Be men in understanding	1 Corinthians 14:20
Do not be children in understanding	1 Corinthians 14:20
Do all things in decent order	1 Corinthians 14:40
Do not be deceived by evil companions	1 Corinthians 15:33

Be steadfast	1 Corinthians 15:58
Be unmovable	1 Corinthians 15:58
Be always abounding in God's work	1 Corinthians 15:58
Give as God has prospered	1 Corinthians 16:2
Let no man deceive himself	1 Corinthians 3:18
Lay aside all envy	1 Peter 2:1
Lay aside all evil speaking	1 Peter 2:1
Honor rulers	1 Peter 2:17
Desire the milk of the Word	1 Peter 2:2
Be ready to give an answer of the hope that is in	1 Peter 3:15
Have a good conscience	1 Peter 3:16
Let the adorning of women be more inward than	1 Peter 3:3-4
Cast your cares upon God	1 Peter 5:7
Be vigilant	1 Peter 5:8
Be patient toward all men	1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Timothy
Do not quench the Spirit	1 Thessalonians 5:19
Be an example to other believers	1 Timothy 4:12
Give time to reading	1 Timothy 4:13
Be aware of yourself and your doctrine	1 Timothy 4:16
Honor widows	1 Timothy 5:3
Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers	2 Corinthians 6:14-18
Be separate from the unclean	2 Corinthians 6:17
Come out from among the world	2 Corinthians 6:17
Give willingly	2 Corinthians 8:12
Give freely	2 Corinthians 9:6-7
Give purposely	2 Corinthians 9:7
Do not bid false teachers Godspeed	2 John 10-11
Beware of backsliding	2 Peter 3:17
Grow in grace	2 Peter 3:18
Do not be weary in well-doing	2 Thessalonians 3:13
Withdraw from disorderly people	2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14
Hold fast sound words	2 Timothy 1:13
Study to show yourself approved to God	2 Timothy 2:15
Be gentle to all men	2 Timothy 2:24
Be ready to teach	2 Timothy 2:24
Be thankful	Colossians 3:15
Let your speech be with grace	Colossians 4:6
Put on the new man	Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10
Be angry and sin not	Ephesians 4:26
Do not let the sun go down on your wrath	Ephesians 4:26
Give no place to Satan	Ephesians 4:27
Do not grieve the Holy Spirit	Ephesians 4:30
Have no fellowship with darkness	Ephesians 5:11
Redeem the time	Ephesians 5:16
Be filled with the Spirit	Ephesians 5:18
Do not be drunk with wine	Ephesians 5:18
Give thanks	Ephesians 5:20; Philippians 4:6
Let wives be subject to their Husbands	Ephesians 5:22; Colossians 3:18

Let husbands love their wives	Ephesians 5:25
Let wives reverence their husbands	Ephesians 5:33
Put on the whole armor of God	Ephesians 6:11, 13
Honor fathers	Ephesians 6:2
Bring up children in the Lord	Ephesians 6:4
Walk in the Spirit	Galatians 5:25
Do not provoke one another	Galatians 5:26
Restore backsliders in meekness	Galatians 6:1
Let those who are taught support the teacher	Galatians 6:6
Do not be weary in well-doing	Galatians 6:9
Do not forsake assembling together in worship	Hebrews 10:25
Exhort one another	Hebrews 10:25
Have confidence in God	Hebrews 10:35
Lay aside every weight	Hebrews 12:1
Run with patience the race before us	Hebrews 12:1
Strengthen feeble knees	Hebrews 12:12
Look to Jesus	Hebrews 12:2
Offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually	Hebrews 13:15
Be content with what you have	Hebrews 13:5
Do not be influenced by strange doctrines	Hebrews 13:9
Come boldly to the throne of grace	Hebrews 4:16; 10:19–23
Do not be slothful	Hebrews 6:12
Let everyone be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow	James 1:19
Count it joy when you are tempted	James 1:2
Resist the devil	James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:9
Let the afflicted pray	James 5:13
Have compassion	Jude 22
Earnestly contend for the faith	Jude 3
Beware of covetousness	Luke 12:15
Do not be afraid of men	Luke 12:4
Let him share with the needy	Luke 3:11
Beware of [evil] men	Matthew 10:17
Let everyone deny himself	Matthew 16:24
Be careful not to despise little ones	Matthew 18:10
Honor mothers	Matthew 19:19
Let your light shine	Matthew 5:16
Pray for your persecutors	Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:28
Do not lay up treasures on earth	Matthew 6:19
Don't let the left hand know what the right hand is	Matthew 6:3
Take no anxious thought of tomorrow	Matthew 6:34
Do not be like the hypocrites in prayer	Matthew 6:5
Treat others as you expect to be treated	Matthew 7:12
Beware of false prophets	Matthew 7:15; Philipians 3:2
Pray for laborers	Matthew 9:38; Luke 10:2
Do all things without murmuring or disputing	Philipians 2:14
Hold forth the Word of life	Philipians 2:16
Be anxious for nothing	Philipians 4:6
Let your requests be made known to God	Philipians 4:6

Present your body to God	Romans 12:1
Be patient in tribulation	Romans 12:12
Be of one mind	Romans 12:16
Be transformed	Romans 12:2
Do not be conformed to this world	Romans 12:2
Let everyone obey civil laws	Romans 13:1
Do not judge one another in doubtful things	Romans 14:1
Do not cause others to stumble	Romans 14:13
Follow things that edify	Romans 14:19
Mark troublemakers	Romans 16:17; Philippians 3:17
Consider yourself dead to sin	Romans 6:11
Do not let sin reign in the body	Romans 6:12

- ***The New Relationship: The Brotherhood of Believers.*** We have seen that when we take Christ as Savior we are immediately justified, and we immediately have a new relationship with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. When we come into this new relationship with the triune God, all those who have ever trusted Christ as their Savior are our brothers and sisters. This has been usually spoken of as “the communion of saints.”
 1. *Matthew 23:8* Not all men are brothers, according to the biblical use of that word. We are all created by God. As all are descendants of Adam and Eve, all men are “my kind” and are to be carefully treated as neighbors (Luke 10:27-37). But in the terms of the Bible, we are brothers to those who have Christ as their Savior and therefore have God as their father.
 2. *Galatians 6:10* We are to do good to all men, but there is a clear line between the “family of believers” and others.
 3. *Ephesians 2:19* Before we took Christ as our Savior, we were strangers and foreigners. But when we became Christians, we were made fellow-citizens and members of God’s household with all others who had done the same.
 4. *1 Thessalonians 5:14, 15* Again we are told to do good to all people, but again it is made clear that there is a distinction between those who are the “family of believers” and others.
 5. *1 Peter 2:17* We have a special relationship to those who are brothers in Christ.
 6. *1 John 1:3* A person cannot have true spiritual fellowship with Christians until he has heard the facts of the gospel and has acted upon those facts by accepting Christ as his Savior.
 7. *Revelation 19:10* The brethren are defined as those who hold to the testimony of Jesus.
 8. *John 13:30, 34, 35* Judas, who did not believe on Christ, had left the table before this command for special love among Christians was given.
 9. *John 21:23* It is clear that “brethren” as used here speaks of believers.
 10. *Acts 9:17* Saul was considered a “brother” only after he had taken Christ as his Savior.
 11. *Acts 21:17* Only the fellow-believers were “the brothers.”
 12. *1 Corinthians 7:12* In this passage the man is a believer and therefore a brother. The wife is not a believer and therefore is not included in this term.

- There are three practical aspects of the brotherhood of believers. The first practical aspect is that brothers in Christ should be a ***spiritual help*** to each other.
 1. *Romans 12:10* Christians should love one another and should desire the advancement of their brothers above their own advancement.
 2. *1 Corinthians 12:26, 27* Christians should sorrow when other Christians suffer, and should rejoice when other Christians have joy.
 3. *Romans 15:30; 2 Corinthians 1:11* Christian brothers are to pray for each other.
 4. *Ephesians 4:15, 16* When individual Christians become what they should be, the Church becomes what it should be. Each Christian has something to contribute to this.
 5. *Ephesians 5:21 – 6:9* The brotherhood of believers should be the predominant factor between Christians in all the relationships of life. This is true of husbands and wives, children and parents, servants and masters, employees and employers. In all such relationships we are also brothers and sisters. See Song of Solomon 4:9, 10, 12 — there is a double relationship of sister and bride.
 6. *Ephesians 6:18* Christians should pray for each other and for all Christians. The brotherhood of believers cuts across the lines of nationality, race, language, culture, social position, and geographical location.
 7. *1 Thessalonians 5:11* The two great spiritual helps which brothers in Christ should be to each other are that of encouraging one another and edifying one another. The latter means helping other Christians to be what they should be in doctrine and life.

1. The second practical aspect is that brothers in Christ should be a ***material help*** to each other.

1. *Acts 11:29* From the earliest days of the Church, Christians gave of their material goods to help those brothers in Christ who had less materially, even those at great geographical distance.
2. *2 Corinthians 8:4* This is one illustration of many examples given in the New Testament of Christians giving money to help other Christians in material need.
3. *Romans 12:13; Titus 1:8; Philemon 5, 7, 22* One form of practical help is by giving hospitality.
4. *1 John 3:17, 18* There is no use talking about Christian love if we do not help our brothers in Christ when they have material needs.
5. *Acts 5:4* The Christians helped each other materially, but they did it voluntarily. Each man kept the right of personal property and possession.

▪ The third aspect is that brothers in Christ should enjoy the ***fellowship and companionship*** of each other.

1. *Acts 2:42, 46* From the earliest days of the Church, the Christians had daily fellowship with each other.

2. *Ephesians 4:1-3; Colossians 2:1, 2* True Christians should try to have fellowship together in love and peace.
3. *Hebrews 10:25* It is the direct command of our Lord that after we have become Christians, we should meet together for worship with other Christians. This was not just to be a passing thing in the early days of the Church, but should continue even until Christ comes back again. This verse says we should be especially careful to keep this command as we come toward the time of the second coming of Christ. If we have accepted Christ as our Savior, we have the responsibility to search out a Bible-believing group of God's people, where there is right doctrine and real community in love, and meet with them. We should not join ourselves to just any group that calls itself Christian, but one where the teaching is truly biblical, where discipline is maintained concerning life and doctrine, and where there is true community. If there is *no* such group geographically available (and there are such places), then prayerfully before the Lord we should find even a small number to meet for worship, prayer, study, encouraging one another, and to have community.

We have seen that the brotherhood of believers crosses all the lines of space. It also crosses all the lines of time.

Hebrews 12:22, 23 his brotherhood includes not just Christians on the earth today, but Christians who are in Heaven.⁵

⁵Schaeffer, Francis A., *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer*, (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books) 1985.