

Weekly Reflection: "Fellowship, a means of grace."

Fellowship

In the bible, fellowship means a deep spiritual partnership, shared life, shared mission, and active community connection.

Means of Grace

In His sovereignty God has ordained that there are means of grace. There are avenues or ways that we receive the grace from God that we need. I think you can make an argument that there are three main avenues or channels that God pours grace into our lives: The Word, Prayer, and Fellowship.

Fellowship, a means of grace.

"And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved." Matthew 24:12-13 ESV

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." Hebrews 10:23-25 ESV

Jesus said, "The love of many will grow cold. And those who endure to the end will be saved." And our text from Hebrews sees this coming and says in verse 24, "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love [how to keep it from becoming cold] and good works [the expression of love] . . ." How? "Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

Love is the first and great commandment, and the second commandment (Matthew 22:37-39). Love fulfills the whole law (Romans 13:8-10). God has ordained that this love, this all-important reality, rise and fall in the church with our willingness to meet with each other and encourage each other and stir each other up. We really need to let this grip us. If Jesus said that in the last Day the love of many would grow cold, and if He counsels us how to triumph over that coldness, namely, by not neglecting to meet together but rather meeting and encouraging each other and stirring each other up to love, then we should listen to Him. We should follow His counsel. Not to follow His counsel here is very foolish and dangerous.

Consider one another.

Verse 24 says, ***"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,"*** Literally, it says, "Let us consider one another." The word "how" is not there in the original. ***"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works," (Hebrews 10:24 NKJV)*** To consider means to contemplate, notice, ponder, think hard, or get to know. The object and focus of our consideration is each other. In other words, get to know people, notice what's going on in someone's life.

What's the purpose of considering one another?

Stir each other up.

There is a clear goal for considering one another, to stir them up to love and good works. To stir up means to provoke, but this is a provoking to love and good works (not anger and hatred). So, knowing your brother or sister, provoke him or her to love and good works. This means there is an intentionality with our fellowship, we should have an agenda. Stir someone up so they have more power to love, more resources to love, more motivation to love, more wisdom to love and do good works, so that people will see our good works, as Jesus said, and give glory to our Father in heaven.

How are we going to be able to consider one another so we can stir one another up to love and good works?

Get together.

If you're going to get to know someone so that you can stir them up to love and good works than you must get together. Do you see the warning in this text? ***"Don't neglect to meet together, as is the habit of some."*** The warning here is that not meeting with other Christians in this way can become a habit. Professing Christians are always in danger of forming the habit of not meeting with other Christians to encourage and be encouraged in faith and love. Are you a part of a regular gathering of Christians so that you can give and receive personal exhortation from Scripture? If we don't show up, if we don't get together, if we neglect the fellowship, we can't get to know each other and stir each other up to love and good works. It sounds simple, but it is often quite difficult to practice. Developing real, honest, vulnerable relationships can take time and definitely take effort and intentionality. But remember, if you are born again, you are filled with the Holy Spirit, and He is the Helper, the Comforter, the Counselor, and the power for you to be a witness of Jesus.

Once we are together, how do we stir one another up to love and good works?

Encourage one another.

"not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." (Hebrews 10:25 ESV) Christian fellowship is word-centered fellowship. Certainly, we can encourage one another with good works, and we should. I want to focus on our words as a means of encouragement. We use words to encourage, strengthen, and comfort our brothers and sisters in Christ. Put grace into the heart through the ear. Be God's voice to your brother and hear God's voice in your brother's. Our words to each other are so important in church life: ***"Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear." (Ephesians 4:29 ESV)***

What type of setting can this happen in? The kind of meeting in view seems to be one that allows for some kind of mutual encouragement and stirring up of one another. It is not talking about merely sneaking into a big church service and sneaking out again. It's talking about the kind of meeting where you can know someone in a personal way, where you can say something to someone that will help them be more loving and where someone can say something to you that will help you be more loving and help you have the strength to more good works. Coming to worship on Sunday morning, as important as that is, is not enough. God means for us to be with each other so that we can exhort and encourage each other to press on.

How often should we get together to stir one another up to love and good works and encourage one another?

All the more.

This is the last part of Hebrews 10:25: “**and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.**” That’s the Day of Christ’s coming and the end of the age. The stresses and troubles and dangers are going to increase as history comes to a close. There will be greater satanic activity, greater evil, greater threats to your faith and love. Jesus said “**And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.**” (Matthew 24:11-13 ESV) That’s why we better take this word of Hebrews 10 very seriously in our day. If your love is going to survive the onslaught of Satan and evil, you must meet with those who can stir you up to love and good works. And don’t miss that it says, “all the more.” The frequency and seriousness of your meetings should increase as the Day of Judgment draws near.

I appeal to you as your pastor, don’t be a loner in the Christian life. God did not make you to be that way. In the words of Hebrews 10:25, “**Do not neglect to meet together . . . but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.**”