

Fellowship
5th in a series of 5

Slide #1 Bucket Offering: Just a reminder that for the next couple of months our Bucket Offerings will be going to a children's camp in Tirrasas (Ter-ra'-says) Costa Rica, an area of extreme poverty.

Slide #2 This ministry is under the direction of Jairo (Hiro), a local missionary. Jairo (Hiro) feeds them, teaches them soccer skill and the Word of God. This camp is in the same area where Stacy Beiler is serving under SCORE International.

Announcements:

1. Because of the Super Bowl, Quizzing is this afternoon...here at TL. Come on out and cheer on our teams. If you brought your lunch along... just hang around and eat in the café, or if you forgot your lunch...go to Isaacs or McDonalds and bring it back. Tony will be leading us in worship at 1:45... so come and join us then.

2. We will soon be handing out new TL Church Directories. If you have any changes to your address, cell phones, home phones or email, please contact the office this week.

3. As some of you may know by now, a 7th grade boy at Pequea Valley Middle School took his life and died this past Friday. Let's take a moment to pray for this family and our students at Pequea. Call up...

4. This past Sunday we had a special evening with the couples I married, since TL began in January of 2003. There were a total of 24 of us who showed up and I just thought it might be helpful to share some good news... in a world where marriages have such little success. Out of the 20 couples we married in these past 10 years, 19 of them are still together! Isn't that fantastic! In a world where on average only about half make it, I think this is a huge blessing!

We were blessed to hear their heartfelt stories of struggles, joys, victories and growth. It was amazing and encouraging to find that many referred to things that they still remembered from premarital counseling and advice they received from books, teachings, parents and friends.

So folks, marriage is a good thing, and marriage blessed by the Church family gives us a huge advantage and this ties right in to our message this morning.

Slide #3 Series Intro: Welcome to the last message of 'Five Healthy Habits'!

Health is important! Healthy marriages, healthy bodies, healthy relationships and healthy spiritual lives as well... are all important.

Over the past several weeks we have been hearing from our own Dr. Ken... and so far we have heard about laughing, sleeping, margin and exercise... all critical habits for healthy living.

So... let the Rockin Sound Track begin and would you please welcome Ken Nafziger!

Slide #4 Ken's Healthy Habit:

Thanks Ken! Healthy Habits take time and intentionality and they require discipline.

Slide #5 The non-negotiable truth is: We cannot be a disciple without being disciplined!

It takes discipline to live a healthy life. This past week it took discipline for me to fast and I'm sure that many of you can relate. I'm hungry this morning! Friday night I dreamed about food! I dreamed about it! Right now even melted Farmer's Cheese on cardboard sounds appealing!

However, this was the best week of fasting yet... because it empowered me to spend time with the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! Yesterday as I was sitting by the fireplace in my office, hungry, but satisfied, I was reflecting back on those times I spent talking with God this past week... even at the risk of not having enough time to study for this sermon... it was worth it all. As a result... this may not be one of my best sermons, but I don't regret it... because I learned to know Jesus better!

The title of the message this morning is...

Slide #6 Habit #5... Fellowship

The NT word for 'fellowship' comes from the Greek word 'Koinonia' which means partnership, participation and social intercourse. It denotes union, being together or shared by all.

We find the NT 'fellowship' battle cry verse in...

Slide #7 Hebrews 10:25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

So why should we not give up meeting together. Why should we continue to get together on Sunday mornings and throughout the week? Some are in the habit of giving this habit up! All over America people sleep in instead of coming to Church. Many of these people claim to be Christ followers. Why should we do this? Let's go to our notes.

Slide #8 Why is fellowship so important? Wait!

1. It provides a sense of belonging.

Slide #9 Ephesians 2:19 LB Now you are no longer strangers to God and foreigners to heaven, but you are members of God's very own family, citizens of God's country, and you belong in God's household with every other Christian.

We belong to each other. Several years ago at a Quiz Meet at LMS I slammed my finger in the door of our GMC Safari van. The door went completely closed and my finger was in between the door and frame. It was the most pain I have ever felt in my entire life, as I used my free hand to open the door! If I never knew before that, that finger belonged to my body... I found out that night. That finger let my entire body know for the next 24 hours that we belonged to each other!

Folks, that wasn't a good memory of belonging but it was a great reminder that we belong to each other because we are all connected to the same body.

Slide #10 Dr. Ray Ortland writes:

"The Christian who is not committed to a group of other believers for praying, sharing, and serving, so that he is known, as he knows others, is not an obedient Christian. He is not in the will of God. However vocal he may be in his theology, he is not obeying the Lord."

It's interesting that in the NT, the word 'Church' is used at least 79 times and in most references the context is the local assembly of believers. The emphasis is almost always on the local gathering of believers... not some invisible church that we talk about in philosophical terms... but a reality... where people actually come together and relate as family.

Slide #11 Why is fellowship so important?
2. It gives us a better return on our work.

Remember... fellowship or 'Koinonia' denotes union... being together.

Slide #12 Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

This is a great wedding text, but it is also the reality of Timberline Church. We meet together so that we can do things together because together we can get- er- done! There is power in numbers!

Years ago, when my oldest daughter Liesl was still without a license, I picked her up at 3 AM on Sunday morning at a cast party. On the way back home we saw a fox run across the road and since I'm intrigued with foxes... I stopped and turned the truck and put my headlights on him and in the process I drove into the ditch and ended up getting stuck.

It was one of those moments when my four wheel drive wasn't working and I'm rocking this truck trying to get out of the ditch. Finally I realized that the only way to get out was...put Liesl behind the wheel of a stick shift truck that she had never driven... and let her get the wheels spinning and then I needed to get out and push and hopefully when she got back on the road she would know how to get stopped. Well she figured it out and got the wheels spinning and I'm pushing and rocking and you know what... we did it! Because two are better than one and it gave us a better return on our work! This is the power of fellowship.

Slide #13 Why is fellowship so important?

3. It supplies accountability. Wait!

Slide #14 Galatians 6:1-3 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

We have all seen the slippery downward spiral that occurs when accountability is missing...think about the sex scandals, the missing funds scandals and the abuse scandals that continue to surface in the news. Fellowship supplies accountability... if we want it... because it brings us together. If we don't want it... nothing will supply accountability.

Slide #15 Why is fellowship so important?

4. It declares the presence of Jesus.

Jesus said this to his disciples.

Slide #16 Matthew 18:20 For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.

It doesn't mean that this is the only time Jesus shows up... it just means that there is something special that happens when we gather together in Jesus' name. And that's what we do here at TL... we get together in Jesus name. It may be for prayer or for encouragement or for worship or just to have fun... but we do it in the name of Jesus. It declares His presence!

Slide #17 Why is fellowship so important?

5. It is a witness to the secular world. Jesus said...

Slide #18 John 17:20-21 NLT I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.

Do you hear these 'fellowship' words, these connecting, belonging words? True Biblical fellowship and unity have incredible power because they send a message to those around us... something is uniting these people, something is drawing them together and the end result is...people come to faith because of fellowship truly lived out! The Bible

is filled with the theme of fellowship through the phrase 'one another'. We did a series on this. Listen up:

Slide #19 One Another's

Live in harmony with one another Romans 12:17-18

Forgive one another Colossians 3:13

Love one another John 13:34

Encourage one another 1Thessalonians 5:11

Accept one another Romans 15:7

Speak to one another Ephesians 5:19

Honor one another Romans 12:10

Serve one another Galatians 5:13

Submit to one another Ephesians 5:21

Offer Hospitality to one another Peter 4:9-10

The 'One Another's' of the Bible will attract people to Jesus but the sad part is that the opposite is true as well. Faction filled disunity will kill the witness of the Church!

So how can we do fellowship?

Slide #20 Acts 2:46-47

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

There are 2 types of settings for fellowship. They are both critical and neither replaces the other, but they each have something special to offer.

The first setting is in a Large Group. In the NT this happened in the temple courts. Today it happens Sunday mornings and at other special Timberline events like Celebrate the Arts, Celebrate Adoption, our outside service, Kids adventure camp, our Thanksgiving meal and our Good Friday service.

There is something special that takes place in a large group setting. There is critical mass, there is momentum, there is energy, and there is a certain sense of excitement. We feel it here at TL when this auditorium is full. It is one of the neat things about snowy mornings when we combine into one service. It is always full in here... the singing it better, the laughter is better, there is a sense of expectancy. You don't get this kind of momentum around the kitchen table with a handful of people.

The second setting is the Small Group feel. In Acts it was referred to as 'in their homes' and today at TL we simply call this Connection Groups. It is a warmer and friendlier place than the auditorium. We can all talk and share and bare our souls. I have experienced many of these small groups over the years... I am in several of them now... and there is nothing like it. Things can happen in Connection Group that will never happen in the large group.

People mistakenly pit the two against the other and claim... the large group is for me... I feel uncomfortable in small groups... or the small group fits my personality and I don't like crowds. The reality is... we need both! We need the large group and we need the small group.

We have this Sunday morning celebration... that always inspires me and we have 12 Connection Groups with a wide range of topics from food to finances to prayer to games to youth to Jr. High to Bible Studies and they are all focused on fellowship, relationships and connecting with others.

It is not either or... the Bible makes it clear... we need both and I'm so glad that we can offer both at TL.

Slide #21 Our Clarian Call at TL reads...

Receiving God's Love - worshipping

Rebuilding Relationships - connecting

Restoring the World – serving

Fellowship is all about Rebuilding Relationships and bringing us together.

Let me read to you a parable: Once upon a time in a land not so far away, a young Christian went to a wise old man and said, "Wise old man, please help me. I have been a Christian for a while now but I seem to have lost the joy, the desire to pray and read the Bible that I once had. How can I get that back?"

The wise old man said nothing because he was very wise and gestured to the young man to sit down beside him in front of the coal fire.

"Please give me your answer wise old man", the young man said as he sat down beside the coal fire which was glowing a soothing red.

The old man smiled wisely and bade the young man to be quiet. He then took a lump of red hot coal out of the fire and put it on the hearth in front of the young man. They watched as the glow faded from the coal and it turned from red to black.

The wise old man looked enquiringly, as only wise old men can, at the young man.

The young man looked at the wise old man in expectation of the wisdom that he was about to utter, but the wise old man just smiled and placed the coal back into the fire.

When the coal had heated back up and was once again glowing from the heat that it had received from the other coals, the old man took it out of the fire again and placed it on the hearth in front of the now confused young man.

Again it turned black, and again the wise old man put it back into the fire, and again it began to glow red hot.

The wise old man continued to take the coal out... letting it cool down and putting it back into the fire to heat up... until the young man understood what the wise old man was telling him.

The moral of the story is this: We are a lump of coal. Away from the Church family, we have no means of receiving the fire that we need... to stay alive in the faith... we have no glow.

This past week I had the chance to come along side Nancy Bradford's family as they laid her to rest. During this time I had this interesting conversation with a family member. She said to me, 'you know I believe in God... I do... I really do... I just don't go to Church.'

And I know she wanted my approval! And whenever I hear people say this... I just see a black lump of coal.

I don't know how connected you are in fellowship this morning... I don't know if you are a black lump of coal or if you are glowing ember...but I do know that you will never glow red hot until learn the habit and discipline of fellowship.

Slide #22 Prayer and Reflection: (I- Pod Special)

Slide #23 Share time:

Since this is week five, I'm inviting you this morning to share about how God has been at work in your life in any of these habits. Maybe you have a short story to tell or a lesson you learned about...

1. Living out the Word of God
2. Talking with God
3. Tithing
4. Fasting
5. Fellowship

Slide #24 Practical Application: Let's all connect with someone in fellowship this week. Let's go out of our box, visit someone, have a dinner party or attend an event with an individual or a family from TL. Even if you have never done this before, let's do it this week.

ONLY IF THERE IS TIME!

How do we start and maintain good habits?

Slide #25 Starting and Maintaining healthy habits!

Step One: Desire!

We must start with a strong desire. We must be internally motivated. External motivations don't last. If we start only half-heartedly, we will never make it to the success point.

Step Two: Decide!

Begin right now! Don't wait. Don't procrastinate. We don't slide into a new habit. 'One of these days' never arrives. We must have a starting point. It's easier to break a bad habit today than it will be tomorrow!

Step Three: Declare!

Announce our intentions publicly. Make a covenant or resolution. The power of a vow is awesome. It is particularly powerful if we put our commitment in writing.

Step Four: Determination!

Never allow an exception until the new habit is securely rooted in our life. Each lapse will be fatal. A single slip unwinds many turns at first. Continuity and success at the start is essential. Never be swayed by "just this once". The act of yielding weakens the will and reinforces our lack of self-control. It takes 3 weeks to become comfortable with a new habit and it takes another 3 to 4 weeks (doing it daily) for it to become a part of our life. It takes 7 to 21 repetitions to learn something.

Step Five: Just do it!

Whenever we feel the slightest urge or prompting to practice this new habit - DO IT THEN! Don't wait. Seize every opportunity to reinforce our habit. These feelings will not last, so whenever we feel inclined to perform our new habit, do so!

Step Six: Double Up!

Let's find a partner who will support and encourage us. Let's find someone who is willing to hold us accountable and check up on us especially in the early days before the habit is firmly rooted in our life.

Step Seven: Depend on God!

The habits we have been talking about are spiritual habits and therefore they are subject to spiritual attacks from the enemy. We cannot do this on our own. We need the power of the Holy Spirit to change us!

Benediction: As a foreigner, lost in the din and blast of a bursting city street, so are those who stray from the wise counsel of trustworthy friends.

As a red hot coal, when deprived of surrounding fire, grows cold, So are those separated from the heat of fellowship.

Those who seek the kingdom will live lives guided by the wisdom of their friends and Heated in the furnace of fellowship.