

What's The Deal At Stone Creek Church Part 6

Familial Fellowship (Homecoming)

Hebrews 10:24-25

Memory Verses: Hebrews 10:24

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Depending on Christ we will reach our world with the Gospel to see lives completely transformed. What's the deal at Stone Creek Church? That's the deal at Stone Creek Church? We depend on Christ in all things through a reliance on the word, authentic worship, and consistent prayer. We will reach our world with the Gospel through relational outreach, and strategic missions. And we hope to see lives completely transformed through intentional discipleship. In 1914 when Reverend Klapp started Third Avenue Christian Church this is what we were all about. When Thomas Sowell grew Third Avenue Congregational Christian Church to over 1500 people in the 40's this is what we were all about. When we became Stone Creek Church almost two years ago this is what we were all about! Times change, methods change, locations change, pastors change, but our God and His Word are the same yesterday, today, and forever. The vision doesn't change! 2000 years ago we were called to go and make disciples and if the Lord decides to wait another 2000 years to come again, we will still be called to the same mission.

Look with me again at **Acts 2:42** where we started this series a couple of weeks ago. There are four things mentioned here that the first church devoted themselves to; the apostles teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. In the past four weeks we've talked about the importance of a reliance on the word as it is delivered in biblical teaching and preaching. We've talked about the importance of the holy ordinances, one of which is communion. We've talked about how we worship God authentically as living sacrifices. And, last week Bobby assured us of the importance of consistent prayer. But, we haven't yet talked about fellowship.

According to the verse we just read, fellowship is just as important as the others, but what does fellowship mean? Isn't fellowship just a meal after a worship service? No! I mean, we most certainly can fellowship together over a meal. I mean, today after the service we are having a fellowship meal! So yes, fellowship can include a meal after a worship service. But, that's far from what it means to be in fellowship with one another! The word in the Greek here for fellowship is *koininia* and means community! When we are in biblical fellowship with one another we enjoy *koininia* with one another. We enjoy community, brotherhood,

family! The idea we get of fellowship from the New Testament is what Jesus and His Disciples had. They weren't blood family... but they were family none the less... and in fact they may have just been even more family to each other than they were to their blood relatives.

You see that's what Jesus does. In Christ we join a new family, and we become so connected to one another in the unity of salvation that we give a new definition to family. **In Christ, family isn't just the community of relatives you were born into, it is the community of believers you do life together with!** That is why you will often here me call our community here at Stone Creek a faith family! We have *koininia* we have community, we have familial (or family-like) fellowship!

So, how do we maintain true biblical fellowship as a faith family? Look with me at our main passage this morning out of **Hebrews 10:24-25**. There are three main things I want you to see here this morning. One, we can't have true biblical and familial fellowship without an environment of encouragement. Two, we can't have true biblical and familial fellowship without a culture of engagement. And Three, we can't have true biblical and familial fellowship without a sense of ease. When we put these together we simply see that **true fellowship means family!**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

Let's tackle them one at a time. First, **Familial Fellowship Means An Environment of Encouragement.** In **verse 24** we see the phrase "let us consider." Let us consider what "let us consider" may mean here. It probably means that in the days of the early church there were and in our day there are a lot of churches who don't take the time to consider how to encourage one another or stir one another to love and good works. Meaning they are busy doing other things... but not these things. And, it's true, many churches consider how to put on a program, or how to appease their parishioners, or how to keep the lights on, but unfortunately forget about or simply ignore these critical elements. So, let US consider; how much time, teaching, money, and commitment do we as a church put towards the importance of encouragement and discipleship?

Two things here. One, we should encourage one another by loving one another and doing good works for one another. I know for a fact that our church desires that everyone love and care for everyone here. We want one big group hug all the time. But is that realistic? I've often thought about the fact that many of us in this room do not have the numbers of each person in this room in their phone or their email in their computer. I know because every time you need to call someone you text me for their number. And, I always get a little sad thinking... now why have they been going to church with this person for over 20 years and not have a close enough relationship with them to have their phone number.

But then I think, it is very hard to have 60 very close relationships

and so that is not that big of a deal. It is not realistic for each of you to have a close friendship with everyone here, but in this church you should have at least 10-20 very good relationships. You should have at least 10-20 phone numbers and emails right? Why? Because these are the people who love you and do good works for you! You don't need to try to have hundreds of genuine relationships, but you should have a couple genuine relationships within the church... or that isn't your church. If you say, "well, all my friends are at work? Then your work place is your church. If you say, "well, all my friends are at the ball field." Well, then the ball field is your church. Listen close... based on the definition of church and fellowship, **church is the community where you encourage, love and do good works for one another**. We hope we are your church!

But we see a second thing here. We encourage one another and then we also stir up one another to do love and to do good works. The phrase stir up simply means that there is an intentional strategy. We are to intentionally encourage each other in this fellowship and we are to intentionally disciple each other to do the work of encouragement. We have a multitude of ways and strategies within our church to specifically help you find community and to train you to be effective in ministry. Small groups, D-groups, ministry teams, bless every home, care portal, each one reach one, etc... The point is, you must learn to love others wherever you go according to the Bible and so we must provide you tools and teams to learn and apply this. And, you must learn to do good to others according to the Bible and so we must provide you tools and teams to learn and apply this. As a church, we have a responsibility to keep you accountable, to stir you up like a coach stirs his team. We win when we teach you to win through love and good works.

Think of it like this, as a dad or mom, you spend your time doing two main things - loving and doing good works for your kids, and then teaching them to do that to the other people around them. Well, we do the same here – because we are a family here! Family encourages and family teaches to encourage! **True fellowship means family**

Secondly, **Familial Fellowship Means A Culture of Engagement**. We also see here in **verse 25** that we are not to neglect meeting together. We are to have a culture of engagement with one another. Engagement means being a part of each others lives. When you are a part of a church there should be an expectation that you are a part of that church. This is why we promote covenant partnership. We don't want anyone to miss out on what it means to be a part of this family. We don't want anyone simply coming on Sundays and watching the production and then fading back into the abyss like a phantom, not to be heard of or seen for a few weeks.

Think about this; how often do you spend time with your family? If you are like me, that would be a lot. I see my wife, and my kids everyday. I go to almost all of my kids games, I help them with homework and play Fortnite with them. We play board games. Family means being together. So, if that's the case, how in the world did we ever get this mentality that being a part of a church family means we only see each other so often and we are okay with that. When you are okay with only seeing your church family once or twice a month its symptomatic of a culture that simply wants you to come to a church service.

Now, don't get me wrong. We want you to come to our church services every Sunday! We wouldn't do this if we didn't want you here. And, we don't want you here once a month or every other week! We want you here every Sunday! But, not because you feel an obligation. We want you here because you can't wait to get here to be with your family! But, here's the catch; if you don't see us as family then you will lose motivation to be here. If it's just a meeting you can skip it. If it's just a lecture you can watch it online. If it's just a show, trust me, you can find a better show somewhere else. But if it's family... this is the only place you can be family together. **The biggest reason people stop coming to church is because they don't have a close connection to the people there.**

So, how do you grow a love and dedication to those at church? You spend time with them! So our encouragement is this. Don't just come on Sundays. Come early. Talk and get to know the people here. Stay after and let your kids play together on the playground as you hang out with each other. Go to lunch together afterwards and ask lots of questions. Then go to a small group and learn what unifies us in Christ. Talk about your struggles together, and pray together, and carry one another's burdens together. Fight in the trenches together and win battles for the Lord together. Then go out to eat together and play sports together. When you can't be together text each other, send funny Gifs to one another, send scripture and prayers to one another. **DO LIFE TOGETHER!**

I'm so sick of hearing this verse used to guilt people in to coming to a once a week worship service! That's a fraction of what it's talking about! **Not neglecting the fellowship means stop doing life alone and start doing it with the church!**

It says, stop neglecting the fellowship as some are in the habit of doing. When we stop seeing fellowship as necessary. When we stop caring to do life together with our church family... it becomes easier and easier to do life alone. It becomes a habit! Today the biggest habit you can break is to stop doing the Christian life alone and start doing life together with your church family! Be dedicated to the fellowship! Be dedicated to your spiritual family. **True fellowship means family**

Lastly, **Familial Fellowship Means A Sense of Ease**. Let me

explain. Why do we encourage one another, love one another, do good works for one another as a faith family? One of the reasons is because this world is not our home and the longer we remain here the harder it gets for us. **For this world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come. - He 13:14 NLT.** The Day of the Lord is drawing near, referring to the end time tribulation or the second coming or both, and as we draw closer to that day we are assured according to the Bible that it will get worse and will be a struggle for us as believers.

Isaiah 5:20 warns us against those who call evil good and good evil. **2Timothy 3:13** warns us that in the last days evil men will get more evil and more deceptive. I'm not a fear-monger but you can turn on the news for five minutes and realize that we are there. We are not in the same culture we were in just a few years ago. 5 years ago those who committed abortions were quite about it, now they are encouraged to celebrate their abortion, shout it out!

5 years ago those who were determined to change their gender identity were subtle about it, today it has changed the entire fabric of our language, pronouns, and the way we talk about human sexuality. If it has not been made clear to you, the LGBTQ community isn't looking for tolerance anymore... they are looking for complete and utter compliance. If you can't praise their way of life they want to destroy you!

There are race riots in the streets. There are domestic terrorism organizations like BLM & Antifa literally setting major cities on fire. 5 Billion dollars in damages. Parts of Portland and Minneapolis may never recover.

A worldwide pandemic has plagued our way of life for going on two years now and no one believes anything that the news tells us about it anymore. Last year lockdowns, masks, and social distancing were all the rage. Last week USC released a study that showed lockdowns actually caused more virus spread, more virus related deaths, and more non-virus related deaths due to suicide and lack of regular medical care. Some say masks work, other studies show they don't, some studies show they cause more sickness. Last year we were told vaccines would be 98% effective, this year its down below 50%. And it doesn't matter what side of any of these arguments you are on... you are wrong!

Last year there was peace in Afghanistan, today the second fastest growing church in the world is back underground and on the run from the Taliban.

And, now more than 30% of Americans support Marxism. America, the country founded on Biblical Principles and Precepts, the country that fought communist Germany, communist North Korea, and communist Vietnam and has been in opposition to communist Russia, China, Cuba, and every communist regime since our inception now has a new generation of millennials and gen Zers that want to turn the red

white and blue simply red! My head is spinning!

And all of that pales in comparison to the fact that biblical Christianity is dying in our country. Every year less people consider themselves believers. Every year less people attend church regularly. Every year less people believe the Bible is the standard. Every year less people believe that Jesus is the only way, truth, and life. How much worse can it get before the end?

And that's why we fellowship in our community of faith. This is the only place we can come and find unity, like mindedness, purpose, the answers to our questions, and a peace that passes understanding! Within our faith family we find a sense of ease that the world cannot explain! Here we don't fret or worry or get all worked up when the world around us crumbles to the ground! We have Jesus and we have each other and we know that within the church we are safe! **When Jesus and the Church are all you have... you find that that's all you need!** Here we find a sense of ease, here we find the warm embrace of family. **True fellowship means family.**

Application

The point is clear this morning; true fellowship is only found within a faith family! A church family that encourages one another, a family that stays engaged with one another, and a family that eases our minds from the fears of these end times! We hope you have found a true faith family. Not just a place to go for an hour on Sunday mornings, but a community of people who are your closest friends, your allies in the trenches, those who have your back and those who you can depend on.

We hope you have found that here at Stone Creek Church but if you haven't yet... here are two tips. 1) try harder – attend more regularly, join a small group, get involved with a D-group or circle group, join a ministry team or board, try forging some close friendships here through texts, social media, or whatever it takes. Or 2) find a church that you can connect with – don't go somewhere else simply because they may demand less of you or because it may be easier to fade into the background there... but if you can't connect to this faith family... go where you already have connections. There are other great churches here in Danville. Blairs Baptist, Mount Hermon, New Ground, Rivermont, Faith Memorial, and many more! We are not the only church in Danville who has this vision and this type of fellowship. **We are more concerned that you find true Christian fellowship than that you stay at our church.**

Conclusion

Lastly, today is homecoming. A day where we hope those who have been a part of Stone Creek / Third Avenue in the past, would come back and worship with us again at least one day of the year. The church can

fellowship with other churches too!

But homecoming also points to the fact that Jesus is coming again to take us to our true home. There will be a great homecoming someday. Our passage this morning reminds us that that day is approaching soon! So... are you ready? Are you ready for that homecoming? 2000 years ago, Jesus Christ came to this Earth, lived a sinless perfect life for 33 years, healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, raised the dead, and then was killed as the passover lamb for our atonement. 3 days later he raised himself from the dead and 40 days after that he ascended into Heaven where he sits at the right hand of God interceding on our behalf and waiting to come back for those who are his! Are you His? Are you ready to be a part of the eternal fellowship of the kingdom of God? If not, today is the day of salvation!