

The Habit of Fellowship

The Power of Spiritual Habits #2 - Pastor Stephen Combs - August 24, 2025 - Hebrews 10:24-25

INTRO: Good morning church! We're continuing a new 7-week sermon series called: "The Power of Spiritual Habits." It's a study of Christian disciplines passed down from the early church. Today, we will be diving into the Spiritual Habit of Fellowship.

ILL: Spiritual habits act as a conduit that connects us to the power of the Holy Spirit. Cell phones are incredibly powerful/smart, but they have to be charged. We have this kind of potential, but our spiritual habits determine if we find our power for living in Christ. We not only open up and ask the Spirit to fill us, we create habits that give Him a conduit to fill us and use us to do God's will. Remember our series theme verse:

Series Theme: Ephesians 4:23-24 (NLT) ²³ Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. ²⁴ Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.

This starts with a receptive heart, "letting" the Spirit change you, then leads to the action of "putting on", which is an intentional habit.

Need: So what causes us to disconnect or not connect to the Lord and put on this new nature in Christ Jesus? Well, last week, we saw that it starts with our intentional and private devotional life with God. We must set aside time daily to be in the presence of our Lord through Bible reading and prayer. This is the first and most important habit.

However, like other positive lifestyles, we know that there are many more habits to work out. If you want to be more physically healthy it takes the habit of eating healthy, the habit of exercise, the habit of good rest ... Our spiritual life is like this, there are many habits that lead to the spirit-filled life. Interestingly, what we begin to build privately is meant to be applied corporately. Christ desires that we connect with Him in fellowship. Christianity is a team sport.

But, let's be honest with ourselves, many of us have gotten out of the habit of healthy Christian fellowship or we never developed it to begin with. In fact, as we will read in today's Scripture, we actually have the habit of isolation or neglecting the fellowship. There are common triggers for this and I wrestle with these myself:

- **Emotional Overwhelm** → When life feels "too much" (stress, anxiety, conflict).
- **Fear of Rejection/Judgment** → Past hurt or social anxiety makes withdrawing feel safer.
- **Exhaustion/Burnout** → Physically or mentally drained, so avoiding people feels like relief.
- **Shame or Guilt** → Negative self-beliefs ("I'm a burden," "I'm not good enough") drive withdrawal.
- **Need for Control** → Retreating gives a sense of protecting boundaries or avoiding unpredictability.

We will likely experience rewards in isolation like:

- **Relief** → Immediate escape from pressure, criticism, or conflict.
- **Comfort** → Familiar solitude feels safe compared to social risk.
- **Control** → Ability to manage environment and interactions.
- **Rest** → A break from stimulation and demands.
- **Protection** → Avoiding potential rejection or failure.

But there's a catch! Over time isolation leads to loneliness, weakened support systems, and deeper disconnection.

The short-term gain creates long-term pain. What we really need spiritually and even physically is fellowship.

Trans: Church, God's word teaches us that fellowship is an essential habit to connecting with God. As we will study together today, Hebrews 10 connects ²² let us draw near with a true heart" and ²³ Let us hold fast the confession" with a call to fellowship. Christianity is indeed a team sport.

BODY: In Hebrews chapter 10, the author concluded his instruction about drawing near to God and holding fast the confession of hope without wavering by teaching the spiritual habit of faithful fellowship as the Day of Christ drew near. We can form the spiritual habit of faithful fellowship in the body of Christ. How can we fellowship faithfully with one another in Christ Jesus. The text gives three ways to form the spiritual habit of faithful fellowship in Christ.

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Read text: Hebrews 10:24-25 (ESV) ²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ 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.

Three Ways to Form the Spiritual Habit of Faithful Fellowship in Christ Jesus:

1. Stir up one another to love and good works.

EXP: (24) And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works

“Let us consider” (24) (κατανοέω, *katanoeō*) (PAS) - to perceive, remark, observe, understand; to consider attentively, fix one's eyes or mind upon

“Stir up” (24) (παροξυσμός, *paroxusmos*) - to provoke, prod; an inciting, incitement, irritation. This seems like a word to describe how a good shepherd prods his sheep to go the right direction. This word is normally used negatively, describing a sharp disagreement as when Paul and Mark disagreed (Acts 15:39).

“One another” (24-25; 2x) (ἀλλήλων, *allēlōn*) - one another, reciprocally, mutually

“To love” (24) (ἀγάπη, *agapē*) - affection, good will, love, benevolence; unconditional Godly love

“Good works” (24) (ἔργον, *ergon*) - good or honorable act, deed, or thing done: the idea of working; effort

ARG: Fellowship is not passive; it is an intentional act of sharpening one another:

Proverbs 27:17 (ESV) Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.

So stir up one another to love:

John 13:34-35 (ESV) ³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

And to good works:

Ephesians 2:10 (ESV) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

ILL: There is this ridiculous scene in the movie Hook where Robin Williams “Peter Pan” sits down to eat with the lost boys. They begin to chow down, but Pan sees no food on the table. He sees them stirring things and eating out of empty bowls. They tell Pete to eat, but he shouts, “*Eat what? There's nothing here. Gandhi ate more than this.*” He had to work out his imagination to partake in the food.

I share this because some of us can't stir others up because we have empty bowls. We see others doing it but we don't get it. Friend, you can't stir what you don't have. Do you know Him? Do you Jesus? Believe in Him and seek Him daily that you may have something in the bowl, something to share.

Some have food in the bowl, but you are running solo. You could experience way more in fellowship.

APP: Fellowship isn't just for comfort; it's for calling each other higher. Every time we gather, we have a choice: will we stir one another toward Christ, or will we settle for small talk?

Be intentional in your fellowship. Don't just “hang out”—ask questions that matter: “*How's your walk with Christ? How can I pray for you? What's one step of obedience you're working on?*” **Speak words that spark action.** Motivate one another to live holy as He is holy. **Model love and good works yourself.** Others are provoked when they see your love in action. **Create rhythms for stirring.** Join a small group where accountability is normal. Build friendships where challenge is welcome.

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2. Stay devoted to one another by gathering together.

EXP: (25a) ... not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some ...

“Not neglecting” (25) (ἐγκαταλείπω, *egkataleipō*) (PAP) - forsake, abandon, desert; leave in straits, leave helpless, neglect. Antonyms: Cherish, look after, care for

“To meet together” (25) (ἐπισυναγωγή, *episunagōgē*) - a gathering together in one place; the (religious) assembly (of Christians); for worship.

“Is the habit of some” (25) (ἔθος, *ethos*) - a usage (prescribed by habit or law); custom, manner. The word *ethos* is still active in English today meaning: the characteristic spirit of a culture, era, or community as manifested in its beliefs and aspirations. Some people have the characteristic/custom of isolation. *Ethos* is the same word as Luke 22:39 from last week, “And [Jesus] came out and went, as was his *custom*.”

ARG: The early church instinctively devoted themselves to gathering:

Acts 2:42 (ESV) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the **fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Acts 2:46-47 (ESV) ⁴⁶ And day by day, **attending the temple together** and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Make gathering a delight, not a duty.

Psalms 122:1-4 (NLT) ¹ I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord.” ² And now here we are, standing inside your gates, O Jerusalem. ³ Jerusalem is a well-built city; its seamless walls cannot be breached. ⁴ All the tribes of Israel—the Lord’s people—make their pilgrimage here. They come to give thanks to the name of the Lord.

ILL: Paul says every member of the body is indispensable (See 1 Corinthians 12:18-22)

We need each other more than we know at times. I learned yet again this week how indispensable the back is. Some of you think that your absence has no effect but you are sorely mistaken ... you might be a big toe, but we need you for stability.

APP: Every time you gather, you declare two things: I belong to Christ and I belong to His people. Neglect weakens both confessions, but devotion strengthens them until the Day we see Christ face to face.

Plan for it. Don't let worship be a “last-minute decision.” Put it on the calendar first, then build everything else around it. Families teach children that the Lord's Day belongs to Him—it shapes their lifelong priorities.

Protect it. Guard against the subtle drift: “We'll go if we're not too tired... if we don't have a game... if nothing else comes up.” **Participate fully.** Don't just “attend”—engage. Sing, listen, serve, pray, greet, give. The gathering is not a show you watch but a family you join.

3. Strengthen one another with encouragement.

EXP: (25b) but **encouraging** one another, and **all the more** as you see the Day drawing near.

“Encouraging” (25) (παρακαλέω, *parakaleō*) (PAP) - to call to one's side, call for, summon; to admonish, exhort; to beg, entreat, beseech. It's like coming alongside a brother and putting your arm around them and saying, “We are in this together.” Holy Spirit (parakletos) great encourager.

“All the more” (25) (τοσοῦτος, *tosoutos*) - so much more, so more greater, so much longer.

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“The Day drawing near” (25) (ἡμέρα, *hēmera*) - The capital D day of Christ return. We should be encouraging each other, stirring each other up, and fellowshiping more not less as Christ’s return is coming. No man knows the hour, but we can be sure it’s closer today than yesterday.

ARG: As a way of strengthening one another, we are commanded to carry each other’s burdens

Galatians 6:2 (NIV) Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Encouraging one another protects us from sin’s deceitfulness

Hebrews 3:13 (NIV) But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called “Today,” so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.

There is strength in numbers

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NLT) ⁹ Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. ¹⁰ If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. ¹¹ Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? ¹² A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.

There is no greater strength and encouragement than having God by your side

Matthew 18:20 (ESV) For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.

ILL: **Christianity is a team sport.** There have been several times in my life when I realized that I can go beyond my perceived limits. High school football pushed me beyond what I thought I could do. Having teammates over you screaming push on the bench press ... getting constantly challenged to go harder, faster. In basic training, I got close with a group of guys that pushed me way beyond what I thought I could do. We can endure way more in teams than we can alone.

I have brothers encourage me like this spiritually. You need to get some of that my friend.

APP: In a world that constantly tears down, the church must be the place where we build up. A single word of encouragement may be the lifeline that keeps a brother or sister running the race until Jesus returns.

Encourage by showing up. Presence itself encourages. A hug, a smile, a handshake can preach louder than words. In 2 Cor 7:6, Paul wrote, “God, who encourages those who are discouraged, encouraged us by the arrival of Titus.” Titus showing up greatly encouraged them for ministry. Your faithfulness in trial becomes encouragement for others. **Make encouragement a habit, not a hobby.** Encouragement is a daily ministry, not an occasional afterthought.

CONCLUSION: Spiritual habits act as a conduit that connects us to the power of the Holy Spirit. This begins with your daily devotion to the Lord and then activates in the ministry we do together in Christ Jesus. Christianity is indeed a team sport. Join the team my friends! Form the spiritual habit of faithful fellowship in Christ by ...

- Stirring up one another to love and good works.
- Staying devoted to one another by gathering together.
- Strengthening one another with encouragement.

In the lobby today, go to the CG table(s) and plug into a group. This is our church’s primary means for fellowship. Make the decision right now to form the spiritual habit of fellowship. Don’t put it off any longer!

Let’s pray.