

Colossians 2:1-8 Ingredients of healthy fellowship

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This morning I want to talk about some of the ingredients that go to make up healthy fellowship as found in the relationship between Paul's team and the Colossian church. The interesting thing about this letter to the Colossians by Paul is that he did not start this church.

But what you will notice in these opening verses we are about to read how much he cares for them even though he has not seen them face to face as he mentions in chapter 2:1

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Colossians 1:1-14

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

2 To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

3 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you,

4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints,

5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel,

6 which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing-as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth,

7 just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf

8 and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

9 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

10 so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

11 May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy,

12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,

14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

There is something pretty special about this relationship and he sums it up in these passages - that it is first and foremost a relationship that an individual comes into with God the father through his son Jesus.

It's about us as individuals being transferred out of the domain of darkness and into the kingdom of his beloved son.

It's about God qualifying us to share in this inheritance.

It's about us together belonging to a kingdom where each of us shares a common knowledge, a common experience and a common relationship with Jesus as King.

And it is this **common** sharing of our lives together in his kingdom that we get the word fellowship or in the Greek - koinonia, which simply means sharing things in common.

So let's delve a bit deeper and look at some of the ingredients of healthy fellowship that is both found in the local church but also in our relationship with the trans-local or the apostolic. We need both to be truly balanced as believers.

Colossians 2:1

For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face,

Empathy (how great a struggle I have on your behalf).

The ability to empathize with each other is an important part of fellowship - our ability to see things from the other person's perspective and care, a phone call, txt msg, a visit. All these things show that you are thinking of others and it doesn't take much.

Intimate Friendship (as many as have not seen my face).

Paul had a desire that they should see him face to face and know him.

He was not aloof, he wanted to get to know these believers personally.

He was not hierarchical thinking that he was the boss - he was one of them.

He did not believe in special cliques.

We need to be like this also and have a willingness to share our lives with each other. Not in always being in each other's pockets but not staying away from getting together with each other.

Colossians 2:2

That their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ,

Encouragement.

We need to be encouraged by being knit together in love.

Know that someone thinks highly of you is possibly one of the greatest forms of

encouragement.

Do you have anyone that thinks of you in this way? Do you think of others in this way and let them know?

Don't be afraid to let people know that they are special to you. Healthy fellowship is held (knitted together) with loving encouragement.

Understanding of Christ.

A vital ingredient of healthy fellowship is that we are growing in our understanding and knowledge of Jesus.

When we come together to do the bitesize theology course we are doing exactly that. We are deepening healthy fellowship by growing in our faith in Jesus.

These times are not meant to be dry lectures but rather, living word based - spirit filled fellowship.

God's mystery - Christ Himself

God's mystery is Jesus himself and healthy fellowship needs to be a place where Christ is continually lifted up - not man, not programs, not a particular doctrine, not a movement, not even knowledge of Jesus - but Jesus himself.

Jesus said if I am lifted up I will draw all men unto myself.

Colossians 2:3-4

In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments.

Wisdom

In Jesus is all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Wisdom is about skillfully applying knowledge in the way we live. Jesus knew people and he applied this knowledge in how he dealt with them.

Truth

Healthy fellowship has a desire to be as word based as it possibly can be so that it provides protection against false teaching and deception.

That goes not just for the pastors but for all believers so that they are able to interpret the word correctly and be able to discern truth from error.

Colossians 2:5

For though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ.

Remembering those who are absent

Paul was absent from these believers, but was in a sense thinking about them in such an honoring way that he could say that he was actually with them in spirit.

Healthy fellowships have a concern for people who are away, not a judgmental

attitude that questions why they were not there.

Can I say that I personally love when people shoot me a quick txt msg to let me know they won't be able to make it for a particular get together and not just Sundays?

I don't require it but it does let me know that people are ok and also if others ask me if I have heard from such and such I can quickly let them know that they are on holiday etc.

We have all been in fellowships where people have come up to and asked "where were you last week?" This question shows immediately to me that they don't really care about the person, but rather the reputation. It's not healthy fellowship.

I also want to say that if I haven't heard from you in a couple of weeks and you haven't let me know that you were away on holidays etc then, out of courtesy I will give you a call to see if everything is ok. I will not call you after only one week absence.

Stable faith in Christ

Healthy fellowship is where you and I are secure in our faith and standing firm in Jesus.

We are not led by our emotions but rather by revelation.

Healthy fellowship also makes others feel secure. It allows people to be themselves and is not threatened by difference or immaturity in others.

Pete Wilson who leads a church in the US said this about insecurity.

It leads to doubt instead of trust, to criticize instead of praise, to assume the worst instead of the best, to talk instead of listen, to micromanage instead of empower, to control instead of release

Colossians 2:6-7

Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Consistent in private and public life

Healthy fellowships are ones where people are solidly consistent both in their public and private lives.

As a tree sends down roots for nourishment (unseen to the world), it produces a public display of beauty and character.

We need to be sending our roots down deep into our relationship with God.

Teachable

Healthy fellowships are ones where everyone is still teachable.
Able to receive and apply instruction and not a know it all - heard it all type.

Thanksgiving

Healthy fellowship shows itself in people who are abounding in thanksgiving.
Not whining and complaining all the time but optimistic and enthusiastic about life.
These people are pleasant to be around, you feel refreshed and encouraged.

Colossians 2:8

See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

Freedom

Healthy fellowship is always freeing fellowship, it should never bring you to a place where you feel inadequate or you're somehow not doing enough.

We need to avoid all teaching that seeks to bring us into captivity that is based on philosophy, empty deceit, human traditions or just plain old worldly ways of doing things. We cannot adopt business models and expect kingdom results.

Galatians 5:1

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

But also please remember that freedom doesn't mean doing what we like when we like, without any form of responsibility.

Galatians 5:13

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

To me this sort of freedom is the one thing that signifies whether our fellowship is healthy. And that is that we are remaining free in him to love him with all we are and to love one another as Jesus loves us.

I hope you are experiencing this freedom in fellowship and are growing in God as a result.

Let's pray.