



Essentials for a Healthy Church: *Harmonious Fellowship*

A Leaders' Guide

This month we did not have the opportunity to preface our Service Group Time with teaching from the pulpit, so I wanted to give our group Leaders a bit more to think on before this week's group time.

Our theme this month is: **Harmonious Fellowship**. Following our pattern, we want to begin by looking at this in the life & ministry of Jesus and then next week we will turn to the experience of the early church. In so doing, it is necessary for us to revisit the "high priestly prayer" of Jesus in John 17. There He prays just before going to his death for Himself (i.e. that He brings glory to the Father), for His disciples (for their protection & unity) AND for those of us today who will 'believe on Him through their message.' He prays for our unity/ oneness and a 'oneness' that is based on the relationship He has with the Father. That is an important component of this! He says, **(vs. 21) "that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you."** In the mind of Jesus, this understanding of the relationship between the Father & the Son (and, indeed also the Spirit!) serves as the basis for OUR 'oneness'. So, this week our aim is for us to ponder that a bit and consider how the 'oneness' of God (though three distinct persons) can serve as the basis for our 'oneness' as a church.

Are we all different, in the church? Yes. Are we distinct with different personalities, characteristics, and roles to fulfill? Yes. But so is God! Jesus had a distinct role apart from the Father. Can we be one? Can we be unified? The Father, the Son & the Spirit are! God is!

This is all also reflected in the language of **John 1. "In the beginning was the Word (logos) and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning."**

The doctrine of the Trinity, though that wording is not explicitly found, is certainly prominent throughout the N.T. Basically it states the classical Christian understanding that God is "three in one." Though there are three distinct persons (Father, the Son & the Spirit) they are all God. The Father is God. The Son is God. And the Spirit is equally God. They are distinct, yet one. They have different roles/ tasks to fulfill, yet they are 'one.' This is a covenantal 'oneness' if not a 'mathematical' oneness.

If all of this seems a bit 'heady' and impractical for tonight's study... challenge your groups to reflect on how each one (Father, Son & Spirit) played distinct and different roles throughout the Scripture and yet were all 'one' in Spirit... in purpose... in harmonious fellowship. What made this possible? The Son's submission to the Father, perhaps? The Spirit's work in pointing toward the Son? The overarching nature of their character being LOVE? Don't be afraid to go deep this Sunday night! The implications of this for today's church are profound!