Koinonia

A. **Koinonia** (κοινωνία) belongs to the following word group:
1. **Koinos** (κοινός) (adjective), “common, common ownership, common property, partner”
2. **Koinonos** (κοινόνος) (noun), “partner, sharer, participation, participant, companion”
3. **Koinoneo** (κοινονέω) (verb), “to share with someone in something which he has, to take part, to partake in, to participate, to possess together”
4. **Sunkoinonos** (συγκοινόνος) (noun), “partnership, joint-participation, fellow sharer”
5. **Sunkoinoneo** (συγκοινονέω) (verb), “to participate or share in something with somebody”
6. **Koinonikos** (κοινωνικός) (adjective), “belonging or appointed to society, generous, liberal in sharing or giving, sharing what is one’s own”
7. **Koinoo** (κοινόω) (verb), “to make common, to share”

B. Classical Usage
1. In the Greek and Hellenistic world **koinonia** was a term, which meant the evident, unbroken fellowship between the gods and men.
2. Even Philo spoke of the “sublime fellowship [of Moses] with the Father and Creator of the universe (Vit. Mos., 1, 158).
3. **Koinonia** was an important concept both in the secular and religious life of the ancient Greek world.
4. It denoted the close union and brotherly bond between men.
5. It was taken up by the philosophers to denote the ideal to be sought.
6. The life tie, which united the Pythagoreans, was called he **tou biou koinonia**, “the fellowship of life”).
7. The word has thus virtually the sense of brotherhood, and is a standing expression for the way social life is constituted.
8. **Koinonia**, an abstract term from koinonos and koinoneo, denotes “participation, fellowship,” especially with a close bond.
9. It expresses a two-side relation.
10. As with koinoneo, emphasis may be on either the giving or the receiving.
11. It thus means:
   a. “Participation”
   b. “Impartation”
   c. “Fellowship”
12. It is constructed:
   a. In the absolute, “fellowship,” in law of a contract partnership, community of possession or communal possession.
   b. With the objective genitive of the thing shared.
   c. With the subjective genitive of the person or thing sharing, the recipient being in the dative or with preposition.
   d. With objective genitive of the person in whom there is sharing.
13. In Platonism **koinonia** acquires its greatest systematic significance.
14. **Koinonia** is the basis of soteria, the preservation not merely of individuals, but of the whole cosmos, which includes both men and gods.
15. The idea of an unbroken relationship of fellowship between God and man is thought to be wholly Greek.
16. Greek philosophy (Plato) lifts the thought of divine fellowship above the cultic experience and extols it as the highest and most felicitous form of fellowship.
17. Stoic thinking regards the universe as a dynamic and integrated totality, and on this basis it arrives at the concept of mutual koinonia between men and of their koinonia with God.
18. **Koinonia** can have the following meanings:
   a. “Association, communion, fellowship, close relationship”
   b. “Generosity, fellow-feeling, altruism”
   c. “Sign of fellowship, proof of brotherly unity, gift, contribution”
   d. “Participation, sharing in something”
19. The group koinon- is important in sacral speech.
20. According to primitive ideas there is an inward reception of mysterious divine power (mana) in eating and drinking.
21. This notion of direct union with the deity is at least a basic impulse in later cults as well, e.g., that of Dionysus.
22. On the level of popular polytheism the sacrificial meal then becomes a communion of the deity with men.
23. In Homer sacrifices are cheerful feasts in which the gods take part.
24. Man and god are companions at table.
25. Nor is this true only of the Homeric age for in the Hellenistic period, too, the gods arrange and conduct sacrificial meals.
26. Men are invited as companions (koinonos) to the table of the gods.
27. In theozenia, the lectisternia of the Romans, the gods take a lively part in the common festivities through their statues.
28. With union by eating and drinking in the sacred meal we may also mention sexual union with the deity.
29. Greek philosophy (Plato) lifts the thought of divine fellowship above the cultic experience and extols it as the highest and most felicitous form of fellowship.
30. Stoic thinking regards the universe as a dynamic and integrated totality, and on this basis it arrives at the concept of mutual koinonia between men and of their koinonia with God.
31. For Epictetus koinonos is equivalent to fellow man.
32. Hellenistic mysticism conceives of a general koinonia psuchon between gods, men and irrational creatures.
33. By its very nature, however, it seeks union with the deity rather than communion.

C. LXX Usage
1. Koinonia is found 3 times in the LXX.
2. Of these only 1 is canonical.
3. The word was not used in the LXX to denote the relationship between God and man.
4. Any theological relationship between God and His people, on the basis of who He is, is absent.
5. The word is used in a negative sense in Hosea 4:17 for fellowship with idols, i.e., demons.
6. The most significant point is that neither chaver (נָשִׁי) nor koinon- is used for the relation to God, as so often in the Greek world.
7. Herein is expressed the sense of distance which the righteous Israelite feels from God, as distinct from the Greek.
8. The righteous man of the OT regards himself as_rbui in relationship of dependence upon God and of belonging to Him.
9. This can be deepened into a relationship of trust, but he never regards himself as the chevar, “companion” of God.
10. This he never ventures to say.
11. Similarly, in the LXX, even though this is influenced by Greek usage and thinking, we never find koinonia for the relation between God and man.
12. This is a surprising fact.
13. For there can be little doubt that in ancient Israel sacrifice, or the sacrificial meal, was widely regarded as sacral fellowship between God and man.
14. In this respect Israel shares ancient Semitic ideas, which can be proved elsewhere.
15. In Israel, too, the common meal implies a close relationship, which binds the participants to one another.
16. This applies not merely to the men who partake of it; it is equally true of the believed participation of God.

D. NT Usage
1. The word is found 20 times in the NT (Acts 2:42; Rom. 15:26; 1 Cor. 1:9; twice in 1 Cor. 10:16; 2 Cor. 6:14; 8:4; 9:13; 13:14; Gal. 2:9; Eph. 3:9; Phil. 1:5; 2:1; 3:10; Phlm. 1:6; Heb. 13:16; twice in 1 John 1:3, 6, 7).
2. Koinonia is used in the NT with reference to following:
   a. The fellowship or communion with God through the Filling of the Spirit (Acts 2:42; 2 Cor. 13:14; Phil. 2:1).
   b. The fellowship or communion with God by means of the application of the Word of God (1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 3:9; Phlm. 1:6; 1 John 1:3, 6-7).
   c. Grace giving as part of the royal family honor code (Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:13; Gal. 2:9; Phil. 1:5; Heb. 13:16).
   d. Undeserved suffering (Phil. 3:10).
   e. Lord’s table (1 Cor. 10:16).
1. Bauer, Gingrich and Danker list the following meanings (A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature pages 438-439):
a. Association, communion, fellowship, close relationship
b. Generosity, fellow-feeling, altruism
c. Abstract. For concre. Sign of fellowship, proof of brotherly unity, even gift, contribution
d. Participation, sharing

2. Thayer’s New Greek-English Lexicon lists the following (page 352):
   a. Fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, intercourse, the share which one in anything, participation
   b. Intercourse, fellowship, intimacy
   c. A benefaction jointly contributed, a collection, a contribution, as exhibiting an embodiment and proof of fellowship

3. Louw and Nida list the following (Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains volume 2):
   a. An association involving close mutual relations and involvement – close association, fellowship (page 446).
   b. To share one’s possessions, with the implication of some kind of joint participation and mutual interest - ‘to share’ (page 569).
   c. That which is readily shared – ‘willing gift, ready contribution’ (page 569).

4. Moulton lists the following NT meanings (The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised, page 235):
   a. Fellowship, partnership
   b. Participation, communion
   c. Aid relief
   d. Contribution in aid

5. Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words has the following article, “koinonia (a) "communion, fellowship, sharing in common" (from koinos, "common"), is translated "communion" in (1 Cor. 10:16; Philem. 6), RV, "fellowship," for KJV, "communication"; it is most frequently translated "fellowship"; (b) "that which is the outcome of fellowship, a contribution," e. g., (Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:4)."

6. Whether believers like it or not they are related to other believers regardless of denomination.

7. 1 Cor 12:12-27, “For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. If they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.”

8. Repeatedly the New Testament commands us to love and care for one another as fellow members of the body of Christ.

9. In fact, the Lord Jesus desires all believers to be functioning effectively as joint-partners/fellow-members of His body, the church.

10. This “one another” care is to be the result of our fellowship with other believers, but many Christians today have seemed to have lost sight of what the Bible means when it speaks of fellowship.

11. Too often when Christians think of fellowship they think in terms of what goes on in that room in the church called “fellowship hall.”

12. Since fellowship is a very important part of caring for one another this study will begin by answering the question—what is meant by fellowship in the New Testament?
13. Acts 2:42, “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

14. A study of two word groups used for fellowship in the Greek New Testament express four related and essential elements that describe what fellowship involves:
   a. Koinonia (κοινωνία) (noun)
   b. Koinos (κοινός) (adjective)
   c. Koinonos (κοινώνος) (noun)
   d. Metochos (μετόχος) (noun)
   e. Metoche (μετόχε) (verb).

15. The meaning of these two word groups can be boiled down to two main ideas:
   a. “To share together, take part together” in the sense of participation and partnership, and
   b. “To share with” in the sense of giving to or receiving from others, sharing what we have with one another.

16. Since fellowship is extremely important and forms an essential foundation for understanding the ministry we are to have with one another, let’s look at these four main concepts of New Testament fellowship.

17. Christian Fellowship denotes the following concepts:
   a. Relationship with Christ: We are all permanently united together by the common (eternal) life that we share as a result of regeneration and the Baptism of the Spirit (Acts 2:42; 1 C. 1:9; 1 Jn. 1:3).
   b. Partnership: We are to work together for a common purpose to obtain common objectives for the glory of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. Phil 1:27; Philp. 1:5; Gal. 2:9; Heb. 1:9).
   c. Companionship: We are to communicate with one another and have fellowship with one another sharing with one another the things (viewpoint and thinking) of Christ (Acts. 2:42; Heb. 10:25; 2 Tim. 2:2; 1 Thess. 5:11; Rom. 1:11-12; 2 Tim. 2:2; 1 Thess 5:11; Philerm. 6).
   d. Stewardship: We must recognize that all we have belongs to the Lord and has been given to us as trusts from God to invest for His purposes. Believers need to be willing to share their material possessions for the promotion of the gospel and to help those in need. Good stewardship stems from recognizing our relationship to Jesus Christ, but it also means recognizing our partnership in Christ’s enterprise on earth. (Rom. 12:13; 15:27; Gal. 6:6; Phil. 4:15; Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:13; Heb. 13:16; 1 Tim. 6:18).

18. New Testament fellowship is first a sharing together in a common life, the life of the Savior, with other believers through relationship with God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Fellowship is, therefore, first and foremost a relationship, rather than an activity.

19. Any activity that follows is to flow out of this relationship.

20. Fellowship occurs in two spheres or levels:
   a. Vertical: God
   b. Horizontal: Man.

21. The word “relationship” describes what we are: A community of people bound together by eternal life and blessings that we share together as a result of our union with Christ.

22. The word “partnership” describes how we are related to each other in that relationship: We are partners in a divine enterprise and calling in which we are to work together as a team in a common purpose to obtain common objectives for the glory of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. Phil 1:27).

23. Philippians 1:27, “Single-mindedly, continue conducting yourselves (as citizens of heaven) in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. So that whether having come and having seen all of you or being absent I might continue hearing the things concerning all of you, that all of you are persevering by means of one Spirit, one soul. By all of you fighting together by means of faith in the gospel.”

24. Companionship is the interchange or the communication (communion) that exists among companions, those associated together through a relationship they hold in common.

25. The key ingredient in companionship is communication.

26. Communication is the interchange or the sharing of concepts, feelings, ideas, information, needs, burdens, etc., through words or other symbols like body language and actions so that all members of the relationship can share and thus minister to each other as they have opportunity and are sensitive to the needs of one another.

27. In the Christian community, fellowship means learning to communicate on a spiritual level through a mutual sharing of the things of Christ by means of the Word, the Spirit-empowered and motivated life, and the ministries and gifts of the various members of the body of Christ.
28. The purpose of this is to promote a greater appreciation of our Lord and Savior and the sufficiency of His Word for our lives, regardless of the circumstances (good or bad) and this is to be accomplished imitating and sharing the Lord with one another.

29. 2 Directions of Fellowship:
   a. Vertical: Our communion and fellowship with the Lord through the Word, prayer, and the filling of the Holy Spirit, the abiding life.
   b. Horizontal: Our communion and fellowship with the body of Christ, with other believers.

30. Mark 12:28-31, “One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him, "What commandment is the foremost of all?" Jesus answered, "The foremost is, "HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH." The second is this, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." There is no other commandment greater than these.”

31. Our horizontal fellowship includes the following:
   b. Assembling in smaller groups (2 Tim. 2:2).
   c. Meeting together one on one (1 Thess. 5:11).

32. We share and communicate with one another by sharing truth with one another, sharing with others what God has taught us with a view to building others up (Rom. 1:11-12; 2 Tim. 2:2; 1 Thess 5:11; Phil. 4:6).

33. Sharing together in the company of others the various aspects of worship as
   a. The Lord’s supper (communion) (1 Cor. 10:16);
   b. The singing of hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16);
   c. Prayer (1 Cor. 14:16-17);
   d. The ministry of the Word (Acts 20:20; 2 Tim. 2:2; 1 Pet. 4:10-11).

34. Sharing together as partners in the needs, burdens, concerns, joys, and blessings for the purpose of encouragement, comfort, challenge or exhortation, praise, prayer, and physical help according to needs and ability (cf. Phil. 1:5 with 1:15; cf. also Phil. 1:27 with 2:4; 4:3; finally note Rom. 12:15; and 1 Thess. 5:11, 14, 15; Heb. 10:33).

35. A steward is one who manages the property of another. He is not an owner, thus he is only a manager.

36. All that we have in reality belongs to God (Ps. 50:10-11; 104:24-25; Dan. 2:38), and it is required of stewards that they be found faithful to the stewardship entrusted to them (1 Cor. 4:1-2).

37. To focus our attention to the One Another concept, the Holy Spirit used a special Greek word, a reciprocal pronoun, allelon (ἀλλήλων) meaning "one another."

38. Allelon means “the quality or state by which there is a mutual exchange between others and ourselves.”

39. The term “reciprocal” means “mutual, shared, shown or felt alike by both sides; united in feelings, actions, responsibilities, and attitudes.”

40. Reciprocal implies a return in due measure by each side in the matter discussed.

41. This reciprocal pronoun is frequently used in statements and injunctions to Christians regarding the responsibilities that believers are to engage in for the mutual help and blessing of one another.

42. The frequency of these injunctions indicates the importance of this truth to the growth, health, and ministry of the body of Christ.

43. The basic and primary command for believers is to love one another.

44. All together these One Another passages may be grouped together into 18 or more specific categories of responsibility where Christians are to be ministering in the lives of fellow members of the body of Christ.

45. Just a brief look at these passages will quickly reveal two things:
   a. The need we each have of the ministry and aid of others, and
   b. Our responsibility to serve to others.

46. As members of the body of Christ (Romans 12:5) we are also members of one another.

47. Rom 12:5, “so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”

48. Just as all the members of our bodies (arms, legs, head, etc.) are diverse and consist of many members, so believers are all part of one body with each one being essential.

49. The One Another passages and injunctions remind us:
   a. That no man is an island—no individual believer can function effectively by himself. We need the help and love of other members of the body. We need encouragement, counsel, prayer, or physical help, depending on our particular needs at any given moment.
b. That every believer is important and essential to the proper function of the church—the body of Christ. While this will vary in one’s life, still, each believer needs help in some way, but also each has something to contribute to the well-being, growth, and ministry of the body of Christ.

50. A study of these One Another passages yield a number of principles that lay the foundation and set forth the reasons why God has given us these exhortations in the New Testament.

51. The following principles speak strongly against our age of independence, loneliness, and insensitivity to others.

52. The tendency is for people to simply do their own thing and go their own way in their search for happiness regardless of the needs of others or upon whom they may trample in the process.

53. Ironically, when we pursue this path, we are searching for happiness in all the wrong places.

54. Indeed, when we do this we have followed the deceptions of the world and Satan; we have placed our trust in the wrong things, worshipping what we think they can give us, rather than resting in God and His plan for our lives (see Matt. 4:8-11).

55. Loving one another according to the love of God constitutes the foundation and motivational reason for the One Another injunctions of Scripture.

56. The following is a list of why we should love one another:
   a. We are God’s children (Eph. 5:1).
   b. We are brethren (Rom. 15:14).
   c. We are members of one another (1 Cor. 12:25).
   d. We are taught by God to love one another (1 Thess. 4:9).
   e. God loves us (1 John 4:7).
   f. It is the expression and fulfillment of God’s will (Mt. 22:35-40).
   g. We want to glorify Him (1 Pet. 4:10-11).

57. “Love” is the noun agape (ἀγάπη).

58. Agape rarely appears in classical Greek.

59. The Greek New Testament writers elevated the word’s meaning by defining it as an attribute of God, thus God is its source.

60. Agape originates in the essence of God, thus it designates the love of God or we could say agape is “divine-love.”

61. In the New Testament agape expresses a love that wills to initiate a relationship and show kindness and self-sacrifice toward an object regardless if the object is responsive or not, whether attractive or obnoxious, rather it is an expression of the nature and character of one who loves.

62. The Christian who operates in the love of God expresses the character and nature of God.

63. Characteristics of Agape, “divine-love”:
   c. Eternal (John 17:26).
   d. Kind (1 Cor. 13:4).
   e. Not self-centered (bragging, jealous) (1 Cor. 13:4).
   f. Immutable (Rom. 8:39).
   g. Unconditional (Rom. 8:35, 39).
   h. Compassionate (1 John 3:16-17).
   i. Merciful (1 John 3:16-17).
   j. Righteous and Just (Rom. 13:8-10).
   k. Thoughtful and Considerate (Rom. 13:8-10).
   l. Truthful or Honest (1 Cor. 13:6).
   m. Enduring (1 Cor. 13:7).
   n. Confident in the Future (1 Cor. 13:7).
   o. Forgiving (Eph. 4:32-5:2).

64. We have a responsibility to love one another.

65. John 15:12-17, “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear
fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. This I command you, that you love one another.”

66. Rom 13:8, “Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.”

67. Loving and caring for one another is not an option for the Christian.

68. It is a mandate.

69. It is solid proof of our love for the Lord and our fellowship with Him.

70. 1 John 3:16-20, “We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things.”

71. The Lord Jesus Christ gave us the perfect example to follow in regards to loving each other.

72. John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

73. Word of God and the Spirit of God are the means by which the believer is to carry out the command to love one another.

74. The Spirit of God through the application of the Word of God by the believer provides the omnipotence he needs in order to fulfill the mandate to love his fellow believer.

75. Gal 5:13-14, “For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.”