

# Experiencing God

## Kingdom People

Ephesians 3:16-21

September 03, 2016

### Today

We have spent the last 7 weeks exploring life with God. It is a rollercoaster, hair on fire ride. It is one that changes and transforms us into kingdom people - people who desire relationship with God and desire to be used by God in his redemptive plans.

Most of our discussion has been focused on our individual experience. Now we shift to the corporate body of Christ. As the church of Christ, God invites us into a special relationship with Himself. Through that relationship God will do things only God can do and He will work through us to accomplish kingdom things.

Christians are kingdom people and as kingdom people it is our duty & privilege to be involved in God's redemptive plan:

- **Exodus 19:5-6** - Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; <sup>6</sup> and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.
- **1 Peter 2:9** - But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

In the mind and teaching of Jesus, the church is a living, breathing thing. It is a dynamic fellowship of believers – NOT a building made of wood or stone.

He gave us a commission to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19). Therefore, it is through HIS church that He impacts the world and brings people to Himself.

The best word to describe this intimate Christian fellowship is *KOINONIA*. That kind of fellowship comes as an extension of the relationship between God and individual Christians. The group experience only comes as a result of individual experience and surrender to God.

- **1 John 1:1-7** What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life-- <sup>2</sup> and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us-- <sup>3</sup> what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> And these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete. <sup>5</sup> And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. <sup>6</sup> If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; <sup>7</sup> but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

It is impossible to be in intimate fellowship with God and OUT of fellowship with other believers. When you live in a love relationship with God, you cannot help but have that same quality of relationship with other believers and people in general.

- **John 13:35** - By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.
- **1 John 3:10-11** - By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. <sup>11</sup> For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another;
- **1 John 4:7-11** - Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. <sup>9</sup> By this the love of God was manifested in us that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Kingdom people are connected to the worldwide community of believers. Notice the New Testament churches:

- **Acts 2:42-47** And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. <sup>43</sup> And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. <sup>44</sup> And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; <sup>45</sup> and they *began* selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. <sup>46</sup> And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, <sup>47</sup> praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.
- **Acts 11:19-26** So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. <sup>20</sup> But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to

Antioch and *began* speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. <sup>21</sup> And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. <sup>22</sup> And the news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. <sup>23</sup> Then when he had come and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and *began* to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain *true* to the Lord; <sup>24</sup> for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord. <sup>25</sup> And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; <sup>26</sup> and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came about that for an entire year they met with the church, and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

- **1 Thessalonians 1:6-10** You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, <sup>7</sup> so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. <sup>8</sup> For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth, so that we have no need to say anything. <sup>9</sup> For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, <sup>10</sup> and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, *that is Jesus*, who delivers us from the wrath to come.

We need each other!

## Essentials for Intimate Fellowship:

### We must love God with our total being.

- **Matthew 22:37** - And He said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.'  
**If you love God, you will obey Him.**
- **John 14:21-24** - He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him." <sup>22</sup> Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us, and not to the world?" <sup>23</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him. <sup>24</sup> "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.
- **1 John 5:2-3** - By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. <sup>3</sup> For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.  
**If you love God, you will love your brother.**
- **1 John 4:21** - And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

When fellowship with God is broken, fellowship with others will reflect that.

### We must submit to God's sovereign rule.

- God is your master
- Because Christ is the head of the church, we must submit and be obedient to Christ
- Giving your loyalty to anyone or anything other than Christ is spiritual adultery
  - Pastor
  - Influential members
  - Church leaders
- Everything and everyone must be under the Lordship of Christ. Fellowship is broken not only when an individual tries to be the head of the church but also when the church expects its pastor or other individuals or groups to rule the church. No individual or group can function as the head of the body if that church is to be healthy. It may look healthy, but God sees the rebellion against the lordship of Jesus and ultimately, He can't bless a church that refuses to accept Jesus as the head of the church.

Christian fellowship is impossible if a church is made up of individuals who are unwilling to submit to the Lordship of Christ.

### We must experience God in a real and personal way.

- Not through spouse, parent, pastor, teacher, friend – it must be YOUR relationship
- Christian fellowship is threatened when we allow anyone or anything to make us a spectator rather than an active participant.
- You must be intentional about your relationship with God or your fellowship will grow cold.
- Churches must not be concerned only with numerical results. They must carefully consider the motivation behind their work. Are lives being transformed? Are broken people finding spiritual and emotional healing? Are people personally encountering the living God? If the answer is no – something is terribly wrong.

### We must completely trust God.

You must depend on God to do the things only He can do.

- **Isaiah 31:1** - Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, *and* rely on horses, and trust in chariots because they are many, and in horsemen because they are very strong, but they do not look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the LORD!

Placing trust in anything else breaks fellowship:

- Yourself: abilities, resources
- Other people: abilities, resources
- Programs or methods
- Manipulation or coercion
- Pressure tactics or guilt
- Deceit

It is interesting that this series is going on at the same time we are studying the methods Jesus used to reach people in Sabbath School. I had completely written this final part of the series before I studied the SS lesson. After studying the lesson, I had to go back and change the sermon.

All of the points above make us stronger Christians and makes for a stronger church body. But to what end? What is the point of this exercise? Do we do all these things just in order to have a strong church community or is there something more to it?

Jesus would have us witness to the world and go on mission with Him for the salvation of people who don't know Him. That is the point of the exercise. Everything we have talked about is completely worthless if the only people it benefits are those already sitting in the pews. The point is to be the hands and feet of Jesus to a world dying for the lack of knowledge of a God who LOVES them.

Listen to what the lesson said this week:

“as followers of Jesus, we are called to live out His pattern of mingling, sympathizing, and ministering to people’s needs.”

People are drawn to Jesus and gain trust and confidence in Him as we do as Jesus did:

- Get to know people
- Desire their good
- Show sympathy
- Minister to their needs

God has done His very best for us in sending Jesus and in response we must do our very best to share the news.

We have come to the end of our Experiencing God series.

A few years ago, an SDA congregation asked this question of their church: “Would our community miss us if somehow our congregation disappeared?” The answer was no. Not liking the answer, the congregation went about building bridges instead of walls (from SS lesson).

I will ask us the same question. If today was the last day this SDA congregation met here. Would the community surrounding us:

- Notice we were gone?
- Miss us?

If the answer is NO then we have to ask why - are we wall builders or bridge builders? We have work to do to gain the confidence and trust of the people in this community. Jesus will not be attractive to them until they know that we care about them. It starts with us. We are the hands and feet of Jesus.

I hope that you are no longer content with the status quo / either in your personal life or church life. I hope that you have become inspired to develop a personal relationship with God.

The Holy Spirit works through believers and empowers them to accomplish God-sized tasks. It is God who grows the church. The Spirit produces unity. Christ grows spiritual fruit. As with our individual walk with God, the church community must depend on God to accomplish His plans. It is not about what we can do for God. It is about what He can accomplish THROUGH us. In everything we must depend on God's guidance, resources, and power. His presence creates and maintains fellowship, and He bears lasting fruit through obedient and trusting people.

When we go on mission together – when we go about the business of doing what Jesus has told us to do (tell the world about HIM) - we begin to experience greater dimensions of God and Christian fellowship takes on a fuller and deeper meaning.