

**Sunday, May 17<sup>th</sup>**  
May, 2009 Sermon Series: “Stewardship: I Believe”  
“Fellowship”  
John 15:9-17

**Context:**

Week 1: Jesus is the “Good Shepherd” who laid down His life and cares for us. Our response is Worship. Last week, we heard Jesus describe Himself as the “True Vine” and we are His “branches.” Jesus commands us to remain (to endure, dwell) in Him because He remains (endures, dwells) in us. Jesus said that we bear fruit (love, faithfulness, overall Christ-like character) as we remain in Him and His words remain in us. The study of God’s Word is a vital way of remaining in Jesus. Today, Jesus calls us His friends! As the Father has loved Him, Jesus loves us, and His love must flow through us to others. This mutual love—The Father loves Jesus—Jesus loves us—we love Jesus—we love others—creates joyful, loving relationships. The old English word is “*Fellowship*.”

**Relevant Scriptures:**

*John 15:12-15 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command. <sup>15</sup>I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.*

“Friend” Φίλος (*philos*) = “to love”

*1 John 3:16 This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.*

*Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

*John 15:16-17 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. <sup>17</sup>This is my command: Love each other.*

“...that will last” μένω (*menno*) = “to stay in a given place, dwell, endure”

*John 14:21 Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."*

*John 13:34 A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.*

*Hebrews 10:23-25 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup>And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. <sup>25</sup>Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

**Prayer/Implications:** Thank God for these two Biblical truths: First, Jesus calls you His friend! Jesus loved you to the fullest extent possible: He gave His life so that you may receive God's forgiveness, joy, and love. Second, Jesus commands you to love others as He loves you. How do these truths make a difference in your life?

☐ **Day #1--Monday, May, 18<sup>th</sup> Read:** *Matthew 18:20; John 13:34-35.*

As we continue to focus on Stewardship during the month of May, this week we explore the nature of Christian "Fellowship." Fellowship is the English translation of the Greek word "*koinonia*," which means "community." The simple truth is that we need each other. Jesus came that all people might know that they have been forgiven and accepted by God and because of this we can come home to the Father—we are reconciled with God! The reconciliation that Jesus brings through His death and resurrection also creates a community of faith; because we have peace with God we can now extend that peace toward others. The Christian faith was made to be lived in community. Spiritual growth is nurtured through spiritual friendships that provide support, mutual accountability, prayer, acceptance, Biblical insights, and commitment to one another. Our goal here at Red Hill is that everyone in this church has a "place" where they are known, loved, prayed for, encouraged, and challenged. If you are not involved in a small group, regular Bible class, ministry team, or connected with other believers, commit now to joining one of our groups and/or studies and get connected into the Body of Christ.

Reflect: I belong in God's family!

Pray: *Jesus, you had twelve people you called your community. If you needed it, I need it. Please lead me to others that I may love them and be loved in return. Amen.*

☐ **Day #2--Tuesday, May, 19<sup>th</sup> Read:** *Romans 12:5; Matthew 16:18.*

You need your church! Why do you need your church? Because that is where God wants you to grow in His Word, serve His people, praise His name, and reach out to His world. The local church is the place that God has chosen to accomplish all these objectives. When we are baptized we become members of God's church, which is the "body of Christ." In this "Body" we have a part to play. We are not in the church to just receive, we are there to give. Rick Warren lists six reasons why you need to belong and be committed to a local church:

1. A church family identifies you as a genuine believer.
2. A church family moves you out of self-centered isolation.
3. A church family helps you to develop spiritual muscle.
4. The Body of Christ needs you.
5. You will share in Christ's mission in the world.
6. A church family will help keep you from backsliding.

I think you can see why the church is important and where you BELONG.

Going Forward: I am a part of the Body of Christ.

Prayer: *God, thank you for the privilege of being a part of your body, the church. Amen.*

**Day #3--Wednesday, May, 20<sup>th</sup> Read:** *Acts 2:42-47; Psalm 133:1.*

Biblical Community, also known as Small Groups, is the practice of fellowshiping with other believers in order to share my life with others and receive God's blessings from others. Are you in a Biblical Community? How do you know? What are the traits?

A Biblical Community is a small group of believers (3-12), where Jesus is the center, and people are known, loved, cared for, and served. In return, they know, love, care for and serve others.

The early church sprung out of these small groups of believers that met in homes and in the temple. These groups had possessions in common, ate together, served each other, and studied together. Sometimes a large church can lose sight of the importance of the individual.

At Red Hill, our small groups fulfill the title of Biblical community. Some of our groups are for Bible study, some for service, some for a common task, some for prayer, and some include all of these practices. We encourage you (again) to get involved in one of these communities.

Going Forward: I need others to share my Christian life.

Prayer: *God thanks for putting other people in my life. Give me the courage to share my life with others. Amen.*

**Day #4--Thursday, May, 21<sup>st</sup> Read:** *John 17:20-26.*

Love. That's what it's all about. We were created to love God, others, and ourselves. Love means giving one's self to another. When we truly love another, we "empty" ourselves and receive the other as they are. When we love like this we experience unity. Unity is the goal of Christian love. Jesus prayed that those who love Him (His disciples) would love like Him. In Jesus' love for the Father, Jesus emptied himself and accepted us as we are. We (humanity) can now come into the relationship with the Father that Jesus had. Here we see the result: unity. We can make ourselves "one" with those we meet during the day, in our church, in our small group, and with our friends. Making ourselves one so that whomever we love in this way understands love and desires to love in return. Of course, this results in mutual love, the characteristic of Christians, an example of the love of Jesus, and the life of the Trinity brought to the world.

Going Forward: When I empty myself and accept others as they are, I love like Jesus.

Prayer: *Jesus, you are love. You love me so that I can love others. I cannot love like this without the power of your Spirit. Love through me today. Amen.*

**□ Day #5--Friday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> Read:** *1 John 4:7-12.*

"There is no such thing as a private life.—"a world within the world"—for man or woman who is brought into fellowship with Jesus Christ's sufferings. God breaks up the private life of His saints, and makes it a thoroughfare for the world on the one hand and for Himself on the other...The first thing God does with us is to get us based on rugged reality until we do not care what becomes of us individually as long as He gets His way for the purpose of redemption." (Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost For His Highest*)

When we enter into a relationship with Jesus, we also enter into a relationship with His children, your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

Going Forward: Loving God means loving others.

Prayer: *Come Holy Spirit and remind me that to love the Father is to love His children. Amen.*

**□ Day #6--Saturday, May 23<sup>rd</sup> Read Again:** *1 John 1:6-7; Hebrews 10:24-25.*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran Pastor and theologian during World War II. After his martyrdom at the hands of the Gestapo in 1945, Bonhoeffer continued his instruction to Christians throughout the world through his writings and personal faith in God during a very difficult time. In his book, *Life Together*, Bonhoeffer offers some insights into Christian community:

Christian community is like the Christian's sanctification. It is a gift of God, which we cannot claim. Only God knows the real state of our fellowship, our sanctification. What may appear weak and trifling to us may be great and glorious to God. Just as the Christian should not be constantly feeling his spiritual pulse, so, too, the Christian community has not been given to us by God for us to be constantly taking its temperature. The more thankfully we daily receive what is given to us, the more surely and steadily will fellowship increase and grow from day to day as God pleases. Christian brotherhood is not an ideal which we must realize; it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate.

Christian theologian, Oswald Chambers adds:

Rehabilitation means the putting back of the whole human race into the relationship God designed it to be in, and this is what Jesus Christ did in Redemption...The rehabilitation of the human race on Jesus Christ's plan means the realization of Jesus Christ in corporate life as well as individual life...We are not here to develop a spiritual life of our own, or to enjoy spiritual retirement; we are here so that the Body of Christ may be built up. Am I building up the Body of Christ, or am I looking for my own personal development only? (*My Utmost For His Highest*)

Going Forward: Christian community is God's gift to me.

Prayer: *Thank you for your community Father. Where two or three are gathered, you are there! You have given us one another. Help me to honor the gift of another in my life. Amen.*