

“Relationship and Fellowship”

We are now about three weeks into a Covid-19 way of life: social distancing; mandatory or self imposed quarantine; disinfecting everything from the dog to the donut; becoming best pals with hand sanitizer; missing the get-togethers with family and friends; etc. For those in the medical profession many of these activities could fit the description of their work world everyday, virus or no virus.

Such re-defining of relationships actually makes me think of Genesis 2:18 → *Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”* Then God created a woman. He made them so they could live in a complementary relationship with each other and form new relationships through family and eventually friends.

Hopefully during this time you are experiencing the importance of the LORD’s statement: *It is not good that the man should be alone.* When relationships with family, friends, co-workers, and so forth are hindered it hits you very hard. Why? Because God created you for relationship with others. The feelings which accompany isolation can be very difficult, even if you are not a “social butterfly” or an out-going individual.

As difficult as it has been to re-define our relationships with others during this time, God has provided us with many technological tools to stay in touch and continue sharing our lives with others. However, talking to and seeing those whom you love on a screen still cannot replace the physical presence which true relationship desires. I wonder how many computer monitors or smart phone screens are all smeared up trying to give those kids or grandkiddos kisses. Guess it’s time to take out the sanitation wipes, huh?

While recognizing the importance of relationships, hopefully we as the believers who make up the body of Christ can also cherish even more our relationship to each other in our fellowship. I know that many people think of relationship and fellowship as synonyms. However, when the LORD created Adam & Eve to live in relationship He also gave them the gift of perfect fellowship with Himself and each other. I've wondered how this virus activity has affected marriages and families, sinners who have to be with each other day in and day out. It's at these times when our broken fellowship in sin can start to show it's ugly face and strain the relationships for which God created us even more.

Thank God that He desires for us to have a perfect relationship in perfect fellowship with Himself, so much so that He re-established it again. 2 Corinthians 5:17-19 says that we are a *new creation* by faith *in Christ*, which means our relationship with one another is also made new in His forgiveness of sins. *All this is from God, Who through Christ reconciled us to Himself . . . that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them.*

In our congregation we not only live in relationship with each other but we share a fellowship with each other under the forgiveness of sins *in Christ* Jesus. That fellowship is bound up in the Gospel we hear read and preached in worship **together**; in the absolution pronounced in response to the confession of sins in worship **together**; in the Lord's Supper of which we partake in worship **together**. Thus, it is doubly difficult for us not to fellowship around that forgiveness of sins in worship **together**.

Although there is no equal substitute for the fellowship of believers gathered around God's Word and Sacraments, in this difficult time we

continue striving to proclaim the Gospel by streaming a worship service over the internet on Facebook and our website and providing printed and recorded versions of sermons and devotions on the website.

1 John 1:7 says: *If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.* The “light” of which this is speaking is not the backlight of your computer or smart phone screens, striving to bring you into relationship with your family and friends. It’s the light of God’s Word around which the Holy Spirit gives us *fellowship with one another, in the blood of Jesus His Son which cleanses us from all sin.* Amen.

— **Pastor**