

## **Lent (1) Fellowship: What does that mean?**

In the bible we come across the word fellowship most frequently in the New Testament. However, the principles of fellowship are threaded throughout. In the Old Testament these principles are embedded in stories about the nation of Israel. How do families and tribes relate to each other, the nation, and their God. How should they care for one another, how should they celebrate and worship together, and how should they share the wonder of their loving God with surrounding nations.

In the New Testament these principles continue but a new word is introduced "Ecclesia" this is the word we translate as Church. As the good news about Jesus spreads new people find hope, faith, and relationship with God. The fellowship becomes more diverse than ever before with people from many different nations and backgrounds joining. Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, men and women, young and old, free and slaves, all in fellowship as brothers and sisters in Christ.

What images does the term fellowship bring to your mind? Is it coffee after Church, meals shared together, or perhaps social activities?

What images do you think the word fellowship might create outside of the Church? Sport, maybe a football team working together to win a game or tournament, perhaps the spectators cheering them on, or maybe aid agencies working to help people in a disaster?

There is a film, based on a book by J. R. R. Tolkien called "Lord of the rings, the fellowship of the ring". In this film a diverse group of people (elves, humans, hobbits, and dwarves) come together and commit themselves completely to each other and to a shared mission, they form a fellowship.

Please pause for a while to think about and if possible, discuss.

- 1) What does fellowship look like in your experience of Church?
- 2) What kind of fellowships may people outside the Church be attracted to?  
And why?

Read Ephesians 4:1-16

The body of Christ working together in unity. But here's the big vision, the body of Christ working together in unity to become the fullness of Christ on earth.

This is not often how we see our fellowship from within the Church and perhaps much less so how our fellowship is seen by those outside the Church. I often have conversations that go a little like this, I ask, "do you believe in God?" and the response is along the lines of "the Church is boring and irrelevant". Initially the answer may not seem to match the question but, if the Church is the body of Christ,

people should be able to see the love, greatness, and glory of Jesus reflected in our fellowship.

Sometimes we even hide some of the best bits in case they look like too much of a commitment and scare people of, but our fellowship should be something worth investing in?

Fellowships form around a common purpose or mission. We are called to share in God's mission to "reconcile the world to himself through Jesus".

3) How much does God's mission shape our fellowship?

4) Is our image of fellowship big enough?

Prayer

What do we need to confess?

What do we need to ask for help with?