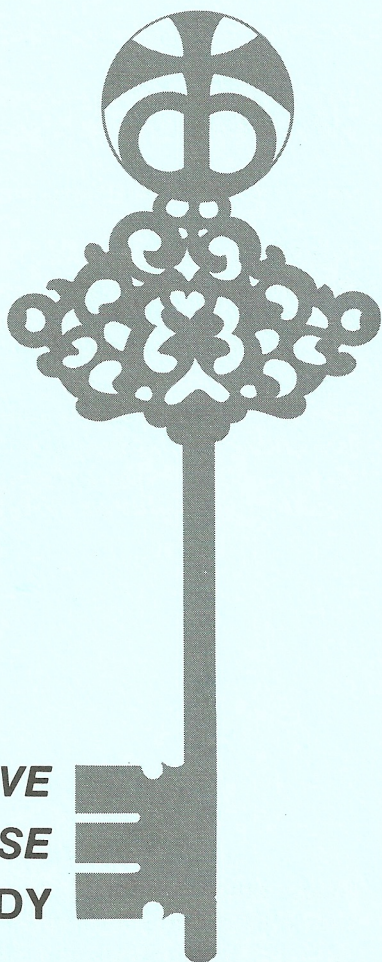


BIBLE STUDY GUIDE GROWING IN CHRISTIAN FRIENDSHIP AND HOSPITALITY

By Bruce J. Lieske



***YOU HAVE
THE KEY TO GOD'S HOUSE
SHARE IT WITH SOMEBODY***

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Foreword to the 2017 edition:

Much has changed in our ministry since this booklet was originally published. So I thought I would take this opportunity to update the reader on what is going on in the LC-MS within Jewish missions.

In 1973, at the encouragement of Rev. Bruce Lieske, their pastor, St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Philadelphia submitted a memorial to the 1973 convention of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, titled "To Facilitate Gospel Proclamation among Jews." The synod ultimately referred this issue to an ad hoc committee, headed by Dr. Erwin J. Kolb then the Executive Director for Evangelism of the LC-MS. You can find these and related documents in *Witnessing to Jewish People* by Bruce J. Lieske available through our website at www.lije.org on the "Resources" page.

This beginning grew into what is now Lutherans in Jewish Evangelism (LIJE), founded in 1981. Rev. Lieske became its Founder and first Executive Director, and LIJE became the first mission society outreach of the LC-MS since World War II. There are 6,000,000 Jewish people in the United States, accounting for 45% of world Jewry.

To minister to this community, we help prepare congregations for ministry to Jewish people through preaching, teaching, writing and workshops while developing branches that are active and intentional in evangelism to the communities where God has placed them. We affirm and seek to be faithful to St. Paul's proclamation, **"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile" (Romans 1:16).**

The vision of LIJE is two-fold:

- First, LIJE seeks to engage in intentional evangelism within every significant Jewish community in the United States, sharing Y'shua (Jesus) with all people and especially the Jewish people.
- Secondly, LIJE seeks to connect congregations for training in evangelism and to help our churches understand the Jewish roots of their faith.

This bible study was written to facilitate those goals with the expressed goal of opening mission branches in every city in the United States with a population of 20,000 or more Jewish people. There are 39 such areas in this country!

When this book was written, I was not a believer in Jesus, having been raised in a Jewish home in Denver, CO. I came to faith in 1991 through the ministry of St. John's Lutheran Church in Denver, and began my ministry with a Jewish outreach organization in Denver, CO, called Menorah Ministries where I was serving as a volunteer missionary on the campus at the University of Colorado. By 1996 I was attending Concordia Seminary and had not heard much about the existing Lutheran mission to the Jews when I met Steve Cohen. He was then the field counselor and advisor to LIJE. In 1996 he left Jews for Jesus and came full-time with LIJE and moved to St. Louis. We worked together to found The Apple of His Eye Mission Society, which was ostensibly intended to be a missionary training center, working with LIJE. But it ended up effectively operating as a competing mission to the Jews, causing a lot of confusion within our church body. So Steve and Bruce decided to separate their work. Steve left the ministry of LIJE but continued to operate under LIJE's street name of "The Apple of His Eye."

Because of all this confusion, LIJE determined to open new mission branches under the name of "Burning Bush Ministries" to distinguish itself from Steve's new ministry, and in 1999, opened a new branch of mission in Detroit, MI, the first of "Burning Bush Ministries."

However, two branches of ministry were still open, St. Louis and New York, operating under the "Apple of His Eye" name. Both branches were attached to messianic-Lutheran congregations, Congregation Beth El in Queens, New York, and Congregation Chai v'Shalom in St. Louis, where I have the privilege of pastoring.

Congregation Chai v'Shalom was founded in 1998, celebrating its first worship service on April 18, 1998, about a year-and-a-half since beginning mission work in St. Louis. Then, in 2005, Bruce retired and LIJE called me to serve as its second Executive Director, and has moved its offices to St. Louis, MO, where it continues a variety of ministries under the structure of LIJE, such as The Apple of His Eye, Burning Bush Ministries, and Aish HaEmeth, our Center for Jewish-Christian studies.

Unfortunately, in 2008 our ministry and congregation in Queens, New York closed as the missionary there took a call to serve a traditional Lutheran congregation. But, we have opened new mission stations in Atlanta and S. Florida, and continue to minister in Detroit, St. Louis and Orlando, and work with partner ministries to serve in the Ukraine and in Israel. We are actively working with congregations in the New York metro area to reopen our New York branch. **LIJE continues as a faith-ministry of the LC--MS, and as such relies on the**

regular support of those to whom God has called to sustain it with their gifts and prayers.

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field"

(Matthew 9:35-38).

--Rev. Kevin Parviz, Executive Director



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BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

GROWING IN CHRISTIAN FRIENDSHIP AND HOSPITALITY

Introduction

God's call by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel to a nonbeliever is to come out of the darkness, be forgiven, and walk in the light of Jesus. But that call is to walk with Jesus **within** a local fellowship of believers. A new believer must be assimilated into the congregation. Let us suppose your congregation has an excellent evangelism program. Members are regularly visiting people, sharing the Gospel with them, and some of those have professed faith in Jesus Christ. Then let us suppose they are further instructed in the "pastor's class" and join the congregation. It is imperative that they **stay** in the congregation and be further disciplined.

What do some congregations have that makes them like magnets, drawing many visitors to their services (even when there is no formal evangelism program) and compelling new members to **stay**, grow, and become fruitful? On the contrary, what is it that some congregations lack that causes new members to gradually drop out?

Perhaps some say the answer is "friendliness." Friendliness seems to pay off. The salesman is friendly so he can get your business. The political candidate shakes hands and smiles so he can get your vote. Shouldn't Christian churches then cultivate "friendliness" so they can "get" new members? Some churches do advertise themselves as "the friendly church." Pastors urge their people to "be friendly" to visitors. Many churches have organized groups of people called "greeters" who are charged with the responsibility of "being friendly" to the visitors on behalf of the congregation.

But the Bible nowhere urges us just to be friendly. Certainly we are not opposed to friendliness, but we are saying that it misses the mark of what God expects of a local fellowship of believers. Attracting the visitor, and retaining the new member, depends not on friendliness, but on **koinonia** and its by-product, Christian hospitality. The following three lessons explore these important dimensions of Christian living.

Lesson One

Close Friendship with Christ and with Christians

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and **fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42).

This passage gives the first of 19 citations of the Greek word **koinonia**, which is usually translated as “fellowship,” but which has a richness that goes beyond the word “fellowship.” The early Christians were devoted to, and busily engaged in, four things: the apostles’ teaching, the breaking of bread, the prayers, and **koinonia**. We can understand that they would be deeply involved in the teaching of apostolic doctrine, that they would celebrate Holy Communion frequently and faithfully, and that they would spend much time in prayer. But what is **koinonia**? And if the early Christians “devoted themselves” to it, should we not do the same?

1. According to 1 John 1:3 for what two reasons did the apostle John write his letter?

- a. _____
- b. _____

2. 2 Corinthians 13:14 is a familiar benediction to many Lutherans. In it Paul prays that the reader would have the grace that comes from Christ and the love that comes from God. What else does he pray for? _____

According to the previous context of verses 11-13, do you think this is a union with the Holy Spirit or a quality that the Holy Spirit gives? _____

Insight: Congregations have been known to quarrel within themselves about money, church furnishings, food, etc. James 4:4 gives the reason for this: “Do you not know that friendship [**philia**] with the world is enmity with God?”

3. Philippians 2:1 speaks of being “in Christ” and of having a “participation [**koinonia**] in the Spirit.” The personal union of the believer with Christ and the Holy Spirit results in what four important qualities:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

How does Ephesians 5:18 describe “participation in the Spirit”? _____

4. According to 1 Corinthians 10:16 how can Christians experience the personal union (**koinonia**) with Jesus Christ? _____

5. Read 2 Corinthians 6:14 and indicate the correct answer:

- T F** Light has much in common with darkness.
- T F** God is silent on the matter of Christians marrying non-Christians.
- T F** Your closest friends should be Christians.

Insight: R. C. H. Lenski in his book **The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude** (Lutheran Book Concern, 1938) says, "We observe that in the New Testament the word **koinonia** is used only in a good or sacred sense and it is not used with reference to evil and those outside" (pp. 396—97).

6. Read 1 John 1:6-7 and answer the questions.
 - a. What indicates that a person does not have fellowship with Christ?

 - b. What indicates that we have a fellowship with other believers?

 - c. Cf. 1 John 1:5-7 and explain what is meant by "walk in darkness" and "walk in the light."

7. Read Galatians 2:9. What caused James, Cephas, and John to give "the right hand of **fellowship**" to Paul and Barnabas? _____

Discussion Questions

1. Can a person belong to a congregation and **not** have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ?
2. Which of the items listed best describe **koinonia**: (a) a potluck supper, (b) a church softball team, (c) intimacy, (d) Sunday morning greeters. Why?
3. One church prints on the outside of its bulletin "bringing the friendship of Jesus to all." What does this mean to you?
4. A familiar table prayer among Lutherans begin with, "Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest." When we pray this, what are we asking for?
5. People sometimes profess a faith in Jesus Christ but at the same time refuse to worship with or associate with a local congregation. Discuss this in the light of 1 John 1:3.

Lesson Two

Sharing, Caring, and Praying Together

“Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common” (Acts 4:32).

The words “in common” in Acts 4:32 translate the Greek word **koinos**.

The Greek word **koinonia** can sometimes mean “contribution” or “sharing.” Indeed, the early Christian church seems to have handled its physical needs well through a system of sharing of possessions. Acts 6 describes the selection of seven deacons who were responsible for ministering to the needs of widows in an organized and wise manner. In this lesson we examine several references of **koinonia** that describe the early Christian church as a sharing, caring, and praying-together community.

1. Read Hebrews 13:16.
 - a. What are Christians asked to do? _____
 - b. What one word describes these God-pleasing actions?

2. Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-4. The churches of Macedonia collected money to help the poverty-stricken churches in Jerusalem. Verse 4 translates **koinonia** as “taking part.” What did the Macedonian church, according to verse 4, think of this endeavor? Underline the best answer.
 - a. Christian obligation
 - b. Christian duty
 - c. A favor or privilege
 - d. A command of Paul, the apostle
3. Read Romans 15:26 and 2 Corinthians 9:13. What English word has been used here to translate **Koinonia**? _____

Insight: A financial contribution, made out of love, to a needy Christian deepens the friendship between both the giver and the recipient of the gift. Have you or your church ever contributed to the financial needs of a ministerial student? A missionary?
4. Romans 12:15 exhorts us to “rejoice with those who rejoice” and “weep with those who weep.” In Philippians 3:10 **koinonia** is translated as “share.” Read the passage.
 - a. What does Paul wish to share? _____
 - b. Who did Paul persecute before he was a Christian? _____

Insight: Hebrews 13:3 tells us to “remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them.” The Body of Christ, and therefore Christ Himself, is being persecuted in some lands. By rendering aid to those Christians we are **sharing in** their suffering and therefore having **koinonia** with them.

5. Read Philemon 6 and answer the questions (**koinonia** is translated again as “sharing”).

T F We should not discuss our private beliefs lest we become proud.

T F Sharing of our faith lifts up Jesus Christ.

T F Jesus died for our sins to forgive us, and that is all that He did for us.

6. What were the early Christians doing in Acts 1:14? _____

7. What were the early Christians doing in Acts 12:12? _____

8. How is **koinonia** expressed in Matthew 18:19? _____

Discussion Questions

1. In his book, **The Problem of Wineskins** (IVP, 1976), Howard Snyder describes the problem of lack of **koinonia** in many Christian churches. He states that the church today is not experiencing nor demonstrating the kind of fellowship “of and in” the Holy Spirit that it did in New Testament times. The church is more like the big institutions of our society rather than a community of believers. “One seldom finds within the institutionalized church today that winsome intimacy among people where masks are dropped, honesty prevails, and there is that sense of communication and community beyond the human—where there is literally the fellowship of and in the Holy Spirit” (pp. 89–90). Discuss Snyder’s comments in terms of your own congregation.
2. What does your congregation consider “Christian fellowship” to be? Often congregations equate it with potluck suppers, Sunday school socials, church picnics, and other such gatherings where the conversation is about jobs, families, sports, and hobbies. David Mains in his book **Full Circle** (Word, 1971) says that the “cohesive element” of Christian fellowship is the common faith and its implications for our lives.
3. How can **koinonia** be expressed in a Sunday morning worship service? In a home Bible study group?
4. What is a prayer meeting? Does your church have them? Why or why not?
5. Which statement best expresses **koinonia**:
 - a. The annual pancake and sausage supper.
 - b. The Sunday school picnic.
 - c. The rite of “peace of the Lord to you” in the worship service.
 - d. Church members may borrow church equipment for personal use.
6. In the following statement there are two things that violate Biblical Christianity as expressed in the idea of **koinonia**: “It is the pastor’s job

to visit the sick.” What are the two violations? Cf. 1 Peter 5:1-3 and Matthew 25:34-40.

a. _____

b. _____

7. Without depreciating either quality, which quality do you think that the average person is looking for most of all in a Christian church: (a) a congregation where the Word of God is taught correctly and the sacraments are properly administered, or (b) a sharing, caring fellowship of believers that shows the love of Jesus.

Lesson Three

Hospitality Overflows Out of Koinonia

“Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality” (Romans 12:13).

The Greek word that we translate as “contribute” is **koinoneo**, the verb form of the noun **koinonia**. We suggest that a congregation that practices **koinonia** among its members will spontaneously practice hospitality! Ray Stedman in his book, **Body Life** (Gospel Light, 1979), describes **koinonia** as resulting in this very thing:

The New Testament lays heavy emphasis upon the need for Christians to know each other, closely and intimately enough to be able to bear one another’s burdens, confess faults to one another, rebuke, exhort and admonish one another, minister to one another with the Word and through song and prayer . . . in the early church a kind of rhythm of life was evident in which Christians would gather together in homes to instruct one another, study and pray together, and share the ministry of spiritual gifts. Then they would go out into the world again to let the warmth and the glow of their love-filled lives overflow into a spontaneous Christian witness that drew love-starved pagans like a candy store draws little children. (Quoted by permission, pp. 113–14.)

How else will the modern pagan understand “what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge” (Ephesians 3:18-19)? The modern pagan cares not that the church “is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel” (Augsburg Confession, VII). He is **not interested** in ladies guild meetings, church budgets, special worship services, special speakers, choirs, Christmas concerts or banners. But he **is** starved for love in a world that urges people to love money and practices selfishness with lies.

1. According to 1 Peter 4:9 where does hospitality begin? _____

Here are some examples of hospitality. Which ones have you or your congregation practiced?

Free baby-sitting for a friend

Inviting a visiting pastor or missionary into your home for a meal

Taking a hot meal to somebody who is ill

Finding a job for somebody

Providing transportation to the doctor for a sick person

Providing clothing for a family whose home has burned

Inviting a Sunday morning visitor to your home for a meal

Resettling a Vietnamese family

2. 1 Timothy 3:2-4 and Titus 1:7-9 set forth God’s expectations for a pastor. Included in **both** lists is the quality of “hospitable.” How can you help your pastor be more hospitable? _____

3. According to 2 Timothy 4:14-18, how did Satan attack Paul to hinder his ministry? _____

How do you think he might attack or hinder the pastor of your congregation? _____

Who then in your congregation might need special love and hospitality? _____

4. In the New Testament there are many examples of Christian hospitality. From your knowledge of the New Testament, match the list of hosts with those who received your hospitality by putting the correct letters in the blanks.

Hosts who gave hospitality

People who received hospitality

a. Jesus

___ church in Laodicea

b. Mary, Martha, Lazarus

___ Paul

c. Gaius

___ Simon Peter

d. Nympha

___ Paul and Silas

e. Philemon

___ 5,000 men

f. Simon the Tanner

___ Jesus

g. Jailer in Philippi

___ Paul and the church in Rome

If you have difficulty with the matching, the answers can be found in the following passages: John 6:11; John 12:1-2; Acts 9:43; Acts 16:33-34; Romans 16:23 Colossians 4:15; Philemon 22. Note that in these instances hospitality included food, lodging, medical aid, and the use of private homes for church meetings.

5. According to 1 Corinthians 16:20 and 2 Corinthians 13:12 how did Christians greet one another? _____

How might we express warm hospitality to another Christian? _____

6. Scripture contains many references to God dramatically rewarding people who showed hospitality to spiritual leaders. The widow of Sidon's son was raised from the dead by Elijah (1 Kings 17). The wealthy woman of Shunem's son was raised from the dead by Elisha (2 Kings 4). Mary and Martha's brother, Lazarus, was raised from the dead by Jesus (John 11).

Read Matthew 10:40-41. The word "receive" here means "receive as a guest." What will happen if you "receive as a guest" a prophet? _____
A righteous man? _____

Read Matthew 10:42. The "little ones" are described as being _____
If you give "a cup of cold water" to a "little one" what will you receive? _____

What might be some examples of "giving a cup of cold water"? _____

7. After Saul (Paul) had his vision of Jesus on the road to Damascus, he spent three days without his sight and without food or drink. During that

time, hospitality was accorded him by means of a man named Judas, who lived on Straight Street in Damascus. A disciple named Ananias was asked by God to be hospitable to Saul. Read Acts 9:10-17 and discuss how easy it was for Ananias to be hospitable to Saul, the notorious unbeliever. What was the result of Judas' and Ananias' hospitality to the non-Christian Saul? _____

8. Read John 14:1-3. What is the greatest act of hospitality anyone can receive? _____

Discussion Questions

1. Share with your group a time when you were the recipient of Christian hospitality. How did you feel?
2. What should you do when a Jehovah's Witness or another cult member comes to your door? Discuss in the light of 2 John 10-11 and carefully define "receive him" and "greet him."
3. Discuss how fear hinders us from being hospitable. What are we afraid of? Cf. 2 Timothy 1:7.
4. Today in the United States the "extended family" (parents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins all living in one geographical area) is not so prevalent as the "nuclear family" (mother, father, children). How can Christian hospitality alleviate the problem of loneliness in the nuclear family? The single-parent family?
5. One example of **Koinonia**—hospitality—is to welcome a new member of the congregation as a brother in Christ or a sister in Christ. Have you ever thought of fellow Christians as brothers or sisters? Did you ever address them as such? Cf. Acts 15:23,36,40; Romans 16:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:6.

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