

CHAPTER 7 – FELLOWSHIP

Purpose

The purpose of this lesson is to demonstrate to the believer that God never intended for His people to live in isolation or separated from each other, but that in His purpose He intended that they be rightly related to one another in unity, flowing together as a harmonious whole, to carry on a corporate ministry to the world.

Key Verse:

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. Eph 4:1-6 (KJV)

I. What does the word “Fellowship” mean?

- a. The actual meaning of the Greek word, translated “fellowship” in the New Testament, is “the act of using a thing in common”. It means to be a sharer, or a partner in something.
- b. In relation to the people of God it describes the partnership, communion or relationship that believers enter into by virtue of their common experience of salvation and mutual participation in the Body of Christ.

II. What are the two aspects of Christian Fellowship?

Fellowship for the believer is seen in two directions : vertically and horizontally.

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. 1 John 1:3 (KJV)

- a. Vertical fellowship is fellowship God-ward. Fellowship with God is the foundation for all other Christian fellowship. Fellowship with God is established when we lay down our will and accept God’s authority in our lives on the basis of the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1: 9; Ephesians 2: 12 – 18).

This fellowship is cultivated in prayer, praise and worship in Spirit and in truth (John 4: 23 – 24).

- b. Horizontal fellowship is fellowship man-ward. Once fellowship with God has been established, we can have proper fellowship with one another. When God is truly our first love and our desire is to please Him, then the way is open for the Lord to break down all barriers that separate us from one another.

This fellowship is cultivated in our inter-relating one with another in the Body of Christ. (Acts 2: 42).

III. What are some of the ways Christian Fellowship is expressed?

Christian fellowship is expressed in spiritual ways, as well as in practical ways.

a. Some spiritual avenues of fellowship include:

1. Praying one for another (James 5: 16)
2. Exhorting one another (Hebrews 3: 13; 10: 25)
3. Edifying one another (Romans 14: 19)
4. Bearing one another's burden (Galatians 6: 2, 5)
5. Singing, praising and worshipping together (Colossians 3: 16)
6. Comforting one another (1 Thessalonians 4: 18)
7. Forgiving one another (Ephesians 4: 32)

b. Some practical avenues of fellowship include:

1. Receiving one another into friendship (Romans 15: 7)
2. Serving one another in practical ways (Galatians 5: 13)
3. House-to-house fellowship (Acts 2: 46)
4. Showing hospitality to those in need (Romans 12: 13)
5. Being considerate one of another (Ephesians 4: 32)
6. Helping the needy financially (1 John 3: 16 – 18)
7. Getting to know and appreciate each other.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.
John 13:34-35 (KJV)

IV. With what are we forbidden to Fellowship?

When we enter into the Kingdom of God there should be an immediate separation from certain things that are totally inconsistent with the Christian lifestyle.

- a. The unregenerate world (Ephesians 5: 11; Psalm 94: 20).
- b. Satanic spirits and cults (1 Corinthians 10: 20).
- c. Unrighteousness (2 Corinthians 10: 20).
- d. False religion (2 Peter 2; Jude 4).
- e. False doctrine (2 John 1: 9 – 11; Galatians 1: 7 – 10).

V. What limitations does God place on our Fellowship with others who profess to be Believers?

While we are to endeavour to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace until we come to the unity of the faith (Ephesians 4: 2, 13), there are limitations that God places on our fellowship even with others who profess to be Christian. These limitations include both areas of doctrine and practice.

- a. Doctrinal concerns. Any doctrine which attacks the fundamental steps of the process of redemption should not be fellowshiped. This would include such things as the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, the humanity of Christ, the physical death, burial and resurrection of Christ, the depravity of man outside of Christ and the power of the blood of Christ to cleanse from sin (Titus 3: 10; Romans 16: 17).
- b. Disorderly conduct. Those who claim to be Christians, but who live in a way that is a reproach to His name, are not to be fellowshiped (Matthew 18: 15 – 17; 1 John 1: 7; 2: 10 – 11; 2 Thessalonians 3: 6). These things include:
 1. Covetous – Inordinately desirous or greedy.
 2. Idolatrous – Inordinately fond of a person or things above the Lord.
 3. Railer – Abusive and scornful language.
 4. Drunkenness – Habitually drinking to excess.
 5. Extortion – Obtaining gain by dishonest means.
 6. Fornication – Illicit sexual relationship.
 7. Hardness of Heart – Refusing to reconcile an offense with a brother.

With individuals who fall into these categories we are instructed “do not eat with them” and “do not keep company (fellowship) with them” (1 Corinthians 5: 11; 2 Thessalonians 3: 14).

Conclusion

God is very much concerned that all who belong to Him live in proper relationship to Him and to each other in His body. This is why, in the New Testament, those who were added to the Lord (Acts 5: 14) were also added to the Church (Acts 2: 41, 47). When we were saved we became part of a great family – the family of God! God is our Father and all those who know Him are our brothers and sisters. God is very concerned that His children love and accept one another and are united to do His work. God has a beautiful work for His family here on earth to do and a structure to follow and be part of while doing it.