



True Christian Fellowship

Is walking with God

Together

True Christian Fellowship

Why does fellowship fail to satisfy us?

It would seem that because of an emphasis on getting people saved by saying they believed Jesus died for their sins, many who attend Church have the idea that Christianity begins and ends with their conversion and a vertical relationship with God in heaven. They get saved and they go to Church, job done, nothing more to do but to wait for God to take us home to heaven. This learnt mindset from the world means salvation is about us and our happiness without any real responsibility to contribute to the life of the Church which is indeed the body of Christ and all who have repented from living for self.

All this reducing the gospel to self indulgence is untrue and in complete contradiction to the fact that Jesus calls everyone to repentance; to cease living for themselves and to live for God; He emphasises this need of turning from self determination and our declaration of independence by saying that unless we deny ourselves and take up our cross we cannot be His disciples. To reinforce this truth, in the final commission of Jesus to His disciples, He said go into the world and make disciples, teaching them to obey all I have commanded you; He didn't say go and build building and get people saved by accepting I died for their sin.

If we think salvation is only agreeing Jesus died for us, we want to walk into a Church that requires nothing from us? We will want all the people to be fully grown with a mature model of church government in place and everything running smoothly according to the New Testament pattern. This will mean we want a ready-made fellowship that we can just show up and gain all the benefits without having to do any of the hard work of making it work. Is it possible that such a fellowship exist at all?

However, real Christian fellowship is based on divinely prepared holy relationships. The fellowship of God requires relationships that are based on loving God and loving others. Since love is about sacrificially putting others first, self-centeredness is not compatible with fellowship.

As one Pastor put it, “we spend years going to church to get our needs met – the service was for us, the sermon was for us, the music was for us, the pastor was for us, the fellowship was for us. We are looking for fellowship, and the motivation revolves around getting our needs met... And so, we

really haven't changed at all. We're still consumed, absorbed, obsessed, and infatuated with what we need and frustrated by what we don't have." The evidence is that we still live for self and not for Christ.

The biggest problem we face is our spiritual immaturity and our inability to understand what healthy Christian relationships should look like. Real spiritual fellowship is based on working on loving sacrificial relationships with others. A relationship is not about what we can take from the relationship, but what we can give to the relationship. In Christ the Holy Spirit ensures we have the life of Christ and a spiritual ability to use as we contribute to the life of His body, the Church. When we surrender to the governance of the Spirit, His heart of fellowship will live in us and we will seek to love others as Christ loves us.

Jesus didn't die just to save us from sin; He died that we could be raised up into newness of His life, so that through surrender and obedience to Him we could have fellowship with the Father, Son and Spirit. Surrender and obedience means we would do as He requires; we would deny ourselves and take up our cross to follow Him; which means we would live in obedience to God and offer ourselves as living sacrifices for the good of all men in doing the Father's will that none shall be lost.

But God's way is not what we often find when we are looking for Christ in the Church. I have had the experience of being in a church for two years before someone came and spoke to me. Even being a regular attendee at a local church for five years has resulted in most people not knowing my name. How many people go to Church and wonder if anyone recognises who they are, or even if they are present.

How is it possible to attend church for two years before anyone speaks to you? After seven years in a local church I offered someone a little book of encouragement, to find that the person felt put down because they had been a Christian for ten years and someone had the hide to hand them a tract.

At another church, encouragement was given to remain for fellowship and a cuppa 'so we can get to know you'; but then you have to wait for a year with cup in hand for someone to approach you. And after that year you made the move to talk to others about spiritual issues, for fellowship is fellowship of the Spirit, only to find from then on that you are avoided.

The local church ought to be the place where we can find genuine fellowship in Christ. *"I in them and You in Me, that they may be*

perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.”

John 17:23

Another Pastor suggested that some churches were more like a movie theatre than a place of spiritual fellowship. Going to the movies means individuals quietly find their seat, watch a movie together with many strangers, get up and leave, often without speaking a word to another patron.

Part of our problem is that we've come to think of the church as the building you go to (by yourself) for church services and therefore enjoy fellowship. However the New Testament clearly presents the church as God's chosen people who no longer live for the world. It is a living body knit together by their common union with the love of Christ as they fulfil their ministry by using their gift from the Holy Spirit.

So it's not about talking about our life in the world as we enjoy a cuppa, it's about keeping our focus on Christ and what He is doing in us and others as we seek His will for the church in the world. Fellowship is about all of us participating in each other's lives for the glory of God. It's surprisingly easy to get people to talk about what things are of interests them, like their holiday, their work, politics, sport, hobbies, and the antics of their children. But question them about how their theology works out in their lives, and the conversation slows to a stop.

What does God's Bible have to say about fellowship?

The word fellowship come from the Greek word κοινωνία, anglicised it is koinonía and refers to communion or fellowship, joint participation, the share which one has in anything. Real fellowship comes from God by the Spirit to fill the heart of the inner man with the desire to join in unity with those who have salvation in Christ. This intimacy does not just know about the Father and the Son, it's about knowing and being known personally in the depth of our being.

Koinonía refers to communion as fellowship, joint participation, the share which one has in anything, a gift jointly contributed, a collection, and a contribution. Koinonía is a noun but its brothers and sisters are verbs that have to be acted on through their common origin in the noun.

The word appears nineteen times in the Greek New Testament. It is translated "fellowship" twelve times, "sharing" three times, and "participation" and "contribution" twice each.

This fellowship communion refers to our common union. This communion is the fellowship with God that fulfils the work of Christ in order for us to know and experience God now and forever. Communion and fellowship is the same thing, both have a spiritual relationship. We tend to relate fellowship with the normal things of life and communion to the spiritual part, but we are mistaken; fellowship is the fellowship of the Spirit, nothing normal here, it is spiritual truth applied to the mundane self centred things of the flesh so that we can more completely put on Christ.

The importance of true Christian fellowship is that it helps us focus on Christ and His desires and goals for us. True Christian fellowship sharpens one another's faith. It stirs us to exercise that faith in love and good works, all to God's glory. True fellowship is about our shared spiritual life in Christ. It's about living for Him as we live together through Him.

So fellowship not about talking about our life in the world as we enjoy a cuppa, but about keeping our focus on Christ and what He is doing in us as we seek His will for the church in the world. Fellowship is about all of us who are in Christ participating in each other's lives for the glory of God.

"what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

1 John 1:3

'Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honour; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.'

Rom 12:9-13

Our first desire is to be true fellowship, and sharing intimate spiritual communion with each other by God the Father, Son and Spirit. This common spiritual union with each other in Christ means fervent devoted love for one another in the manner of a shared cherished possession of Christ our Lord. As He has loved us with all He is, we love one another with all He has given us of Himself before thinking about ourselves.

Devotion means that we are not only committed to something we love, but we work at that love and frequently invest much time, money, and effort into the commitment to love as Christ loves us. Spiritual fellowship is a strong attachment or affection; it maintains earnest zeal; it is especially relevant of our feelings toward God expressed by acts of worship; which includes devotedness in affectionate attachment to His people.

How many people in the church are open to and interested in having a loving spiritual relationship with someone they don't know? How many people are uncomfortable when we begin to address personal spiritual issues or problems concerning the absence of intimate fellowship? If we cannot see devoted love for others in the church, how can we say we love God? How will unbelievers know God cares?

The sacrificial love of God working in the believer is the evidence that we know Him; and this love from God means we love all those who are in Christ, strangers included. Without God's love expressed in the believer, the church is irrelevant, for unbelievers will conclude that God is not in the church. How many people in the church know who the person is seated near them as an individual, heart and mind as God's child?

As one Puritan Pastor wrote: "Believers have a duty of affectionate, sincere, genuine love in all things towards one another; a love compared to that of Christ for the Church." ..."At present it is a grace that, shamefully, has been lost amongst those who call themselves Christians, to the dishonour of Christ and His Gospel." John Owen 1616-1683

The affection of the Church was on display in the Holy kiss

In a world of constant change, where many cultures and origins were joined together in a melting pot of diversity, the affection offered in the display of the holy kiss was an assurance of care and belonging in a world that provided no real comfort to the followers of Jesus Christ.

Today, it is not whether it's an appropriate kiss on the cheek, a hug or handshake, it makes no difference, what is important is the heart of God behind the greeting. What was at the centre in the first Century was a loving heart of family support and protection against indifference. Affectionate love was on display with the giving of the holy kiss.

With a growing availability of material things in our day, and the demand for everyone to be Captain of their own ship, independence and isolation

from the deeper things of the heart and mind is probably worse now than in John Owen's day.

Christian fellowship is for devotees of Christ who are also devoted to one another. Surely Christian fellowship means combined love in action to the glory of God. *'Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.'*
1 John 4:7-8

The heart at the centre of the holy kiss is not optional, in one verse it is partnered by a list of commands we consider Christian obligations: *'Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.'*
2 Cor 13:11-12

One of the essential marks of the body of Christ is physical affection, current culture included. We might be tempted to think of the holy kiss as a practice for a particular first-century culture; but this imperative covers the wide diversity of the New Testament church. And as a command the principle behind it is required of us in our generation.

The holy kiss is not about our personal choice of friends and our individual preference. We give affectionate acceptance to all the brothers. This show of affection is a visible, physical assurance of mutual love in Christ. It demonstrates that believers are truly brothers and sisters in Christ, made holy to be holy. It is no longer to be just a greeting as a routine gesture that reflected the social graces of that particular culture.

One problem with autism is the apparent absence of emotions, and it raises the question: is the church spirituality autistic? The problem with autism and us is not a lack of emotions but the difficulty in expressing and understanding emotions.

For instance as has been expressed by many others; in our day, greetings generally tend to be quite pleasant but empty. People say, "Hello, how are you?" without any thought of wanting to know how you really are getting along. Many people say, "It's been good to see you." Yet they could care less if they ever see you again. Many people say, "I'm glad you came," while not caring if you'll ever come again. All of these, of course, are meaningless and empty, if not in many instances dishonest and insincere.

God's concern in having this greeting command written down was that these New Testament Christians would greet one another with a true expression of concern and love. So today when Christians greet one another, it must reflect the same fervent devotion. There is no such thing as us and them. Fellowship is communion, and communion is a common union, a shared union through the unifying work of Christ who has made us one with the Father and Himself. *"that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me."*

John 17:21

This communion of fellowship is based on the love of God. *"and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."* (John 17:26) This is the beginning of fellowship. A polite Hello and "how are you" is not what it's all about. Fellowship is about knowing God and sharing the love of God with His chosen children. How many people in the church know who you are as God's child?

Fellowship begins with the Holy Spirit

Conversion is the work of the Spirit. (John 16:8) The Holy Spirit convicts us of our self indulgent nature in rebellion to God. He brings us to repentance so that we willingly deny ourselves and take up our cross to follow Christ. He then cleansed us by immersing us in the blood of Christ, and raises us up in newness of His life in Him.

Rom 6:4-6

The Spirit is given to each one who repents. (Acts 2:38) All who are chosen of God are now longer to live in the world as before, but are joined to Christ by the Spirit of God to live with God and be the light of God in the world. This is the meaning of true fellowship. By the work of the Spirit we no longer live, but Christ lives in us. We are not our own to please ourselves. Christ is our life and we live for Him.

2 Cor 5:15

The Holy Spirit unites us with Christ. *'These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.'*

Eph 1:18-23

The Spirit unites us as the dwelling place of God. *“In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit”*
Eph 2:21–22

The Spirit unifies all true believers in the one life of Christ. *“Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slaves or free—and we were all given one Spirit to drink”*
1 Cor 12:12–13

The Spirit joins us in fellowship with God. *“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all”*
2 Cor 13:14

The Spirit unites believers in peace. *“Being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism”*
Eph 4:3–5

The Spirit will live in the believer. *‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’*
John 7:38-39

The Spirit will teach us what we need to know of the kingdom of God.
John 14:26

The Spirit will govern our lives.
Gal 5:25

The Spirit will lead us into all righteousness.
John 16:13

The Spirit will empower us to witness to Christ.
Acts 1:8

The Spirit will give us power over sin and the flesh.
Gal 5:16-17

The Spirit will give us the qualities of His life so we can grow in Christ.
Gal 5:22-23

The Spirit will give us the joy of life.
Acts 13:52

The Spirit equips us for ministry and enables us to live for God.
1 Cor 12:4-11

The Spirit unites the Church in Mission and Service. Acts 2:4–11, 16–21

The Spirit unites the Church in Faith and Doctrine. Eph 4:5-6

The Spirit unites the Church through the Word of God. John 6:63

Spiritual gifts are given to each believer according to the Spirit's privilege. The sure way to know what gift He has given is to always be attentive to His leading, so that the talent finds its natural expression by living His life

in Christ. The Spirit's passion for the will of God living in us will ignite His gift of service into action.

Anyone truly born of the Spirit will have His heart of devoted fellowship for Christ beating in their chest, even if they don't yet understand all fellowship means in the mind of Christ. If there is no real heart for the fellowship of God, then the Spirit of God is not in residence.

Fellowship is about devotion for God and His people

'They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.' Acts 2:42

Devotion to the apostles' teaching requires Pastors and Teachers as is recorded in the book of Ephesians chapter four. *'He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ.'* Eph 4:11-12

The church was devoted to the apostles' teaching. Fellowship is about being devoted to learning from God's teachers. Since the Church began, this responsibility of teaching has been given by the Spirit to those He has chosen and equipped.

There are many pretenders, who because of human desires, pass themselves off as God's teachers; and why should we be surprised, because many who are long term church attendees also have a higher opinion of themselves than they should. This is clearly seen when they are faced with good teaching that they disagree with by saying: "that's only your opinion". To stay with their own opinions they use the excuse of poor teachers to reject the lot rather than change.

Instead of giving a glib rebuttal to teaching, those who disagree should do a 2000 word essay explaining from scripture where the teacher has gone wrong in their view. This isn't to say they write a different opinion, but that they search the scripture to see if what has been said is correct.

It's not enough to say, 'that's only your opinion' you must prove it. If the word of God preached and taught was obeyed by the majority there would be no lack of sacrificial service in the church and the mission fields.

In many cases good teaching is not received with devotion. Sound words seem to pass straight over the heads of the congregation. The assumption being that they have already decided what God means us to understand.

God's gift of teachers means we often don't understand His word. God might be providing the teaching required, but the congregation often remains unaffected, happy to go their merry way, stunted in their spiritual growth and usefulness.

Consequently there is a stark lack of real spiritual discernment concerning the word of God. The teachers chosen by God are there to overcome the flesh in our thinking, simply because we think we have already arrived at the place of knowing. If we have arrived there wouldn't be any need for teachers, God is mistaken, and spiritual maturity would be self evident in the church because everyone would be able to teach and everyone would be making and training disciples to obey all that Jesus Christ has commanded us to do.

Many complain about false teachers, but there are many more false learners who are devoted to what they think should be acceptable without the gifting or calling a teacher needs.

The lack of proper discernment means that many accept without question the many strange doctrine that come out of the world by the flesh of men, ideas that are designed to prevent God's people putting on Christ and doing His work of obedience in the world.

If we were devoted to the teaching, every self sufficient church member would be able to carry out every imperative command given to each of us in the scriptures. But as it is, many behave as if there isn't any need for our sanctification, for we seem to have arrived without any help from others.

Fellowship is about being devoted to what God's teachers work hard to make clear to those in their charge who think they can see all things simply by their own understanding. The number of years spent in the church doesn't relate to maturity, obedience to God and the teaching of Christ is the only measure of a man or a woman who has overcome the flesh to live for Christ and not themselves.

Many people equate spiritual maturity as been equal to having been saved, and as a result become a burden on the body of Christ. As is the case with the unrepentant, everyone does what's right in their own eyes. Devotion to teaching requires humility and humility is a work of the Spirit in the heart of the repentant believer.

True fellowship means that the teaching of God is always open to evaluation by God's people together, so that any blind spots can be brought into the light. The individual is not so open to the scrutiny of others according to the written word of God. The one hour church service makes it easy for those who are misinformed to escape scrutiny.

If the Spirit of God is resident, conviction will provoke questions, and the fellowship of Christians should be given time right then and there to see the truth. Sorry, we have other things to attend to.

As for being devoted to the breaking of bread daily, (something that is difficult in the western world because of the physical distance between us) we have gone overboard and arrived at the place where we never invite people into our homes to share a meal and talk about what God is working in us to His glory. Again we isolate ourselves from the scrutiny of those who we claim are one family in Christ with nothing to hide because we share in His love.

Naturally our devotion to prayer also suffers; so meaningful, personally relevant, timely prayer with one another is out of the question, we are too preoccupied with the world. The bread and the prayer are the two parts of the fellowship meal, like two slices of bread; God's will is the filling.

From the scripture we find that love for God and each other is the glue that holds us together. Fellowship is primarily about loving one another. It should not be surprising that the most repeated command we have from God in the verses about one another, is to love one another. It is repeated sixteen times.

Fellowship is for one another

The forty-nine 'one another' verses of the Bible indicate what His loving fellowship is supposed to look like. There is no fellowship without action. The noun "fellowship" only has meaning when the verbs related to it are put into action; as in the one another scriptures.

Love one another. John 13:34; John 13:35; John 15:12; John 15:17; Rom 13:8; 1 Thess 3:12; 1 Thess 4:9 2; Thess 1:3 1; Peter 1:22; 1 Pet 4:8; 1 John 3:11; 1 John 3:23; 1 John 4:7; 1 John 4:11; 1 John 4:12; 2 John 1:5

Do not judging one another.

Rom 14:13

Be devoted to one another.

Rom 12:10

Be of the same mind. Twice

Rom 12:16; Rom 15:5

Build up one another.	Rom 14:19
Accept one another.	Rom 15:7
Abel to admonish one another. Twice	Rom 15:14; Col 3:16
Greet one another with a holy kiss. Thrice	Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12
Have the same care for one another.	1 Cor 12:25
Serve one another.	Gal 5:13
Showing tolerance for one another in love.	Eph 4:2
SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE...for we are members of one another.	Eph 4:25
Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other	Eph 4:32
Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.	Eph 5:19
Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.	Eph 5:21
With humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;	Phil 2:3
Bearing with one another, and forgiving each other,	Col 3:13
With all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another	Col 3:16
Abound in love for one another,	1 Thess 3:12
Comfort one another.	1 Thess 4:18
Encourage one another. Twice	1 Thess 5:11 Heb 10:25
Build up one another.	1 Thess 5:11
Live in peace with one another.	1 Thess 5:13
Always seek after that which is good for one another.	1 Thess 5:15
But encourage one another day after day,	Heb 3:13
Stimulate one another to love and good deeds.	Heb 10:24
Encouraging <i>one another</i> ;	Heb 10:25
Do not speak against one another,	James 4:11
Do not complain, brethren, against one another,	James 5:9
Therefore, confess your sins to one another,	James 5:16
Pray for one another.	James 5:16
Be hospitable to one another.	1 Peter 4:9
As each one has received a <i>special</i> gift, employ it in serving one another.	1 Peter 4:10
Keep fervent in your love for one another.	1 Peter 4:8
Have fellowship with one another.	1 John 1:7
As a result we read: <i>'And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.'</i>	Acts 4:32

Fellowship is prayer

Fellowship prayer is the breath of the Spirit, inward from God, and outward towards God. Prayer is a natural common Spiritual union with God. The prayer of the Church was an expression of fellowship that was concerned for the growth of the body and the mission to make disciples throughout the world.

Prayer is the natural expression of the life of the Spirit stirring up the heart of the believer laying out the content of the heart and mind in reverence to God. If the Spirit is not leading the prayer it bounces off the ceiling. The surrendered heart can be confident that Spirit helps us pray as we should.

When the Spirit is resident, the prayer will honour God and the doing of His will. It will seek kingdom nourishment from God so we can grow to be like Christ. It will pray for the deliverance of others as much as for power to overcome our own failings so that we can be delivered from the evil one. Prayer isn't a programme it's spiritual breathing. It is the natural result of having our minds set on the concerns of God. The mind set on the flesh suffocates the soul.

Fellowship is service

God the Spirit has given all of the repentant children spiritual ability to work for God and to build up the body of Christ. The giving of ability is for service to God so that everyone can share in the works of the kingdom of God. When we are committed to serving Christ and not ourselves, the Spirit will gift us with an ability to work for Him as one united body.

Every spiritual child of God is equipped to be a minister of the church serving God and each other. The church is to grow by that which each one can contribute when led by the Spirit, if some fail to contribute; the church fails to grow as it should. Without Spiritual ability we cannot serve God because we are not in fellowship with God. Fellowship considers others more worthy than self.

Fellowship is giving

We have fellowship because of what God has given to us. He gave us the life of Christ, so we can give the life of Christ to the world as we live out His life as witness to Christ. What we have in Christ we have in common, both in the spiritual sense and the material. The abundance of more than we need is for the supply of others in need.

Fellowship is unity

Being ‘*in Christ*’ is more than a private union; everyone who has forsaken themselves to live for Christ is joined to all others who are in Christ, as one body, in one Spirit. As we are one Spirit in Christ, we are also His one body of Christ in the world. As recipients of His life, we are all together equipped by the Spirit to carry out His purpose in reaching every lost soul, even while we work to build up His body the church, so that we can present everyone complete in Him.

The Holy Spirit will teach us all things as to how we should live according to the kingdom of God in his world. What He gives us is not for cold storage, but to keep us united in fellowship with the Father and the Son, and each other. God’s children don’t walk alone, He doesn’t have any orphans, Christ has many brothers and sisters who look out for each others as they serve Him as the Spirit directs. Only the devotion shown in obedience to Christ with all the love of the heart, mind and strength indicates His divine indwelling and our life in His body the Church. To be a Christian is to live with Christ and one another as the centre of our life that seeks first the kingdom of God.

The Holy Spirit consummates our union with Christ. When we live for Him we are consumed as He takes possession of each other as we become one life. *“The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. “O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”*

John 17:22-26

Fellowship is worship

Jesus gives us His life of fellowship with the Father, so we can be one with each other as they are one. In Christ there is nothing superficial about fellowship, because it is how we give God His worth.

Fellowship in the world is about worldly things, fellowship with God is about His will for us as His beloved heavenly prepared children. When we are called into fellowship we are called out of the world to worship God. Worship is not only when we give worth to God, but also when we give worth to His people in mutual fellowship. Since God dwells in His people, His people are worthy of our affections and fervent devotion as we serve Him. But if my relationship with God is superficial, my relationship with His people will also be shallow. We show we love God by the way we love His people, by this the world will know you are My disciples, that you love one another.

Fellowship is constant devotion to Christ

"He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf." 2 Cor 5:15

Anything that distracts us from that devotion is only fleshly desire for the world. The fellowship believers have with God is the same kind of fellowship His children have with one another. If there is no effective devoted fellowship with God then there will be none with His people.

The standard for God's fellowship is the holiness He makes possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore nothing is hidden or excused for those who have fellowship with God and His people. Those who come to the light shall not walk in the darkness. *"But if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin."* 1 John 1:7

However we avoid intimacy as if it threatens our life

When we hold God at a safe distance we are afraid of His intimacy, and we forget our hearts are an open book to His piercing gaze. In the same way we avoid real depth of intimacy with one another because we want to remain as we are; we fear we won't be liked if what we accept in ourselves is known in the Church.

In order to maintain our inner privacy we need to have built up barriers to keep others from intruding into our private space. This having been the case, not only are we preventing others from getting close to us, but we are excluding ourselves from real intimate involvement with others in communion. God heart of love provided for our daily restoration through conviction that leads to repentance and forgiveness.

The heart of love is a heart secured by the grace and mercy of God so we can love as Christ has commanded us to follow His example; "*just as I have loved you.*" When we open our hearts to others by first denying ourselves, and we are completely honest, we can experience the fullness of a loving relationship made possible by living life with Christ Jesus.

Eph 3:16-19

The love of God cannot be shown fully if we remain private and secretive. True love requires we are vulnerable and transparent as we deny ourselves and look to the spiritual needs of others as our Father in heaven does. A failure to deny self will mean our words of love will be superficial, and worthwhile communion impossible.

There are to be no lone strangers in the body of Christ. The Church is saved for Communion with God in order to live in intimate fellowship with God as the people of God. To claim to be a Christian without binding oneself to a local Church is inconsistent with what God teaches us about the unity of God's communing people.

Having a relationship with God is about us, one another, gathered together with the Lord. To separate oneself in some sort of private religious endeavour is to be cut off from the significant others and the intimacy of life in Christ. Privacy is about me, my and mine. This can only be seen as setting a different agenda to the Lord which results in been excluded from His loving presence. God calls us to daily communion with each other.

If there is to be any chance of real fellowship, it will only come when we can be encouraged to trust God enough to lower the barricades because we have seen that the significant others in our lives are for our good, to give and not to take, and can be found to be trustworthy. God is the first significant One with His Son, and His children are included in His significant family. If we are still holding back, resisting the need to be vulnerable and transparent with the members of the Church, we are resisting the work of the Spirit of God and we quench the Spirit, we douse His fire in us so we grow cold.

Walking by the Spirit is to live the communion life together in the presence of God. The children of God are eternally bound together by divine love with chords that can never be broken, even when we are out of sight of each other. We are not called to live as if we are independent and isolated from the only body that gives life to the world. We are called to know the

fullness of joy in intimacy with God and one another because we are hid together in God through Christ.

Fellowship is about obedience

All the scriptures that inform us how to love one another, are given in the imperative, they are commands. Any shortfall on our behalf is actually disobedience. Ignorance is no excuse, since all of us have adequate access to the word of God so we can remain in fellowship through obedience. We are instructed to love as we have been loved. Some of the 'one another' commands are very personal and a little threatening, confess your sins, bear others burdens, and admonish one another. These things normally only happen in a loving family, which we are supposed to be, but instead of love we have developed a culture of hiding from one another and as a result disobey God. A lack of humility prevents us from walking with God and each other. A failure to confess to one another is hiding from accountability.

It seems we prefer the way of the world rather than to expose ourselves to the scrutiny of God's word and his people. Isolation is preferred to intimacy, and we behave as if God didn't command us to love one another in humble submission. Some of the commands are personally costly concerning our physical resources and our God given talents, so we behave as if God doesn't mean we should obey. All of the commands concern our family responsibilities in Christ, but surely they don't apply to me.

We must remember that none of us are yet perfect, and we all need to grow in grace and obedience, but we have in our world today an epidemic of blindness of biblical proportions. Could it be that we are on a road less travelled?

We need to be wise enough to know that all who claim Christ have not repented. Therefore we have to be careful we expecting unrepentant believers to do the impossible because they have not crucified the flesh so they can be led by the Spirit? Jesus said: *"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me."*

John 15:4

Fellowship is devotion to Christ and His chosen people

The fact that we are commanded to love one another in all they ways listed tells us that loving sacrificially is not automatic just because we are

Christians. And it reminds us that there is no perfect Church. We are called to have the mind of Christ so there is a lot of renewing our minds to still happen since we are to grow into Christ even though He lives in us. Fellowship perfection remains a process, in the same way excellence in marriage is a labour of loving obedient devotion to Christ first and then each other in humility and forgiveness.

Our loving devotion to God in all things is the measure of the potential for fellowship with others that the Spirit will pursue in us if we are determined to follow Him in all things. To the degree He is Lord of us will determine the quality of our fellowship everywhere He rules. Fellowship begins with fervent devotion to God which gives us the opportunity for devoted fellowship with one another. In fellowship we do all things as unto the Lord. Fellowship is not about worldly things; fellowship is about the life of the Spirit. Fellowship is having our minds set on spiritual things, and sharing and building up the spiritual life in others and ourselves. God is at work in us so that we can become like Christ, together.

Sanctification is the work of the Spirit, especially in the church. Therefore encourage one another to be holy for this we have been called. Fellowship requires diligence, since all of us have bought some aspects of the fleshly isolation into the church. We help one another put to death that which is of the flesh in us so we can be made complete in Christ. Fellowship is about seeing others as more worthy than ourselves and not giving up on seeking their holiness even if they do, for we are joined at the heart, and whatever affects their spiritual growth also effects us, all of us. Love never fails.

We miss the spiritual reality of fellowship because we don't realise how much of the culture of the world we bring to our faith. To see what we cannot see we need one another. When we spur one another on, the Spurs don't need to be sharp and cutting, but they have to be effective in moving us in the right direction.

The lower limit for active service in the Church is the age of understanding; the upper limit is death, as there is no age that allows for retirement. The church grows by that which everyone supplies. Now here's your chance to see if you agree or not, do your due diligence with this teaching in the word of God, and if you find it to be correct, just do it.

Love doesn't quit. *'And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.'*

Heb 10:24



Living Water Resources Come to the River

Contents compiled by
Robert C May
Copyright © 2020
cometotheriver@optusnet.com.au
www.cometothestream.com