

What Does the Bible Teach About Our Fellowship in Worship?

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction: Acts 2:42

I. DO WE UNDERSTAND FELLOWSHIP?

- A. Sound churches place great importance to being true to the Word of God, observing the Lord's Supper correctly, and baptizing by immersion. These things are essential, but Christian fellowship is often overlooked.
 - 1. We cannot neglect any aspect of truth due to emphasis on another.
 - 2. Are we practicing fellowship in a way consistent with the example of the early church?
- B. The problem of self-orientation -- What if an observer came to make a careful analysis of the church in reference to fellowship, examining:
 - 1. How we relate to one another when we assemble for worship,
 - 2. How we interact with each other away from our assemblies,
 - 3. Our family loyalties,
 - 4. Our willingness to support each other in time of need,
 - 5. The amount of time we spend in the company of others in the church,
 - 6. Attempting to learn how well those who sit by each other during the assembly every week really know each other?
- C. Several years ago, some churches allowed themselves to be analyzed in this way; here is what was discovered:
 - 1. The majority of members knew only a small percentage of the others.
 - 2. Many who gathered for worship were mostly solitary worshipers.
 - 3. They were not a genuine community of souls prepared to bear one another's burdens.
 - 4. They expressed little interest in spending more time with each other except under tightly controlled circumstances.
 - 5. They came to worship only for the sake of their own spiritual life and personal salvation.
 - 6. They concluded: "Many go to church as they would go to the movie theater."
- D. Focus of the word fellowship is on one's fellow.
 - 1. It is fellowship, not me-o-ship, or self-o-ship.
 - 2. We cannot worship God in fellowship without assembling together
 - 3. We cannot come and worship by ourselves in our corner avoiding contact with others.
 - 4. We cannot come with the attitude "it's my way or else I hit the highway."

II. THE CHURCH MUST HAVE FELLOWSHIP FREE FROM SELF-CENTEREDNESS

- A. Are we practicing fellowship consistent with the example of the New Testament church?
- B. This is taught in the apostles' doctrine.
 - 1. We are to be hospitable to one another - 1Peter 4:9
 - 2. We are to have a care for one another - 1Cor. 12:25-26

3. We are to pray for one another - James 5:16
 4. We are to restore one another - James 5:19-20
 5. We are to serve each other in love - Gal. 5:13-14
- C. This was exemplified in the early church.
1. By the church in Jerusalem - Acts 2:42-46
 2. By the church in Antioch - Acts 11:27-30
 3. By the churches in Macedonia - 2Cor. 8:1-5
 4. By the churches in Achaia - Rom. 15:26
- D. Such fellowship is a natural consequence of the teaching of Christ.
1. The Kingdom consists of those who love both God and their brethren.
 - a. Mark 12:28-34
 2. The fellowship we are to enjoy in the church is both upward and outward.
 - a. With God we enjoy a "vertical" relationship - 2Cor. 5:20
 - 1) An overemphasis by preachers on this aspect can cause neglect of the needs of others.
 - b. With fellow Christians we enjoy a "horizontal" relationship
 - 1) Eph. 2:14-18
 - 2) An undue emphasis on this aspect may cause one to neglect God, or move one to alter His commands for the church.
- E. Actions that will enhance our ability to provide the proper fellowship
1. Learn the names of every member; make use of the church directory.
 2. Take notice of the cares and the joys of fellow Christians; listen to the announcements, not just the ones important to you personally.
 3. Pray for those with special needs, mentioning them by name in your private prayers.
 4. Develop an approachable personality where people feel comfortable with you.
 5. Cultivate transparent lifestyle where you are not afraid to let others know you.
 6. Focus on what is good in each other, and try to nurture it in others.
 - a. Not suggesting that we ignore what needs corrected.
 - b. However, fellowship to some folks only means listing those with whom they are not in fellowship.
 7. If you feel the urge to talk about someone, talk about the Lord.
 8. Realize that we have come together not only to worship God, but to share in worship and love with one another.
 9. Converse with someone you don't know very well. Make an appointment to get acquainted.

III. CONTRASTING VIEWS OF THE CHURCH

- A. How humankind mistakenly views the church:
1. As an institution or an organization
 2. Uses terms and plans better suited for businesses or corporations
 3. Tries to institutionalize works best suited for individuals

4. Tries to save the institution instead of the individual
- B. How Christ designed the church:
 1. As a family doing the will of His Father in heaven - Matt. 12:46-50, 7:21
 2. Jesus spoke of God as His Father - John 2:16
 3. Taught His disciples to address God as Father - Matt. 6:9
- C. How the apostles viewed the church”
 1. As a “brotherhood” - 1Peter 2:17, 5:9
 2. As the “house (or family) of God” - 1Tim. 3:15; 2Cor. 6:18
- D. In service to one another:
 1. Our older brother came to serve - Matt. 20:25-28
 2. We serve one another as we would our own physical families.
 3. The church is our family.
 4. All of these scriptures emphasize the fact that the church is a familial fellowship of believers.
 5. A home while away from our heavenly home; a trusting, loving family where one can enjoy the blessings of home life.
 6. It is a broken home and a dysfunctional family that does not make the family members feel at home.
 7. One who rejects the family relationship in the local church loses the blessings of home life and grows spiritually warped and unhappy.

IV. THE CHURCH IS THE CHRISTIAN'S HOME

- A. The cost of discipleship can be great, just as the cost of being part of a family will often require sacrifice - Matt. 10:34-39
 1. Christ intends for His church to make up for the cost - Mark 10:28-30
- B. Building familiarity in the church:
 1. Spend more time with the family of God away from services,
 2. More faithful in attendance,
 3. More involvement in local church work,
 4. More interested in the vulnerable,
 5. Less self-oriented.
- C. Be active in family matters:
 1. Saving souls,
 2. Restoring erring,
 3. Teaching and encouraging new family members,
 4. Edifying the saved.
- D. What am I doing to help the church fulfill its design to be a familiar fellowship?
 1. John 13:35; 1John 5:1