

A FAITH FOCUSED ON FELLOWSHIP (1)

Christianity is decisively unique in comparison alongside other world religions. The architect Himself created support and spiritual intimacy for the fellowhelpers and advancers of the resurrection. Since the primitive beginnings of this new movement, fellowship springs forth as both a spiritual blessing in Christ and a tool that demands proper stewardship upon our part. Paul refers to fellowship as a “good work” (Phi. 1:6), much like the office of a bishop (1 Tim. 3:1). Oftentimes, however, spiritual perversion creeps in and spoils the purity of God’s intentions. Is this not true with the subject of Christian fellowship? Within our own ranks corruption on this subject is evident by the following simple yet startling observation. Many fellowship everyone, while some fellowship almost no one!

A study of Philippians 1:1-11 offers powerful points of persuasion as to what constitutes true Christian fellowship between individuals and congregations. The prayerful disposition that Paul had towards the brethren in Philippi (1:4), reciprocated his thanksgiving and appreciation for their continuous financial support of the work (Phi. 1:4-6). Prayer by itself may not always prove Christian fellowship. One may be in a room with numerous people during the holidays. Surely one would not argue that merely because a prayer was offered in the presence of Christians and non-Christians that somehow it shoved them both together in a temporary mode of fellowship? Amos 3:3 speaks clearly of a particular ingredient in true fellowship... agreement! When one reads Philippians Chapter One it is apparent without recourse that both parties dearly esteemed the other and their mental and physical acts of charity etched that fellowship on the pages of the Bible forever. While this brief article is not intended as an exhaustive and all

inclusive list, it is intended to probe one on to greater research. The following points are required to have or extend Christian fellowship: **source, sacrifice, agreement, and joint participation.** The Holy Scriptures serve as our inspired source (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3; Jude 3). Specifically, the New Testament, including the words of Christ (Heb. 1:1-2) and the traditions of the apostles (1 The. 2:10; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 4:17) serve as our sole foundation for understanding fellowship. Sacrifice includes aligning our priorities in a way to always promote the higher cause. Evermore so, as a Christian we must be willing to sacrifice everything, including life, if it be required of us (Rev. 2:10). What one is willing to pay for something, determines value. Christ freely gave His blood for the fellowship (Eph. 1:7; Acts 20:28) that exist between saints and deity (Phi. 1:1; Jho. 1:7).

Fellowship includes agreement on a particular item of truth. These prerequisites are God given mandates that supply us with “all things” (2 Pet. 1:3) necessary for the unity that Christ prayed for (John 17). After all, the words of the prophet Amos still ring loud and clear “How can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3). Furthermore, Christian fellowship demands joint participation both by definition and context. Far deeper than casual acquaintance, or the mere presence of our physical body, this concept of joint participation emphasizes our willingness to put our agreement and intention in action to promote and defend a common cause (Phi. 1:1-11; Jude 3). Thus, our beloved apostle Paul was, “set for the defense of the gospel” (Phi. 1:17).

Ecumenicalism and her natural enticement of ease create an irresistible merger between Christ’s Church and man-made religions. Distinctive and divine perimeters of truth (2 Jho. 9-11) are shoved aside as human reason gives way to modernistic viewpoints extracted from society that surrounds us. Real Christian fellowship meets specific criteria that provides authenticity and advantage (Acts

2:42; Romans 6). Promotion and expansion of the “Real-Deal” suffers from misconceptions that Scripture refers to as “the wiles” of the Evil One (Eph. 6:10-17; Jho. 8:44). Presumptuous is the man that tears down what God has set in stone (Pro. 23:10).

Our failure to study and promote true Christian fellowship creates a cancerous divisiveness like that seen in Diotrophes (3 Jho. 9-10). Deadly division spoken of in the context of Second John serves as a spiritual counterpart to the divine intimacy of Christian fellowship. See also 1 Corinthians 1:10 and Romans 16:17. The religious self appointed dictator, Diotrophes, serves as an eternal example of the other side of the coin: pride, politics, power, and prejudice all took their toll upon this dangerous man. Maybe he began with good intentions, this we simply do not know. However, his end result was detrimental to the church at large and a breach of Christian fellowship. Remember this: **to forbid Christian fellowship to those to whom it rightly belongs, is as equally sinful as is the snuggling of denominationalism.**

A serious and prayerful examination of this beautiful subject must be revisited by all of us. There are obvious specific parameters regarding our Christian fellowship. Such must be embraced, respected and taught to the next generation (2 Tim. 2:2). However, could it be that the pendulum is swinging too far the opposite direction towards Diotrophes? The “biting and devouring of one another” (Gal. 5:15) which occurs is anything but divine in its origin. True Biblical fellowship must be preserved and enjoyed. May God speed the day when we appreciate to a higher degree this sublime topic of truth.

To be continued...

Brant Stubblefield from Reflections

ILL

Sunday: Chris Edwards (AM); Millie Robertson (PM).

Wednesday: Millie Robertson; Clara Scott.

Ralph Franklin was admitted to Olathe Medical Center early last week and was released by Wednesday. Chris Edwards has been having some health difficulties. Millie Robertson is tentatively scheduled for surgery April 22.

Those battling cancer: Ledgia Campbell, Betty James and Cleo Stone. Please remember these in your prayers.

HOME BOUND

Kathleen Camp is in Room 101 at the Royal Terrace Nursing Home in Olathe. Marion Stone is at home. Barbara James' aunt, Evelyn Marquardt is at the Sweet Life of Rosehill in Shawnee. Please remember these in your prayers and visitation.

OUT OF TOWN

Robin, Lauren and Lindsey Brown are visiting relatives in Texas this weekend. Wilba Hopkins was in Iola, Kansas visiting relatives last weekend.

SATURDAY SEMINAR

"Great Bible Words" is the theme of the Saturday Seminar on March 21 at the 39th Street congregation in Independence. Lessons begin at 9:30; 10:30 and 11:30. See the flyer in the foyer for detailed information.

GOSPEL MEETING

Mark your calendars for April 26-30, 2009 for our Gospel Meeting with brother Randy Carr of the Liberty church of Christ in Belle, Missouri. See the flyers in the foyer for details. Pick up some flyers and invite your family, friends, co-workers, associates and neighbors to attend!

ATTENDANCE

Sunday AM, 53; Sunday PM, 33; Wednesday PM, 34.

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." **1 John 1:7**

Those To Serve

March 15, 2009

BUILDING AND COMMUNION..... Nemechek

MORNING WORSHIP

ANNOUNCEMENTS..... George Thomas
SONG LEADER..... Trent Thrasher
OPENING PRAYER John Cody Carter
PRESIDE..... Joel Nelson
ASSIST..... John Dodson
ASSIST..... Steven Schleif
CLOSING PRAYER..... Chris Edwards

EVENING WORSHIP

OPENING PRAYER Steve Brown
CLOSING PRAYER..... Jared Nelson
LORD'S SUPPER..... Joel Nelson

WEDNESDAY 18th

SONG LEADER..... Ted Thrasher
INVITATION George Thomas

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday

Bible Study 9:30 AM
Morning Worship 10:30 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Ladies Bible Study 10:00 AM
Bible Study 7:00 PM

Preacher: Ted J. Thrasher

Phone: (913) 764-2325

E-mail: olathecocf@sbcglobal.net

CHURCH OF CHRIST

515 WEST PARK

P.O. BOX 482

OLATHE, KANSAS 66051

www.kc-cocf.org/olathe.htm

www.oabs.org/olathe.asp