

Why Christians Need Fellowship

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

Fellowship comes from the Greek word, KOINONIA, which means "to share in common." Christian fellowship is more than attending Church — it is "assimilating" into the body of believers, becoming "one" in worshipping, loving, caring, and sharing.

According to the scripture, fellowship is not an optional matter for believers. It says, "*if walk in the light [in fellowship with God]... this causes us to have fellowship with one another.*" And from the outcome of this fellowship, "*the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin*" (1 John 1:7).

The Body Needs Proper Blood Circulation

What does fellowship with the brethren have to do with "cleansing us from sin?" As we know, the Bible says "*the life is in the blood*" (Lev. 17:11). This is a fact, both biologically and spiritually. The blood in your body is a cleansing agent which purges the toxins and bacteria in our system, and supplies oxygen to vital areas necessary for our survival. Each minute, your heart pumps and circulates blood through miles of inter-connected veins and arteries, passing through the kidneys for filtering, and back into the same circulating cycle. However, in the event that a part of your body were to be severed from the flow of blood, the absence of blood circulation would cause that part to become infected — it would develop gangrene and would die. Survival is not possible without continual circulation of the blood.

So it is within the body of Christ, the Church

(1 Cor. 12:27). For the blood of Jesus Christ to have its continual cleansing effect over our sins, we must remain attached to Christ's body. If we sever fellowship with His body, we risk cutting off the circulation of the cleansing blood!

Keep in mind, salvation is based on "faith," and is not earned by performing "works" such as attending Church (Eph. 2:8-9). But fellowship with Christ's body, the church, is critical in helping to sustain your faith by providing ministry, encouragement, and an atmosphere of spiritual "cleansing" and growth.

Our relationship with Jesus Christ is obviously the basis for the forgiveness of our sins, but the Bible indicates that we cannot have a proper relationship with Christ without a proper relationship with His body. For instance, the scriptures indicate that our worship to God is unacceptable unless we make things right with our brethren. "*Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift*" (Matt. 5:23-24).

Fellowship is the Practice of Loving the Brethren

Not only does the Bible say that "fellowship" is the evidence of walking in the light (1 John 1:7), but it also says that "loving the brethren" is evidence of that walk. "*He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him*" (1 John 2:10). This shows that there is a strong, inseparable relationship between "fellowship" and "loving the brethren." Consequently, it appears that fellowship is intended to be the practice of loving the brethren, which helps keep us in a right relationship with Christ so that His shed blood can continue its full cleansing effect!

Many passages of the Bible confirm that "love toward the brethren" is proof of our salvation. "*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren...*" (1 John 3:14). In essence, we need brethren to have a right relationship with God. We are able to see our relationship with God from the reflection of our relationship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. "*...for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?*" (1 John 4:20).

Fellowship with the brethren is an exercise of love bringing us toward spiritual maturity. Your relationship with the brethren is the barometer that measures your spiritual temperature. Your degree of love toward the brethren is the gauge that shows our love for God. "*...If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us*" (1 John 4:12).

Fellowship with the body of Christ is where love is tested and proven. It is the opportunity to learn how to love one another — it is God's great classroom of the development of Christian character. We are benefited by both, the strengths and weaknesses of the fellowship. The mature ones help to strengthen and encourage us, while the weaknesses in the less mature give us the opportunity to practice — to test our spiritual growth in such characteristics as patience, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, etc. (All spiritual virtues must be challenged and tested to bring forth progress.)

At some time you may meet a few rude, offensive, immature believers in the body. They need someone like you to show them love and patience (so they'll grow up), and you need them in order to practice and develop your love for the brethren. When you can remain loving and steadfast, even if brothers say negative things about you, let you down, or do offensive things, your love is being perfected — you're

growing up as a Christian and becoming more like Christ!

Rejecting Fellowship Leads Away From God

How much love do you have for your brethren? The Bible says that we're supposed to be ready to lay down our life for our brothers. But do you suppose you would really lay down your life for them if you're not willing to even come together with them a few times a week for worship? *"By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren"* (1 John 3:16).

Jesus expressed that we must be committed to the love of the brethren in the same way that He was. He stated that this love toward the brethren was the necessary evidence to prove our authenticity as Christians to the world. *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another"* (John 13:34-35).

It is essential for every believer to be an active part of a Christian fellowship. Willful rejection of fellowship is evidence of not walking in the light. A famous preacher once said "show me a professing Christian who seldom attends Church, and I'll show you a backslider who needs to get their heart right before God."

All through the New Testament, Jesus shows us that He takes personally, how we relate to His body. Our love, expressions of kindness, and ministry to any of our brothers and sisters in Christ are received as though they were done unto the Lord, Himself. *"...inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me."* (Matthew 25:40). Therefore, would we refuse to gather with Jesus when the opportunity is given? If we refuse to gather with

our brethren, we have, in reality, refused to gather with Jesus. *"For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them"* (Matthew 18:20).

Fellowship with the body of Christ is not just an option, but is critical to our continued survival as Christians. We need the preaching and teaching from God's Word, the atmosphere of worship and praise, the encouragement which we draw from our brethren, the opportunities of Christian service, and we need the opportunity to practice love toward other Christians.

Get involved and stay in faithful fellowship with the body of Christ! Don't run off if something disappoints you or you get your feelings hurt — this only demonstrates immaturity and places you in further danger of losing out with God.

If you alienate yourself from fellowship, you will restrict the life-giving blood flow of the body of Christ, and will be regressing down a path that leads away from God.

"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins" (Heb. 10:24-26).

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