

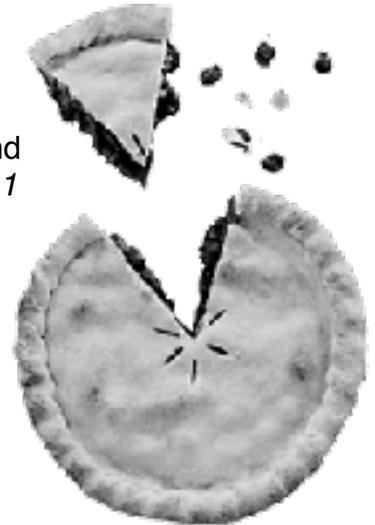
Key Text: Acts 2:42

“They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles teaching and to **fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

WHAT IS FELLOWSHIP?

The idea of fellowship is that we “**SHARE**” something in common with others. Fellowship or “Sharing” is especially relevant to our Spiritual life and that is why the church was continually devoted to it. God also desires to have fellowship with us and He desires that we have fellowship with each other in His name. (*1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 John 1:3,6,7*) The Word “Fellowship” in Acts 2:42 is the Greek word, “Koinonia”. This means, “To share a common bond of **purpose, interest, participation, and partnership**”

One example of “Koinonia” is found in **Romans 1:11,12** between Paul and the Christians in Rome. *“For I long to see you in order that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established; that is that I may be encouraged together with you while among you, each of us by the other’s faith, both yours and mine.”*



Another and even greater example of Fellowship is the analogy of “The Body” found in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27. Christians are placed in the figurative body of Christ as one of its many members. This analogy implies what is also taught in scripture, that **SPIRITUAL LIFE GROWS AND IS MADE POSSIBLE BECAUSE WE ARE CONNECTED TO EACH OTHER**. If we get separated from the body we will suffer! If we remain connected to Christ and to each other then we will be “Established” and Strong. A simple description of coming into fellowship is... You have been connected to God through “**Salvation**”. After that, you have been connected and marked with other believers through “**Baptism**”. Finally, we continue to celebrate the truth that we are now one body in Christ through “**Communion**”. (*1 Corinthians 10:6; 12:13*) Moving forward, the important thing is to maintain healthy fellowship with God and mankind. This lesson trains us to know what a healthy fellowship with God and with mankind is supposed to look like.

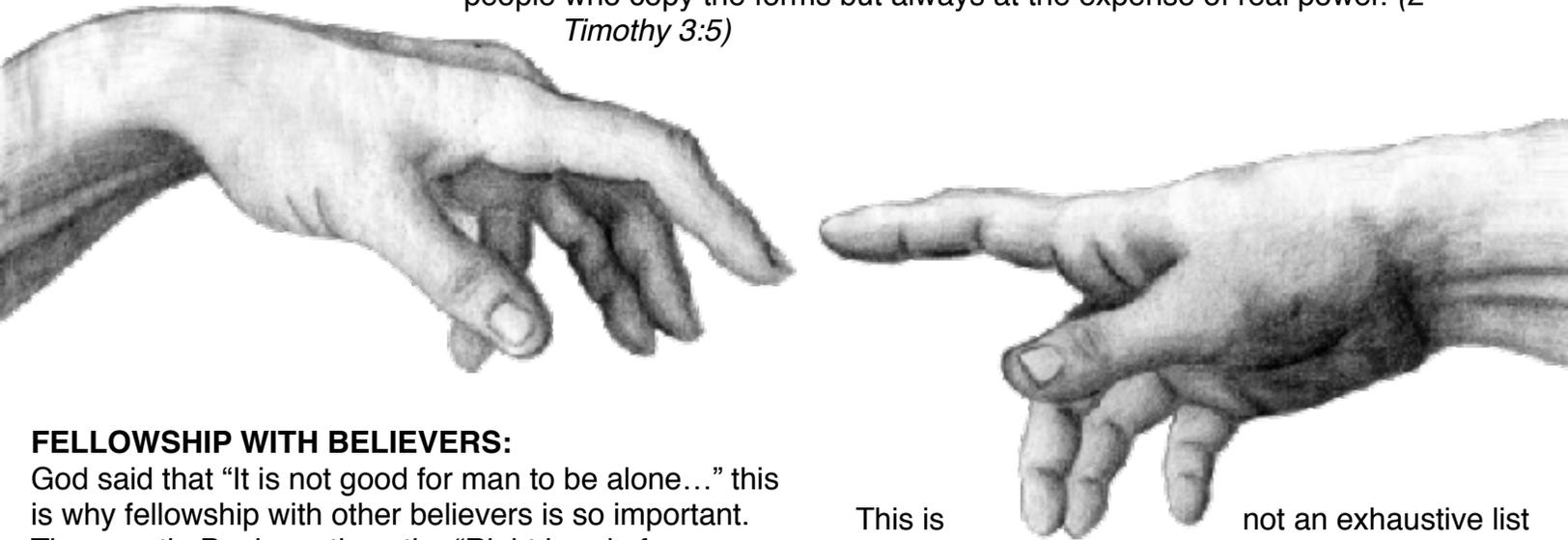
FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD:

Fellowship with God all started or was initiated by Him as seen in Ephesians 1:5 & 1 John 4:10. “He First loved us...even before we were born!” But any real sharing of “purpose and interests, etc.” doesn’t start until we place our faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins and submit to Him as our Lord. (*John 1:12*) At this point we begin to have “real” fellowship with God. Our fellowship with God has at least two major phases to it. The first is sharing Christ’s **HUMILIATION**. The second is sharing in Christ’s **EXALTATION**. Here are some of the specific things that Christians will share in common with God:

- **Transformation** in your life. “**Putting off the old ways**” You will begin to look and act more like Christ. (*Phil. 2:13; Rom. 8:29; 13:14*)
- **Persecution & suffering** for righteousness. (*John 15:18; Col. 1:24; Phil.3:10*)
- **Spiritual fruit** will grow like, Love, grace, freedom, and PEACE! This is proving your fellowship with God. (*Galatians 5:22,23; John 15:8; 1 John 4:20*)

- **The Power of The Holy Spirit** as seen in the resurrection. (*Acts 1:8; Phil. 3:10*)
- **The Work** and Mission of Christ is also something we partner with Him in. (*Matthew 28:19; John 14:12*)
- **The Hope** of Eternal life with Christ. (*2 Tim. 2:12; Romans 8:17; Titus 3:7; John 1:12*)

This vertical relationship will have very tangible expressions which include; **Prayer, Praise & Worship, Bible Reading, Evangelism** and **Fellowship with believers**. These five expressions are to be done in “spirit and in truth” meaning that they should be naturally birthed out of a genuine and loving relationship with God. (*John 4:23,24*) **CAN YOU FAKE IT? YES**, Since fellowship with God has some form of religion to it, there will be people who copy the forms but always at the expense of real power. (*2 Timothy 3:5*)



FELLOWSHIP WITH BELIEVERS:

God said that “It is not good for man to be alone...” this is why fellowship with other believers is so important. The apostle Paul mentions the “Right hand of fellowship” in Galatians 2:9. The kind of partnership and sharing is expressed in at least two categories, Spiritual and Practical.

Spiritual Expressions of the Right Hand of Fellowship:

- Praying together.
- Singing, praising and worshipping together.
- Testimony and Exhortation
- Encouragement through the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- **Doctrine:** Ministry of the Word.
- Communion; celebrating our New Covenant relationship with God and each other.

Practical Expressions of the Right Hand of Fellowship:

- Getting together at church and in your home.
- Contributing to material & physical needs.
- Sharing in each other’s daily burdens and joys.
- Hospitality toward strangers and visitors.
- Eating meals together.
- Conversation: Listening, and Sharing thoughts.

This is not an exhaustive list but merely a sample of the many ways that love and fellowship find practical expression. (*1 John 3:17; Rom. 12:5-13; 15:27; Acts 2:46; Hebrews 10:23,25*)

SHARED BENEFITS FROM FELLOWSHIP WITH BELIEVERS:

- A sense of belonging. (*1 Corinthians 12:7; Romans 12:5*)
- Real help and protection in times of need. (*Ecclesiastes 4:10*)
- Sharpening and refinement of faith. (*Proverbs 27:17*)
- Healing for physical and spiritual problems. (*James 5:14-15*)
- Increased effectiveness in prayer and spiritual matters. (*1 Peter 3:12*)
- The Gospel Spreads and people get saved!

WHEN DO WE BREAK OUR FELLOWSHIP WITH ANOTHER BELIEVER?

It is important to remember that as a believer, the first concern is to fight for fellowship and for unity in the spirit. (*Ephesians 4:3*) With that in mind, believers should make it their goal to forgive and to cover over wrongs with mercy. (*Col.3:13; Matt. 18:22-35*) But, how do we know something cannot be ignored or overlooked anymore? What do we do then?

Here's what cannot be overlooked if confronting it and calling for repentance has made no difference: (*Matt. 18:15-20; Titus 3:10; 2 John 9,-11*)

- False Doctrines which attack the fundamentals of redemption.
- Heresy: Personal opinions that are contrary to the Spirit and the Word.
- Divisive Conduct - Behavior that is undisciplined and divisive.
- Covetous - Greedy people motivated by wants; An idolater - The exalting of anything above God and the worship of God.
- A Railer - An angry and abusive person with their tongue as with slander and gossip.
- Drunkards are anyone controlled by substances like alcohol and drugs and refusing to submit to help.
- An Extortioner - Manipulating and controlling individuals through intimidation and threats.
- Anyone refusing to stop all forms of sexual sin that include things like pornography, any sexual activity outside of marriage and other forms of abusing the purpose and design of the body.

When you must break fellowship, remember that believers are still commanded to love and forgive the unrepentant person. Believers should not view them as an enemy because the Devil is our true enemy. (*2 Thessalonians 3:15 & Eph. 6:12*) Believers only need to limit close fellowship with the unrepentant person. (*1 John 1:7*) When this time of separation is needed it is also important to focus on the redemptive purpose behind the separation. We only separate so that God might use the pain of separation to bring people back to a place of repentance and unity in the Holy Spirit. (*1 Corinthians 5:5*)

Here are some things that believers should not hinder or break fellowship over:

- Food and drink preferences related to worship.
- Choices to celebrate or not to celebrate Jewish Holy days.
- Doctrinal differences that do not affect the Gospel.
- Racial differences.
- Economic differences and levels of income etc.
- Sinful and Shameful actions from a person's past that have been forgiven.
- Personality differences.
- Differences in a level of faith or spiritual giftedness.

WE ARE FORBIDDEN TO HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH...

- THE WORLD (*Ephesians 5:11; Psalms 94:20*)
- SATANIC SPIRITS (*1 Corinthians 10:20*)
- UNRIGHTEOUSNESS (*2 Corinthians 6:14; Galatians 5:19*)
- FALSE RELIGION (*2 Peter 2; Jude 4*)
- FALSE DOCTRINE (*2 John 1:9-11; Galatians 1:7-10*)

What is "The World" as it is referred to in *Galatians 4:3,9; 6:14; James 1:27*? This is a phrase that comes from the word "Kosmos". This is not referring to the literal earth or universe but it is talking about the spiritual realm. So, when we see the **Kingdom of Darkness** manifesting itself through the THOUGHTS, ACTIONS, AND SYSTEMS of our surrounding society, the Bible calls that, THE WORLD. We are not to have anything to do with "THE WORLD". *Ephesians 5:11* commands us to have no fellowship with the fruitless deeds of darkness but rather expose them for what they are.

What about fellowship with "Unbelievers"? It is a good thing to remember that fellowship is partnership and sharing. This means that we are not talking about "ALL" interaction and aspects of a relationship, just "intimate" or close sharing of life, interests, and purpose. We have been given two commands that we must obey with regard to unbelievers. *1 Corinthians 6:14* commands us to have no "Fellowship" with unbelievers. But at the same time, we are also commanded to reach out to them with the truth of the Gospel. (*Matt. 28:19,20*) The key is to maintain a balance of purpose and focus in all relationships that involve unbelievers. The Balance might be summed up in *Colossians 4:5,6*. **"Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."**

