

FELLOWSHIP

In modern Christianity today people choose to attend a church for various reasons. The selection often depends on whether they like the music, whether they like the pastor's preaching style, or if there are lots of programs for their kids. Many people I've spoken to over the years say that they stay at a church because of the fellowship.

Modern church fellowship is typically a social gathering among the members, often including snacks and conversations about current events, business and ball scores.

The members often study the Bible and discuss what the pastor preached about last Sunday. They sometimes share about the current challenges in their lives and ask the others to pray for them. These get-togethers most times function as a support group for Christians, as they deal with the problems of life in this world.

I'd like to share some scriptures and a few thoughts about how God sees fellowship.

Let's start with
1 Corinthians 1.9

God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

This scripture shows us that fellowship is not a natural social gathering. It's the spiritual result of God's supernatural work on our behalf to redeem us back into His family and into His kingdom.

Paul's prayer for the believers in
2 Corinthians 13.14 confirms that it's a spiritual relationship with God and not just a social gathering among people.

He prayed that, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

It's a spiritual interaction with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and is part of God's eternal redemptive plan for man.

The Greek word translated as fellowship in the scriptures is the word "koinonia". It means "to share in common." Literally, it means to drink from the same cup.

Let's look at a few more scriptures to see how this fellowship actually should function in our lives.

1 John 1.1-3

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life— and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was revealed to us, 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.

Please note, that in this scripture John says that we experienced the Word of Life that was from the beginning.

John 1.1 declares,

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and THE WORD WAS GOD. HE was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through HIM, and apart from HIM not even one thing came into being that has come into being. In HIM was life, and the life was the Light of mankind.

Their fellowship was not a discussion of a sermon or even a Bible study. There wasn't even a Bible to study!

The Word of Life that they experienced was not a teaching. It was a person. Jesus Christ, the Life of God and the Light of all men.

John goes on to say that this Eternal Life was manifested and we experienced it.

In John 17.3, Jesus explained what eternal life actually is.

This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

Again, this was not an academic teaching session or a natural support group. It was a spiritual relationship with God, and the experience of His Eternal Life, by the presence of His Holy Spirit.

Now let's look a little closer.

Hebrews 1.3 states that Jesus is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of God's nature.

John said that this eternal life was manifested and we experienced it.

Please note, that Jesus of Nazareth was not in that meeting. He had already risen to the right hand of the Father, yet they all experienced His Eternal Life.

So how did that happen?

His eternal life was manifested through them by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit within them.

Now some will protest, how can I possibly manifest the eternal life of God. I'm only human and nobody's perfect.

Let's take a look at 1 John 5.11.

And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. The one who has the Son has the life; the one who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

There is only one life in the universe that is eternal. It's God's life.

As God's children, we are not merely sinners who've had their sins forgiven. We are new creations of God. Who are born of His spirit and endued with His eternal life. The very thing that makes God, God, His supernatural nature, is the same thing that has made us His children according to John 1.12.

He has made us one with Him and whoever is joined to the Lord is one Spirit with Him.

(John 17.22 and 1 Corinthians 6.17)

So, the effectiveness of fellowship is based on our oneness with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, more than our natural willingness to support one another through the ups and downs and problems of life in this world.

Let's focus for a minute on how this fellowship, this Eternal Life of God is supposed to function among God's children.

John said, we proclaimed to you this eternal life so that you would have fellowship with us.

Take a look at Ephesians 4.15, it reads,

speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all *aspects* into Him who is the head, *that is*, Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

We are directed to speak the truth in love to one another.

Jesus clarified what the truth actually is.

John 14.6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life.

In John 8.32, He said, you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

Jesus didn't say, my teachings will set you free. It's the reality of His life in us that sets us free.

They manifested the life of God to one another, so that the whole body would grow into the full measure of the stature which belongs to Christ.

This explains the "proper working of each individual part," and "that which every joint supplies."

Do you recall when God provided mana in the wilderness for the Israelites. He rained down the Bread of Heaven every day for their life.

Please note that He did not serve it up to them as a group. He ordained that they had to individually go and gather it themselves morning and evening.

God's intention was that every person of the children of Israel would have an ongoing, spiritual, and eternal relationship with the living God and be equipped to serve up that eternal life to the other tribes on the planet.

That is also His intention for us today. That every member of the body of Christ would have that relationship with Him.

Many Christians have lost sight of God's calling for them to individually have a relationship with Him. The modern church experience has evolved for many into a bit of a spectator sport. The only requirement is attendance.

Although they believe that having your sins forgiven is absolutely mandatory to go to heaven, dwelling in God's presence daily, living by every word that He speaks, and being equipped to serve up His eternal life to the other members of the body and those outside the church has become pretty much optional.

In God's mind, it's not enough for God to just forgive our sins and meet our current needs in this world. He wants to give us our inheritance. Our inheritance is the eternal life of God 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, for the rest of our lives.

We were created to be the supreme creation of God to express His Eternal Life to this entire world, so that every nation, tribe, and nationality could become members of His family and citizens of His kingdom.

In Peter's 1st letter in chapter 4.10 he says,

as each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards, of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God, whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs to glory and dominion forever and ever. 1 Peter 4.11

In conclusion, in 1 John 1.6, says,

if we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 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.

It's dwelling in Christ, and living in His Light that guarantees fellowship with Him and one another, and it ensures an ongoing application of His grace in our lives that empowers us to be like Him.

In 1 John 4.16, John testifies,

We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this union and communion, love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment because as He is, so also are we in this world.

God has called us into fellowship with Himself and has committed His eternal life to us, His children, as our eternal inheritance.

He has committed everything He is and everything He has to us, in fellowship with Him.

Let's not settle for chips and dips, or business and ball scores, as a replacement, when we can experience His eternal life with Him and in fellowship with each other.

God bless you.

Jim Fuller

