

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2018 Bible Study Outline



### THE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP: OUR LIFE TOGETHER

#### STUDY 1: A CALL TO FELLOWSHIP

##### INTRODUCTION:

1. In **Acts 2: 42**, we have this account of the early church: "**And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.**"
2. Today, many congregations place great emphasis on being true to the Word of God, observing the Lord's Supper, and being fervent in prayer
3. These things are certainly important, but what of "**fellowship**"?
  - a. Do we properly understand this part of the church of Jesus Christ?
  - b. Are we practicing it like the example of the early church?
4. Starting with this lesson, we shall examine the subject of "**fellowship**" in the light of the Scriptures in order to ensure a proper understanding and application of this Biblical subject

##### I. THE PROBLEM OF SELF-CENTEREDNESS

###### **A. As Often Manifested In A Local Church...**

1. What if an observer comes in to study and analyze our fellowship life in this church?
  - a. Someone who is a specialist in studying and analyzing how groups work together
  - b. Someone who intends to compare us with other groups or congregations
  - c. Someone who will examine things like:
    - i) How we relate to one another when we assemble for worship
    - ii) How we interact with each other after church meetings and assemblies
    - iii) Our group faithfulness and loyalties
    - iv) Our willingness to support each other in times of need
    - v) The amount of time we spend in the company of one another in church
  - d. Someone seeking to learn how well those who sit by each other during church meetings really know each other - What would such a person discover?
2. Several years ago, some churches allowed themselves to be analyzed in this way, and these are some of the things discovered:

- a. The great majority of members knew a very small percentage of the people
- b. Those who gathered for worship were mostly an anonymous group of worshippers
- c. They were not a genuine community of souls prepared to bear one another's burdens
- d. They expressed little interest in becoming more involved in each other's lives
- e. They came to worship only for the sake of their own spiritual life and personal needs!

The truth is that - **"Many now go to Church as they would go to the Cinema"**

3. The bottom line was this:

- a. The churches that were analyzed consisted of members who were "self-centered"
- b. Therefore, very little fellowship of any sort was taking place in their midst!

This does not automatically suggest that the same thing happens here. But as we grow in number, the tendency is there for us to lose the kind of fellowship we ought to have. The purpose of this study therefore is to avoid the kind of "self-centeredness" which can destroy the spiritual fellowship God wants us to have in the church.

### **B. Some Reasons For "Self-centredness" In Churches...**

1. Most of us live the **"Me Life"**

- a. The "Me Life" is distinguished by self-centered attitudes and self-indulgent behaviour
- b. The "Me life" leads to...
  - i) A rapid rise of crime against others - lies, theft, rape, assault, murder, etc.
  - ii) An increased use of drugs and alcohol as a way of escape
  - iii) A turn to philosophies and religions which involve preoccupation with SELF like Transcendental Meditation (TM) and Yoga
  - iv) An emphasis on wealth acquisition, consumerism and materialistic gains
- c. Over all, the "Me Life" makes us greedy and self-centered people!

2. We live in a highly mobile society

- a. New families move in, and others move away
- b. Many live great distances from the place of worship and from each other
- c. These facts do not prevent us from having proper fellowship; they just make it easier for us to become isolated from the fellowship of our brethren unintentionally

3. Technology designed to bring us closer together, can easily move us apart

- a. Phones, computers, internet, email, etc., greatly increase our ability to communicate
- b. We can however become stretched out so thin through use of such technology that we do not have time for others to develop meaningful relationships

4. A failure to understand and appreciate the Biblical teaching about **"Our Life Together"**

We shall dwell and expand upon this last point in this lesson. While societal trends may be encouraging the spirit of self-centeredness, God wants His church to go in a different direction.

## **II. THE CHURCH: A FELLOWSHIP FREE FROM SELF-CENTEREDNESS**

### **A. This Truth Is "Emphasized" In The Apostles' Doctrine...**

- 1. We are to care for one another - **1Cor.12: 26**
- 2. We are to be hospitable to one another - **1Pet.4: 9**

3. We are to pray for one another – **Jam.5: 16**
4. We are to restore one another – **Jam.5: 19-20**
5. We are to teach and admonish one another – **Col.3: 16**
6. We are to serve one another in love – **Gal.5: 13**

**B. This Truth Was “Exemplified” By 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**

**C. Church Fellowship Is A Natural Consequence Of The Teaching of Christ...**

1. The kingdom consists of those who love both God and their brethren – **Mk.12: 28-34**
2. Thus the fellowship we are to enjoy in the church is both "vertical" (fellowship with God) and "horizontal" (fellowship with fellow Christians)
  - a. Fellowship with God...
    - i) We enjoy a "**vertical**" relationship – **2Cor.5: 20**
    - ii) An overemphasis on this aspect can cause insensitivity to the needs of others
  - b. Fellowship with fellow Christians...
    - 1) We enjoy a "**horizontal**" relationship – **Eph.2: 14-16**
    - 2) Of course, an undue emphasis on this aspect also may cause one to neglect God

**CONCLUSION:**

1. Subsequent lessons will define further...
  - a. The fellowship that is to be enjoyed by those in the church
  - b. The spiritual activities designed to nurture fellowship in the body of Christ
  - c. Elements necessary to preserve our fellowship
  - d. Biblical limitations on the extent of our fellowship
2. But in this lesson we have stressed...
  - a. The importance of fellowship in the local church
  - b. The danger of allowing "self-centeredness" to disrupt our fellowship
3. For now, here are some practical suggestions that will enhance our ability to be involved and flow in proper church fellowship:
  - a. Learn the names of other church members
  - b. Listen to the announcements and take notice of the cares and joys of fellow Christians
  - c. Pray for those with special needs, mentioning them by name in your private prayers
  - d. Allow yourself to have...
    - i) An "**approachable personality**" where people feel free and comfortable in your presence
    - ii) A "**transparent lifestyle**" where you are not afraid to let others know the "real you"

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### THE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP: OUR LIFE TOGETHER

#### STUDY 2: AN INTIMATE HOUSEHOLD

##### INTRODUCTION:

1. In our previous lesson...
  - a. We asked whether churches today fellowship like the Early Church in the NT
  - b. We also asked questions as to whether churches today:
    - i) Are communities of believers expressing a sense of concern for one another?
    - ii) Or if they are simply groups of "anonymous" worshippers
  - c. We considered:
    - i) Factors in our society which tempt us to be self-centered
    - ii) How an attitude of self-centeredness is foreign to the very basics of Christ's teachings
2. In this lesson, we shall examine more carefully...
  - a. The teaching of Christ concerning the nature of the church He said He would build
  - b. How His teaching ought to shape the type of fellowship He wanted the members of His Church to experience

Let's start by considering some contrasting views of the church...

##### I. DIFFERENT VIEWS OF THE CHURCH:

###### **A. How Modern Man Tends To View The Church...**

1. An "**institution**" or "**organization**"
2. We then find business terms frequently used in the church, like:
  - a. "Music Director"
  - b. "Associate Minister"
  - c. "Group Coordinator"
  - d. "Evangelism Secretary"
  - e. "Superintendent of Education", etc

While the church was divinely instituted by God, and does have some organization, it seems that many have molded the local church into a business-like structure.

### **B. Jesus Viewed The Church Differently...**

1. He viewed it as a **"family"** who would be doing the will of His Father in heaven – **Matt.7: 21; 12:46-50.**
2. Indeed, both Jesus and His apostles often referred to the church as a "family"
  - a. Jesus spoke of...
    - i) God as His Father – **Jn.2: 16.**
    - ii) His followers as family relatives and His disciples to address God as our "Father" – **Matt.6:9.**
  - b. The apostles referred to the church...
    - i) As a **"brotherhood"** – **1Pet.2:17.**
    - ii) As the **"house (family) of God"** – **1Tim.3:15; 2Cor.6:17-18.**

So, the church Jesus established was to be **"An Intimate Household"** with a closeness not usually found in "organizations" or "institutions". In fact, every aspect of the life of God's people is to manifest that closeness or family intimacy...

## **II. HOW FAMILY INTIMACY IS TO PERMEATE CHURCH LIFE:**

### **A. In Our "Relationship" With Each Other...**

1. We are to be like little children – **Matt.18:1-4**
2. Not striving for dominance over each other
  - a. But with humility, showing submissiveness
  - b. And with dependence upon one another

### **B. In Our "Concern" For Each Other...**

1. Concerned with protecting members of our family from harm – **Matt.18:5-7.**
2. Concerned for those who stray as we are for those in the fellowship – **Matt.18:10-14.**

### **C. In Our "Discipline" Of One Another...**

1. We are to remember always that we are "brethren" (brothers and sisters)
  - a. Use measures that take full advantage of our relationship as family – **Matt.18:15-17.**
  - b. Treat any erring one disciplined as a brother – **2Thess.3:6-15.**
2. If the brother in error is not responsive...
  - a. We are to take advantage of the family relationship which we enjoy and deprive the erring brother of it!
3. Indeed, the failure of much discipline is due to lack of proper fellowship to begin with!

### **D. In "Forgiving" Each Other...**

1. Realizing the value of this intimate, family relationship...
  - a. Forgiveness is to be automatic upon repentance – **Matt.18: 21-22.**

- b. We're not to keep record of offenses as such would hinder our relationship as family
- 2. We are to keep in mind...
  - a. How our Father has forgiven us
  - b. Forgiveness by God is based on our forgiveness of our brethren! – **Matt.18:23-35**

#### **E. In "Service" To One Another...**

- 1. Jesus - our "Senior Brother" came to serve – **Matt.20:25-28.**
- 2. So we are to serve one another as we would in our physical family.

All these things are emphasizing an important spiritual truth:

The church is to be such a fellowship of believers that it can be rightly considered as:

- a. A home away from home!
- b. A home which is our true home!

### **III. THE CHURCH AS OUR TRUE HOME:**

#### **A. The Cost Of Discipleship Can Be Great...**

- 1. For some, it may even mean forsaking their earthly family – **Matt.10:34-39.**

#### **B. Christ Intends For His Church To Make Up For Any Cost...**

- 1. Whether it be:
  - a. The cost of putting Christ before family without compromise
  - b. The cost of leaving family to serve Christ (e.g., going to mission fields)
- 2. Christ has promised a hundredfold in replacement – **Mk.10: 28-30.**

#### **C. The Church Can Be A Home (Family) For All Especially...**

- 1. Those away from home (e.g., university students, youth corpsers, etc.)
- 2. Those with no family or an incomplete one (e.g., orphans or children of single parents)
- 3. Those from a "dysfunctional" family (e.g., those abused or neglected)

But for the church to be the home Christ intended, the family "members" must play their role and do their part. And for some that might mean making some changes...

### **IV. BUILDING FAMILY INTIMACY IN THE CHURCH:**

#### **A. Need To Spend More Time With Each Other...**

- 1. For some, it may mean being more faithful in attending church meetings and services
- 2. For others, it may mean widening our circle of fellowship to include others
- 3. For all of us, it means...
  - a. Being less self-centered!
  - b. Willingness to become involved with the concerns of others!
  - c. Willingness to spend more time with others both before and after church meetings

**B. Need To Become More Involved In The Work Of The "Church Family"...**

1. Our task is not just to create some sort of "social club" but a "family of believers" who are active in doing the will of their Father in heaven, including...
  - a. Saving souls
  - b. Restoring the erring
  - c. Edifying the savedIndeed, reconciling all with the Father and His family!
2. So we need to provide the appropriate service, which in turn builds intimacy:
  - a. Preaching and teaching
  - b. Exhorting and restoring
  - c. Ministering to both the spiritual and physical needs of the family

**CONCLUSION:**

1. What are we doing to see that the church is fulfilling its design to be "**An Intimate Household or family**"?
2. If we are doing nothing, or if we are depriving others from trying to become close to us...
  - a. Then we are depriving ourselves of one of the greatest blessings found in Christ!
  - b. And, we are also giving the impression that we may be false Disciples of Christ! – **Jn.13:35.**

Brethren, let's all work harder at being the kind of family God would have us to be! If becoming a child of God is your need today, consider what Paul wrote about how we become sons of God – **Gal.3:26-27...**

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### THE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP: OUR LIFE TOGETHER

#### STUDY 3: NO LIFE BEYOND THE BODY

#### INTRODUCTION:

1. So far in this study on "Our Life Together" ...
  - a. We have seen that fellowship in the church is both:
    - i) A "**vertical**" relationship with God
    - ii) A "**horizontal**" relationship with fellow Christians
  - b. We also noticed that the fellowship in Christ's church:
    - i) Was to be similar to the intimacy found in a family
    - ii) For the church is indeed the "**Family of God**"
2. In this lesson, we shall consider how the church in its fellowship is like a "**Body**"...
  - a. With Christ as its head and its members dependent upon the head and each other ...that it can be truly said that there is "**No Life Beyond The Body**"!

#### I. THE CHURCH AS THE "BODY OF CHRIST":

##### **A. That The Church Is The Body of Christ...**

1. Is evident from Paul's statement to the Colossians – **Colossians 1: 18**
2. Is stated very clearly in **Ephesians 1: 22-23**

##### **B. As The Body of Christ...**

1. The Church is "SAVED" by Christ – **Ephesians 5:23**
  - a. He saved it out of love, and by giving Himself for it – **Ephesians 5: 25**
  - b. He did so that He might make it a "glorious" church – **Ephesians 5: 26-27**
    - i) By sanctifying and cleansing it
    - ii) So it might be holy and without blemish
2. The Church is "NOURISHED" and "CHERISHED" by Christ – **Ephesians 5: 29**
  - a. Even as husbands do for the wives they love
  - b. This suggests that the work of Christ in behalf of His church goes beyond just dying on the cross, but continues on in some ways



But the main point is this: Outside the church, the body of Christ, there is no life!

\* There is no salvation outside the body, the church! – **Ephesians 5: 23**

\* There is no spiritual nourishment outside the body, the church! – **Ephesians 5: 29**

We know how Christ provides "**salvation**" to those in His church (through His blood), but how does He provide "**life**" (i.e., nourishment and strength) to those in the body?

## **II. HOW CHRIST PROVIDES LIFE TO THOSE IN THE BODY:**

### **A. Directly From The Head To The Members of The Body...**

1. As He suggested by the figure of the vine and branches – **John 15: 5**
2. As illustrated in the statement of Paul – **Philippians 4: 13**
3. So the direct and individual relationship we have with Christ is one avenue of the "life" (i.e., nourishment and strength)

### **B. Indirectly By The Proper Working of Each Member...**

1. Each member has been given some ability by the grace of God – **Romans 12: 4-8**
2. We are expected to "minister it to one another", i.e., use it to benefit others – **1Peter 4: 9**
3. When each member is doing its part, the body then builds itself up in love – **Eph.4: 15-16**

### **C. Thus We Receive "Life" (Strength from Two Sources)...**

1. Directly from Christ (through our individual association with Him)
2. Indirectly from Christ (through our fellowship with the members of His body, the church)
3. An EXAMPLE of this:
  - a. We can receive "comfort" directly from God in Christ – **2Corinthians 1: 3-4a, 5**  
(e.g., through prayer – **Philippians 4: 6-7**)
  - b. Yet we can pass this "comfort" along to others – **2Corinthians 1: 4b**
  - c. For that is how God often provides "comfort" to us indirectly – **2Corinthians 7: 6-7**

As we understand HOW Christ imparts "life" to the body, we can then fully appreciate...

## **III. THE IMPORTANCE OF EVERY MEMBER OF THE BODY:**

### **A. Every Member Is Needed For The Body To Function Well...**

1. No one can say they are not important – **1Corinthians 12: 14-19**
2. No one can say others are not needed – **1Corinthians 12: 20-25**

### **B. So "Interdependent" Are The Members, That What Affects One Affects All!**

1. As Paul taught in **1Corinthians 12: 26-27**
2. So when a member begins to reason within himself...
  - a. "I am not needed" or
  - b. "I won't be missed" or
  - c. "There's nothing that I can do that is important"  
...and by such reasoning remains inactive, the whole body suffers!

3. In such cases, the body (church) becomes "handicapped"!
  - a. The church is not working at its full potential
  - b. Because there is not what Paul described as **"the effective working by which every part does its share"** – **Ephesians 4: 16**
4. And when the body (church) is "handicapped"...
  - a. Christ is unable to provide the full extent of His life and nourishment!
  - b. For as we have seen, the body (church) is one means by which He does so
  - c. The end result is lack of **"growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love"**!

### **CONCLUSION:**

1. When we understand that the church is the **"body of Christ"** and functions like a body which needs the working of every member, we see...
  - a. The need for becoming more actively involved
  - b. The need for doing what we can to improve the fellowship among members of the body
2. From a negative perspective, we might ask "How long will Christ endure members who do not perform their function?"
  - a. Not long, from what Jesus taught His disciples in **John 15: 2, 6**
  - b. Understandably so, for a member of the body that does not function is often better removed lest it becomes a hindrance to the working of other members!
  - c. And since Christ is always adding "new" members to His body...
    - i) For He is adding daily those who are being saved – **Acts 2: 47**
    - ii) He can always replace non-functioning members with those willing to serve!
      - a) Remember Mordecai's words to Esther – **Esther 4: 14**
      - b) Just as Judas Iscariot was replaced by Matthias – **Acts 1: 15-26**
3. But from a more positive perspective...
  - a. **"Why deprive OURSELVES of the nourishment Christ provides through other members of His body?"** – For that is what we are doing when we don't have much fellowship with others in the body!
  - b. **"Why deprive OTHERS of the nourishment Christ provides through the members of His body?"** – For that is what we are doing when we fail to add what we can do to the fellowship of the body!

Let's all work at being more productive and effective members of the body of Christ, so that we may all benefit by the mutual strength and edification we have in Christ!

**"As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen."**  
 – **1Peter 4: 10-11**

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#### STUDY 4: A GIVING FELLOWSHIP

##### INTRODUCTION:

1. We have seen that "fellowship" in the Lord's church is designed to have...
  - a. The "intimacy" similar to that found in a **"family"**
  - b. The "interdependence" similar to that found among parts or members of a **"body"**
2. As we continue in this study of fellowship, we should examine how various **"acts of worship"** done in our public assemblies actually contribute to building this sort of fellowship
3. In this lesson, we will look at one "act of worship", which of all the things we do might be considered by some to be the least "spiritual" and the least likely to build fellowship...
  - a. This is the **"collection"**, also known as the **"contribution"**, and the **"offering"**
  - b. This is often thought of as little on the part of some

Let's start with this question: **"What is the purpose of the collection or offering?"** People might answer that question differently...

##### I. SOME VIEWS OF "THE COLLECTION":

###### **A. A Way To Pay The Bills?**

1. Some might think the collection is a mere mechanical detail necessary to raise money to pay the bills
2. Such would likely consider it to be a rude intrusion of secular matters into an otherwise spiritual service i.e., singing, prayer, Bible study, preaching... those are spiritual activities. But what does taking up money (mammon) have to do with worshipping God?
3. People with this attitude toward the collection might say: **"Hurry up and pass the plate, bag or basket, so we can get on to more spiritual matters!"**

###### **B. A Private Act Between The Christian And His God?**

1. Others may understand that there is a spiritual side to the collection  
That giving is an act of devotion to God for I give back to Him as He has prospered me

2. This view looks at the collection solely as a private matter between a person and His God, with no bearing on my fellowship with others

But are these Biblical views of the collection? Is the contribution to be thought in such terms? To answer these questions, let's consider...

## **II. A BRIEF HISTORY OF GIVING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH:**

### **A. The Church in Jerusalem...**

1. There was a commendable spirit of giving for those in need
    - a. At first, the giving seemed to be informal, given directly from giver to one in need – **Acts 2: 44-45**
    - b. Soon, the process became systematic: brought to the apostles, and then distributed to needy saints – **Acts 4: 32-35**
  2. From what is said by Peter to Ananias, this giving was a "freewill offering", not a requirement – **Acts 5: 1-4**
- HERE WE HAVE CHRISTIANS IN ONE CONGREGATION HELPING EACH OTHER

### **B. The Church in Antioch...**

1. Responding to a prophecy about a coming famine - **Acts 11: 27-28**
  2. They sent relief "according to their ability" to the brethren in Judea - **Acts 11: 29-30**
- HERE WE HAVE ONE CHURCH HELPING MANY CHURCHES

### **C. The Ministry of Paul...**

1. He was asked to remember the poor – **Gal.2: 9-10**
  2. On his missionary journeys, he was careful to do so
    - a. By giving instructions to the churches on how to collect the money for the poor saints – **1 Cor.16: 1-4**
    - b. By encouraging churches to imitate one another's liberality in giving
      - i) He motivated the Macedonians by telling them of the Achaians' readiness and zeal – **2 Cor.9: 1-2**
      - ii) He motivated the Achaians (Corinthians) by telling them of the Macedonians' sacrificial participation – **2 Cor.8: 1-7**
    - c. By imparting principles to govern proper giving
      - i) It must be done willingly – **2 Cor.8: 12a**
      - ii) It must be according to what one has, as God has prospered him – **2 Cor.8: 12b-14; 1 Cor.16: 2**
      - iii) It must be with purpose (i.e., with thoughtfulness and prior plan) - **2 Cor.9:7a**
      - iv) It must be done cheerfully, not as a grudging obligation – **2 Cor.9: 7b; 9: 5**
  3. He writes of his plans to take these gifts to the poor saints in Jerusalem – **Rom.15: 25-26**
  4. Which he eventually did – **Acts 21: 17; 24: 17**
- Here we have many churches helping one church

With this background, we are in a better position to appreciate...

### **III. THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF "THE COLLECTION":**

#### **A. A Means of Supplying Needs...**

1. A way for Christians to supply the needs of their brethren – **2 Cor.9: 12a**
2. A way for supplying the needs of preaching brethren – **Phil.1: 5; 4: 15-16; 2 Cor.11: 8-9**

#### **B. A Means of Building And Strengthening Fellowship...**

1. This was how Paul viewed the support he received from Philippi – **Phil.1: 5; 4: 15-16**
2. This was how Paul viewed the collection the Gentiles churches were sending to their Jewish brethren
  - a. The Gentiles had been partakers in spiritual things (i.e. fellowship) with their Jewish brethren, now they were simply sharing (having fellowship) with them in material things – **Rom.15: 27**
  - b. The effect of such sharing was to create "longing" for one another; i.e., more fellowship together! – **2 Cor.9: 12-15**
3. Among the church in Jerusalem:
  - a. Such sharing was the ultimate proof that they were of "**one heart and one soul**" (i.e., having true fellowship) – **Acts 4: 32**
  - b. Such sharing was proof of their love for one another – **1 Jn.3: 16-18**

### **CONCLUSION:**

1. The point is simply this: **The collection is just one means to promote "fellowship" in the Church or Body of Christ!**
2. As we give...
  - a. We are sharing (having fellowship) with those Christians whose physical needs cannot be met on their own (whether here or afar)
  - b. We are sharing (having fellowship) with church workers or those who are preaching the gospel (whether here or afar)
  - c. Indeed, we are sharing (having fellowship) with one another as we work together as a local congregation by pooling our resources together!
3. When thought of in this way...
  - a. Even this simple "**act of worship**" becomes a means for developing our fellowship
  - b. What might be considered by some as secular intrusion into an otherwise spiritual service is in fact an activity designed to increase our spiritual fellowship that we have together in Christ!
4. Thus it confirms the idea that we are not to view ourselves as "isolated worshipers" when we come together; we are truly "**A Giving Fellowship!**"

Our next study will continue examining the fellowship aspect of our "acts of worship"...

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### THE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP: OUR LIFE TOGETHER

#### STUDY 5: THE SECRET OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

##### INTRODUCTION:

1. As we continue this study on "**Our Life Together**", we are looking at how various "acts of worship" have a part in strengthening the kind of fellowship Christ intends for His church
2. Our previous study looked at "**the collection**" or "**contribution**", in which we saw that...
  - a. It not only supplies the needs of the saints and the preaching of the gospel
  - b. But it also builds fellowship between the givers and the recipients
3. In this lesson we will focus our attention on "**The Lord's Supper**", which is also called:
  - a. The "**breaking of bread**" – **Acts 2: 42; 20: 7**
  - b. The "**Communion**" – **1Cor.10: 16**
4. People who visit our services for the first time may often be perplexed as to its meaning
  - a. Indeed, what is its meaning?
  - b. And what does this observance have to do with "fellowship between Christians"?

##### I. THE MEANING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER:

###### **A. Important Aspects Are Often Pointed Out...**

1. It is "**a memorial**" - **1Cor.11: 23-25**
  - a. Instituted by the Lord Himself
  - b. To commemorate the death of Jesus on the cross for our sins – **Matt.26: 26-28**
2. It is "**a proclamation**" - **1Cor.11: 26**
  - a. In which we proclaim our faith in the efficacy of Jesus' death in our behalf
  - b. To be done till He comes again (so it also a proclamation of our faith in His 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming)
3. It is to be "**a period of extreme reverence**" - **1Cor.11: 27,29**
  - a. It is to be observed "in a worthy manner"
  - b. Out of respect for the supreme price Jesus paid for our sins
    - i) E.g., the cruel torture and humiliation of His physical body
    - ii) E.g., the spiritual anguish suffered as the Son of God bore the punishment for our sins

– He cried, "My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

c. To make light of this memorial is to put one in the same group as those who mocked Him as He hung on the cross!

**4. It is "a time for self-examination" - 1Cor.11: 28**

a. Reflecting upon our own spiritual condition in relation to the sacrifice of Christ

b. Are we living in a manner that makes His sacrifice worthwhile?

i) By our accepting the grace of God in our lives? – **2Cor.5: 18-6: 1**

ii) By living for Him? – **2Cor.5: 14-15**

c. Or are we by willful sinning, guilty of having...

i) "trampled the Son of God under foot"?

ii) "counted the blood of the covenant by which we were sanctified a common thing"?

iii) "insulted the Spirit of grace"? – **Heb.10: 26-29**

d. Do we, by refusing to repent of our sins, "crucify again for ourselves the Son of God, and put Him to an shame"? – **Heb.6: 4-6**

**5. It is "a communion" (i.e. sharing, fellowship) - 1Cor.10: 16**

a. With the blood and body of Christ

b. Certainly, then, a "vertical" relationship and fellowship with Christ as we commune

**B. But There Is Something Else...**

1. It also has something to do with "our oneness in the body of Christ"! – **1Cor.10: 17**

a. Though many, we are "**one bread and one body**"

b. Why? "**for we all partake of that one bread**"

c. There are at least two possible ways to view this...

i) Partaking of the one bread together "**reminds**" us of our oneness, i.e., our fellowship

ii) Partaking of the one bread together "**strengthens**" our oneness, or fellowship

- Both views are valid, and both are accomplished, whether or not that is what Paul actually had in mind

d. In this way "**The Lord's Supper**" is an act of worship in which there is both:

i) A "**vertical**" fellowship (communion with the Lord's body and blood)

ii) A "**horizontal**" fellowship (communion with one another)

2. This helps us to see some implications in several passages

a. E.g., **Acts 20: 7** - "**...when the disciples came together to break bread...**"

b. E.g, **1Cor.11: 33** - "**...when you come together to eat, wait for one another**"

c. The Supper is designed to be a "communal" meal...

i) Even as the Passover, from which the Lord took elements to institute the Lord's Supper, was a communal meal

ii) For this reason, some practices are questionable such as:

a) Observing the Lord's Supper by one's self during personal retreat or when camping

b) Observing the Supper when just one or a couple is partaking

c) Taking the elements to the sick or shut-in who were unable to assemble with the saints. However, these practices can be discussed

Yet there is sufficient evidence for us to appreciate that "**The Lord's Supper**" is more than just a personal act of devotion between a Christian and his Lord. As we do it together, it should

remind us of our fellowship in the (one) body of Christ, and by such remembrance, we actually strengthen our sense of fellowship!

### **III. PRESERVING THE "FELLOWSHIP" ASPECT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER:**

#### **A. For Those Who Assist Us In Partaking...**

1. The fellowship aspect of the Lord's Supper can be alluded to from time to time
  - a. Those who lead the song in preparation for the communion might point out when a song refers to the shared nature of this supper
  - b. Those making comments or reading Scripture might occasionally make reference to the relationship between Christ's death and our fellowship with one another – **Eph.2: 13-16**
  - c. Prayers offered can include thanksgiving for the reconciliation between men made possible by that suffering of Christ which we now commemorate
2. By occasionally making a connection between the "communion" and the "collection"
  - a. It is true the "collection" is not a part of the "communion"
  - b. But taking up the "collection" immediately following the "communion" need not be thought of as simply "a matter of convenience"
  - c. What better time is there to have "fellowship in the matter of giving"?
    - i) We have just completed having "fellowship in the matter of the communion"
    - ii) It is the death of Christ who has made our fellowship possible – **Eph.2: 16**
    - iii) And it is His sacrificial example we are to follow – **2Cor.8: 7-9**

#### **B. As Participants And Partakers...**

1. We should keep in mind the significance of Paul's statement in **1Cor.10: 17**
  - a. **"For we, being many, are one bread and one body;"**
  - b. **"...for we all partake of that one bread."**
2. We should think not only of the communion we are having with the Lord, but with one another as well
3. We should make every effort to be present when the church "comes together to break bread" – **Acts 20: 7**

### **CONCLUSION:**

1. The fellowship we enjoy in Christ...
  - a. Was made possible by His death on the cross
  - b. Is strengthened whenever we participate together in the "breaking of bread"
2. Is this how you view the Lord's Supper?
  - a. Or do you consider it simply as a personal act of worship?
  - b. With no bearing on your relationship with other Christians?
3. The **"fellowship"** aspect of the communion has not often been pointed out in teaching about the Lord's Supper, and for this reason it has often been called **"The Secret Of The Supper."**

Hope this "secret" is no longer a secret to us, and that we might get more out of the time we spend together around **"The Lord's Table"**...



## 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2018 Bible Study Outline



### THE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP: OUR LIFE TOGETHER

#### STUDY 6: THE PLACE OF PRAYER AND SONG

##### INTRODUCTION:

1. We have seen that the "**collection**" and the "**Lord's Supper**" include in their design the element of strengthening fellowship...
  - a. The "**collection**" supplies the needs of the saints, but it also increases fellowship between the givers and the recipients
  - b. The "**Lord's Supper**" is indeed a memorial and communion with the Lord, but our partaking of it together also involves a communion together as one body
2. There are two other "acts of worship" in which we engage when we assemble that also have as a purpose (or at least as an outcome) that of nourishing fellowship among Christians...
  - a. One is "**prayer**", and the other is "**song**"
  - b. Both involve expressions of praise and devotion to God, but is that all?
3. In this study...
  - a. We shall examine how these activities can build fellowship with each other
  - b. And seek to examine whether or not we are utilizing them as we should

##### I. THE FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER AND SONG:

###### **A. Can Be Illustrated By The Example of The Early Church...**

1. They were quick to join themselves together in prayer
  - a. In response to the threat of persecution – **Acts 4: 18-20, 23-24, 29-33**
  - b. In the face of actual persecution – **Acts 12: 1-3,5,12**
2. They had fellowship in singing as well
  - a. While enduring imprisonment – **Acts 16: 25**
  - b. Note the connection of singing with praying

###### **B. Why Such Fellowship in Prayer and Song?**

1. Because of the value of prayer and especially collective praying
  - a. Prayer is a wonderful source of strength and peace – **Phil.4: 6-7**

- b. But there is also a special value when brethren pray together!
  - i) Jesus taught the value of collective prayer – **Matt.18: 19-20**
  - ii) James taught the value of the prayer of a righteous man; how much more, then, the value of many righteous people praying! – **Jam.5: 16**
- 2. Because of the value of song, and especially collective singing
  - a. Singing certainly is appropriate as an individual expression of praise – **Jam.5: 13**
  - b. But when done together, it can also serve as a form of mutual teaching and admonition – **Col.3: 16**
  - c. This can lead to increased blessings, as such collective singing...
    - i) Nurtures a heart of thankfulness to God – **Col.3: 16**
    - ii) Can lead to our being "filled with the Spirit" – **Eph.5: 18-19**

The early church certainly took advantage of the full blessings to be found in prayer and song; they not only prayed and sang as individuals, but collectively as well. This could not but help strengthen the fellowship they enjoyed in Christ!

What about the church today? Are we allowing prayer and song to strengthen our fellowship together in the body of Christ? Consider...

## **II. HOW WE CAN USE PRAYER AND SONG TO BUILD FELLOWSHIP:**

### **A. First, Make Prayer and Singing Meaningful in Your Private Devotions...**

1. You DO have private devotions, don't you?
2. Learn to lean on God in prayer - believe in the power of God to answer prayer!
  - a. For God is One Who hears our prayers – **Ps.65: 2**
  - b. And those who look to God in prayer will find Him to be One Who answers, prompting us to pray even more – **Ps.116: 1-2**
3. Learn the joy of singing praise to God
  - a. David did, and found it to be both pleasant and beautiful – **Ps.147: 1**
  - b. It is also helpful to listen and sing along with those singing hymns recorded on tapes  
The more experience you have in your personal devotions, the more you will get out of your public devotions with others!

### **B. Second, As We Pray and Sing Together, Expend Some Effort...**

1. Listen attentively to the prayers, making them your own
2. When appropriate, don't hesitate to offer a hearty "AMEN!"
3. As we sing, be sure you are making melody "with the heart" – **Eph.5: 19**
  - a. New Testament worship stresses the spiritual side, not the physical side
  - b. Don't worry how you sound, but sing from the heart!
  - c. Remember, our countenance is often a good indicator of the condition of our hearts – **Prov.15: 13**

Just as you get more out of attending a sports event by getting involved in the game, so one gets more out of our assemblies by getting involved in the collective activities!

### **C. Third, Sit Closer Together...**

1. What good is it to teach and admonish one another if we can't hear each other?
2. By sitting close together, people are more likely to sing out
3. There is more sense that we engage in these activities sitting together as a family
  - a. When you attend with your physical family, don't you like the idea that you are worshipping God "together"?
  - b. Doesn't sitting together "as a family" therefore help nourish that idea?
  - c. Shouldn't we, then, as the family of God "sit together"?

### **D. Finally, Take Advantage of Opportunities To Sing and Pray Together...**

1. In our regular meetings and assemblies
2. In special singings
3. In house fellowships and singings  
For the more you do it, the more you get out of it; some people never experience the joy of fellowship in prayer and song because they do it so rarely!

### **CONCLUSION:**

1. In **Jam.5: 13**, James wrote:

**"Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. "Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms."**

2. While we can certainly do this on our own, God does not intend for this to always be the case; consider what Paul wrote in **Rom.12: 15...**

**"Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep."**

3. The fellowship Christ intended for His church to enjoy involves a sharing together in the songs and prayer we offer to God!

To ignore or otherwise not fully appreciate this part of **"Our Life Together"** is to deprive ourselves of some of the greatest blessings found in the family of God, the church.

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2018 Bible Study Outline



### THE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP: OUR LIFE TOGETHER

#### STUDY 7: AN ACCEPTING FELLOWSHIP

##### INTRODUCTION:

1. Our study so far on "**Our Life Together**" has focused on the concepts of Christian fellowship:
  - a. That the nature of our fellowship in Christ...
    - i) Is to be patterned after that found in a family as "**An Intimate Household**"
    - ii) Is such that we are truly interdependent upon one another (**No Life Outside The Body**)
  - b. That even those "acts of worship" God ordained have as a purpose to strengthen fellowship
    - i) The "collection" supplies the needs of the saints, but it also increases fellowship between the givers and the recipients ("**A Giving Fellowship**")
    - ii) The "Lord's Supper" is indeed a memorial and communion with the Lord, but partaking of it together also involves a communion together as one body ("**The Secret of The Supper**")
    - iii) Both "prayer" and "singing" contribute as well ("**The Place of Prayer and Song**")
2. Another important concept in developing the type of fellowship that should exist in the church of our Lord is that of "**acceptance**"
  - a. It is easy for there to be acceptance in a family because of the physical ties
  - b. It is also easy in social organizations that are based upon things members have in common  
But in the church, it is not always easy; for it is a gathering of people of various backgrounds, lifestyles, and interests
3. How can a thriving fellowship exist in the midst of such differences?

The answer lies in understanding and applying the concept of "**acceptance**" in the family of God. To appreciate the challenge facing the church, consider...

##### I. THE NATURE OF OUR DIFFERENCES:

###### **A. The Differences In A Church Can Be Many...**

1. Differences in "**race**" (white, black, oriental, etc.)
2. Differences in "**nationalities**" & "**tribes**" (Nigerian, Ghanaian, Togolese, Briton, American, Indian, Canadian, Mexican, etc., Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, Fulani, Ijaw, Itsekiri, Efik, etc.)

3. Differences in "**philosophies**" & "**political ideologies**" (conservative, liberal, etc.)
4. Differences in "**educational status**" & "**economic status**" (literate or illiterate, rich or poor)
5. Differences in "**temperaments**" & "**lifestyles**" (introvert, extrovert, simple, complex, etc.)
6. Differences in "**hobbies**" & "**secular interests**" (sports, music, computing, etc.)
7. Differences in "**spiritual maturity**" (weak in faith or strong in faith)

**B. All These Differences Have Potentials To Disrupt Fellowship...**

1. Prejudice or bigotry in any one area can destroy unity (and fellowship) in a local assembly
2. Even "cliques" can develop (innocently or not) among those who have things in common  
How can we be one and enjoy fellowship with so many differences?

The answer lies in understanding...

**II. GOD'S ATTITUDE TOWARD "ACCEPTANCE":**

**A. God Does Not Show Partiality...**

1. He revealed Himself to Israel as One who shows no partiality – **Deut.10: 17**
2. Paul wrote of God's impartial judgment to come – **Rom.2: 9-11**
3. Peter also wrote of God's impartiality - **1Pet.1: 17**

**B. God Is Willing To Accept All...**

1. This was the purpose of the vision shown to Peter, and the Spirit falling upon the Gentile listeners - **Acts 10: 34-35**
2. As Peter would relate later at the Jerusalem conference, God makes no distinction – **Acts 15: 7-9**
3. And in his last epistle, Peter wrote that the Lord desires all to come to repentance – **2Pet.3: 9**

**C. God Wants Us To Be One, and Accept One Another...**

1. Even as Christ has received us, so we are to receive one another – **Rom.15: 7**
2. Putting on Christ in baptism, our differences lose their significance as we contemplate our oneness made possible in Him – **Gal.3: 27-28**

When we understand that God is no respecter of persons, and that we are to receive one another just as He has received us then, we are in a better position to have "**An Accepting Fellowship**".

**III. APPLYING THE CONCEPT OF "ACCEPTANCE":**

**A. Do Not Practice "Partiality"...**

1. By showing favouritism towards some, and prejudice towards others – **Jam.2: 1**
2. As an example, consider – **Jam.2: 2-9**
  - a. Where we are told to accept the poor as well as the rich
  - b. This principle can be applied in many other areas where there are differences

3. We must also beware of "reverse partiality" (where the poor despise the rich, out of envy)

**B. Put On The "New Man" Through Spiritual Renewal...**

1. Whatever our differences, we are all to become like Christ – **Col.3: 9-10**
2. As we do so, our differences lose significance – **Col.3: 11**
3. For as we develop Christ-like character, the potential for partiality lessens – **Col.3: 12-15**
  - a. We will have a heart of compassion, not ice
  - b. We will be kind, not cruel
  - c. We will be humble, not proud
  - d. We will be gentle, not harsh
  - e. We will be patient, not intolerant
  - f. We will be forgiving, not judgmental
  - g. We will love, not bigoted

**C. Though Differences Lose Their Significance, This Does Not Mean Differences Cease to Exist...**

1. A Jew is still a Jew, and a Gentile is still a Gentile
2. The poor are still poor, and the rich are still rich (though sometimes this may change)
3. Divine guidelines governing some differences must still be respected
  - a. The servant must still honour his responsibilities as a servant - **Col.3: 22-25**
  - b. The differences in responsibilities between male and female must still be honoured – **Col.3: 18; 1Tim.2:11-12; 1Cor14: 34-38**  
Just as all members are to submit to the "elders" - **1Tit.3: 1-7; Heb.13: 17**

**CONCLUSION:**

1. As we grow in Christ, putting on the "**new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him**", we are more likely to fulfill the admonition of Paul:

**"Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God." – Rom.15: 7**

2. Only as we accept one another without partiality can we hope to attain to the level of fellowship the Lord intended for His people to enjoy in the family of God

Are you contributing to "**An Accepting Fellowship**"? Are you willing to accept others, even as God has accepted you?

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2018 Bible Study Outline



### THE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP: OUR LIFE TOGETHER

#### STUDY 8: FREEDOM IN OUR FELLOWSHIP

##### INTRODUCTION:

1. We have seen that the Lord intends for us to enjoy a fellowship together in the church of Christ which has...
  - a. The intimacy of a family
  - b. The interdependence of a body
  - c. Opportunities to be nourished and strengthened in our assemblies
  - d. An acceptance of one another despite differences in many things
2. For that fellowship to truly flourish in a local congregation, it is important to understand certain concepts that can impact on our fellowship
  - a. The proper use of our freedom in Christ is one such concept
  - b. Failure to understand the nature and proper use of liberty has destroyed the fellowship of many churches
3. In this lesson, we shall examine the nature of our freedom in Christ and how it affects our fellowship with one another

##### I. THE NATURE OF OUR FREEDOM IN CHRIST:

###### **A. We Enjoy "Freedom" in Christ...**

1. Jesus offered freedom to His disciples – **Jn.8: 31-32, 36**
2. Paul taught that Christ has made us free, and we should be careful to stand fast in this liberty – **Gal.5: 1**
3. James refers to the "perfect law of liberty" – **Jam.1: 25**

###### **B. The Nature of This Freedom...**

1. Does this mean we are totally free from any sort of obligation?
  - a. That we are free to "do whatever we like"?
  - b. That we have no responsibilities to anyone?
  - c. That we are free from having to be concerned about others? Of course not!

2. We should be careful to understand the context of freedom in Christ
  - a. Jesus promised freedom from sin – **Jn.8: 34-36**
  - b. Paul had reference to freedom from rudimentary elements of the Old Law – **Gal.4: 3-11**
  - c. The "perfect law of liberty" is a blessing only to "doers of the word" – **Jam.1: 21-25**
3. The truth of the matter is that we have been set "free" in order that we might "serve"!
  - a. Set free from slavery of sin, that we might be servants of righteousness – **Rom.6: 12-18**
  - b. We are now free to "serve one another" through love – **Gal.5: 13**

As Paul reveals in **Gal.5: 13-15**, there is a very real danger of abusing our liberty to provide an opportunity for the flesh. Christ died to give us freedom "from" sin, NOT freedom "to" sin!

Having been set free from sin, we need to be careful how we use this freedom, especially in our fellowship with one another...

## **II. HOW THIS FREEDOM RELATES TO FELLOWSHIP:**

### **A. The Church at Corinth: A Case in Point...**

1. The situation:
  - a. Brethren were claiming to have true knowledge about eating meat sacrificed to idols - **1Cor.8: 1-6**
  - b. By their example and influence, they were encouraging others to violate their conscience - **1Cor.8: 7**
  - c. Those who so violated their weak conscience were sinning – **Rom.14: 23**
2. But even if there was liberty in Christ to eat such things, Paul counseled against it
  - a. Because it was a stumbling block to those weak in faith - **1Cor.8: 9-10**
  - b. Because this abuse of knowledge and liberty was causing brethren to sin, which in itself is a sin against Christ! - **1Cor.8: 11-12**
3. Paul provides himself as an example of the proper use of freedom
  - a. He is willing to go to extremes in service to his weak brother - **1Cor.8: 13**
  - b. Though an apostle, enjoying freedom in Christ - **1Cor.9: 1**
  - c. He is willing to place limitations on his freedom to save others - **1Cor.9: 19-23**
4. He concludes his treatment on this subject with a command for us to follow his example - **1Cor.10: 31-11: 1**

### **B. Paul Gave Similar Counsel To The Church in Rome...**

1. The strong in faith are to be considerate of those weak in faith – **Rom.14: 1, 13**
2. Even, if it means giving up things that are right within themselves – **Rom.14: 14-23**
3. Bearing with the conscience of the weak, seeking their edification, follows the example of Christ Himself – **Rom.15: 1-3**



### **C. Imagine The Fellowship Where These Principles Are Followed...**

1. Rather than just trying to please ourselves, there would be serious efforts to build up one another
  - a. We would not just think of the value of assembling for our own personal benefits
  - b. But we would also be concerned about the impact of my absence on others!
2. Brethren would be patient with those weak in faith, willing even to forego liberties in Christ in order to serve
  - a. We would not be desirous to force issues or ideas on those whose consciences could not allow them to participate
  - b. Instead, we would seek other ways where we could accomplish the same goals
3. An atmosphere of love, service, and unity would exist, in which fellowship could truly thrive to the glory of God!

### **CONCLUSION:**

1. The fellowship we enjoy in Christ is a "**precious**" thing, made possible by the work of Christ on the cross – **Eph.2: 13-22**
2. Yet, that fellowship is also a "**fragile**" thing, easily disrupted through our misuse of the freedom we have in Christ!
3. The solution is to have the "mind of Christ" in our dealings with one another – **Phil.2: 1-8**
  - a. Fellowship in one accord is possible, but only when we heed the admonitions given by Paul to the Philippians
    - i) To do nothing through selfish ambition or conceit
    - ii) To esteem others better than one's self
    - iii) To look out for the interests of others and not just our own
  - b. Only by following Christ's own example of humble service can we ensure that fellowship in one accord will continue!

Will we follow the example of Christ in how we use our freedom in our fellowship?

Remember:

**"For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." – Gal.5: 13**

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2018 Bible Study Outline



### THE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP: OUR LIFE TOGETHER

#### STUDY 9: ENRICHING OUR LIFE TOGETHER

##### INTRODUCTION:

1. So far, we have dealt with some of the "**doctrinal**" foundation of "**Our Life Together**"...
  - a. Noticing the "**intimacy**" and "**interdependency**" of our fellowship in the local church
  - b. Examining various "**acts of worship**" and their role in nurturing fellowship
  - c. Reviewing the concepts of "**acceptance**" & "**freedom**" in Christ as they relate to fellowship
2. In this lesson we shall begin to address the "**application**" side of our study...
  - a. What can we "**do**" to enrich our fellowship or our life together?
  - b. What should we "avoid" that have the potential of disrupting fellowship?
3. There are many places we could turn to in the New Testament for a study on "**Enriching Our Life Together**"...
  - a. Indeed, much of the New Testament addresses the subject of fellowship in one form or another
  - b. But in this study, we will focus mainly on what we find in "**The Epistle of James**"
4. Addressed to "the 12 tribes scattered abroad" (**Jam.1: 1**), it is especially full of advice for...
  - a. Those Christians who find themselves living in a highly mobile society like our own
  - b. Those Christians whose need for "fellowship" is often a truly "felt need" (because other normal channels of association like family, friends, etc., may be lacking)

Let's begin by observing things we must "not" do or have, if we desire to succeed in "**Enriching Our Life Together**"...

##### I. THINGS TO AVOID:

###### **A. All Filthiness and Overflow of Wickedness – Jam.1: 21**

1. This includes any kind of immoral behaviour or speech – **Eph.5: 3-5**
2. The wise man wrote of the devastating effects of immorality – **Prov.6: 27-35**
  - Nothing will destroy the precious fellowship we have in Christ like "sin in the camp"

###### **B. Partiality – Jam.2: 1-9**

1. This was discussed in our study entitled "**An Accepting Fellowship**"

2. Showing respect of persons, either through "partiality", or its more deadly cousin "bigotry", makes us sinners before God – **Jam.2: 9**  
- Fellowship in Christ is designed to bring us together, not divide us

### **C. Misuse of The Tongue – Jam.3: 1-12**

1. The tongue possesses great power to destroy, if we are not careful – **Jam.3: 5-7**
2. When we misuse the tongue to slander or curse men, it reveals the shallowness of our praise of God - **Jam.3: 9-12**. The old Navy used to say, "**Loose lips sink ships**"; the same is true of our peace and fellowship in a congregation!

### **D. Selfishness – Jam.4: 1**

1. James reveals that the root cause of much strife is nothing more than selfishness
2. As he wrote earlier, "**For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing will be there.**" – **Jam.3: 16**  
- If we desire peace and harmony in our fellowship, we must grow beyond the egocentricism of our youth and carnality!

### **E. Speaking Evil of One Another – Jam.4: 11-12**

1. Here we learn that speaking evil of another actually "**speaks evil of the law and judges the law**"; do we wish to be guilty of that?
2. We also set ourselves up as judges, when there is really only one Judge and Lawgiver
3. This does not preclude the necessity to "judge with righteous judgment" (**Jn.7: 24**), or that we cannot "judge those who are inside" the family of God (**1Cor.5: 9-13**).  
- But too often we can be guilty of "judging" others according to our own personal standards; speaking "evil" of others is usually an indication of that, and quickly destroys fellowship

These five things can prevent a congregation from enjoying "**True Fellowship or Our Life Together**" that Christ intends for His church. Let's be diligent never to allow them to infect the relationship we have as the family of God!

At the same time, let us take a "pro-active" approach in building fellowship; what does James counsel us to do...?

## **II. THINGS TO DO:**

### **A. View Challenges As Opportunities – Jam.1: 2-4**

1. Having a positive perspective about difficulties is good for us all in a congregation
2. Any growing church will likely experience problems with maintaining peace and harmony
3. But just as marriages are made stronger when spouses are willing to work through their difficulties, so a congregation can be made stronger by its difficulties!

### **B. Pray For Wisdom – Jam.1: 5-8**

1. To be able to maintain a thriving fellowship in a congregation requires wisdom
2. Just as we should seek wisdom from God as individuals, so also as a congregation!

**C. Maintain Proper Perspectives About Our Situations – Jam.1: 9-11**

1. Fellowship is often disrupted by envy or pride
2. But God gives us reasons to be thankful for whatever situation we may find ourselves
3. If we all are willing to see ourselves as God sees us there will be no room for pride or envy

**D. Be Swift To Hear, Slow To Speak, Slow To Wrath – Jam.1: 19-20**

1. Poor communication and short tempers will quickly destroy any relationship
2. But if all apply this "triad" of graces, problems can be gracefully handled and overcome

**E. Practice Pure And undefiled Religion – Jam.1: 22-27**

1. This involves each of us...
  - a. Being doers of the Word, and not just hearers
  - b. Letting our actions speak louder than our words
  - c. Attending to the needs of the less privileged
  - d. Keeping ourselves untainted by the world
2. Wouldn't it be wonderful to have fellowship in a congregation where all are true "practitioners" of this kind of religion?

**F. Demonstrate Wisdom By Your Conduct – Jam.3: 13, 17-18**

1. Again, we are letting our actions speak louder than our words
2. Note especially **verse 17**, wouldn't it be wonderful to be in a congregation filled with people demonstrating the wisdom that is: **"...first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."**?

**G. Pray For One Another – Jam.5: 13-16**

1. When we are praying for others, it is hard to be angry at them
2. When we know others are praying for us, it is hard not to love them
3. When we are praying for each other, not only is our fellowship with God strengthened, but our fellowship with one another is strengthened also!

**H. Restore The Erring – Jam.5: 19-20**

1. When people stray from the faith, we lose the benefit of their fellowship with us
2. Restoring them back to God both saves them and blesses us with their renewed fellowship!

**CONCLUSION:**

1. This quick survey of The Epistle of James illustrates many of the good things we can do to be **"Enriching Our Life Together"**
2. Indeed, the entire New Testament is filled with admonitions...
  - a. Not only to enhance our relationship with God
  - b. But also to enhance our fellowship with one another!  
- Let the Word of God be our guide in creating and maintaining **"Our Life Together"**!

How about "your" relationship with God and His children (i.e., the church)? Is it what it ought to be? Can we help you draw nearer to God and His family...? – **Gal.3: 26-27; Jam.5: 16**

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2018 Bible Study Outline



### THE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP: OUR LIFE TOGETHER

#### STUDY 10: USING THE HOME TO BUILD FELLOWSHIP

##### INTRODUCTION:

1. Our previous study began to focus on the "application" side of "**Our Life Together**"...
  - a. By observing how the Scriptures are filled with exhortations
  - b. Which taken to heart will nurture fellowship in the local church
2. We noticed one such example in the Epistle of James, where we found admonitions...
  - a. On things to "**avoid**"
    - i) All filthiness and overflow of wickedness ii) Partiality iii) Misuse of the tongue
    - iv) Selfishness and v) Speaking evil of one another
  - b. On things to "**do**"
    - i) View challenges as opportunities ii) Pray for wisdom
    - iii) Maintain proper perspectives about our situations
    - iv) Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath
    - v) Practice pure and undefiled religion vi) Demonstrate wisdom by your conduct
    - vii) Pray for one another viii) Restore the erring or backsliding
3. The Scriptures teach not only by "precept", but also by "example"...
  - a. The early church for example provides insight into ways fellowship can be strengthened
  - b. One such example is **their use of the "home"**
  - c. A study of the New Testament church shows that their success in both evangelism and in building fellowship was partly due to their use of the home. Let's examine this truth...

##### I. THE USE OF THE HOME BY THE EARLY CHURCH:

###### **A. Homes Were Used With Much Frequency...**

1. The church in Jerusalem, especially in times of persecution - **Acts 5: 41-42; 12: 5,12**
2. Aquila and Priscilla often hosted the church in their home – **Rom.16: 3-5; 1Cor.16: 19**
3. Another example is Philemon – **Philem.1-2**
4. Paul utilized homes in his ministry, both at Ephesus and in Rome - **Acts 20:17-21; 28:30-31**

###### **B. But With Time, The Use of The Home Began To Decline...**

1. We know that "church buildings" began to be built as early as the second century

2. When Constantine, the emperor of Rome, was "converted" in 312A.D....
  - a. He designated Christianity the "official religion" of the empire
  - b. He gave many of the pagan temples to the Christians to use as meeting places
3. Before long, people began to view the building as "the church"
  - a. Homes were not used again as much as before
  - b. Most "religious activity" then began to be centered around the building
  - c. Such is the case now, where most "religious activity" takes place at the church building

This subtle shift of activity away from the "home" to the "church building" might have strongly contributed to a decline of fellowship among many Christians. Let us elaborate on why...

## **II. WHY USING THE HOME IS IMPORTANT TO FELLOWSHIP:**

### **A. Because of The Limitation Inherent To Public Worship...**

1. Public worship is certainly necessary and important
  2. We have already seen that the "acts of worship" are designed to nurture fellowship
  3. But there are limits to the degree of fellowship we can have during our public assemblies
    - a. **Limits on "time"**
      - i) A couple of hours a week do not provide much opportunity to develop meaningful relationships between brethren
      - ii) Especially since the time we actually spend talking to one another is a few minutes before and after the services
    - b. **Limits on "intimacy"**
      - i) Sheer numbers prevent us from spending much time with everyone
      - ii) We mostly spend a few minutes with a select few and have no time for all
- If our "fellowship" is limited to what takes place at the church building, the fellowship we have at best will be shallow!

### **B. Using Homes Extend Opportunity For Fellowship...**

1. We have more "time" to visit, to talk, to study, to pray
2. The informal and personal atmosphere of the home allows for more "intimacy", i. e...
  - a. We become better acquainted
  - b. We proceed beyond mere formalities, to better know and understand one another
3. Opportunities to ask questions, provide answers, study together, are enhanced when we are willing to open our homes to one another

It should be easy to see that opportunities for meaningful fellowship can be increased through the use of the home. To encourage this idea further, here are some suggestions...

## **III. SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THE HOME TO BUILD FELLOWSHIP:**

### **A. Practice "Hospitality"...**

1. We are commanded to practice hospitality among brethren - **1Pet.4: 9**
2. Certainly not all have the same ability to provide hospitality
  - a. Some may be able to have the entire congregation in their home at one time
  - b. Others may be able to have only a family or two at home

- c. Yet others may at best provide hospitality by taking people out to dinner
  - But to whatever degree we can, let us be fruitful in this area – **1Pet.4: 10**
- 3. Even if we engage in hospitality only on a social level, it can help to increase levels of communication in which spiritual fellowship can occur later
- 4. But consider using your home as place for...
  - a. Home Bible studies with new converts
  - b. On-going studies with other Christians
  - c. Periodic devotions, such as singings, prayer meetings, etc.
    - Remember the example of Aquila and Priscilla, who offered the use of their home for the work of the church, wherever they lived – **Rom.16: 3-5; 1Cor.16: 19**

#### **B. Engage In "Visitation"...**

- 1. For "hospitality" to work, it must be a two-way street
  - a. We must be willing to accept invitations by others, and visit them also
  - b. Sometimes hospitality is not practiced, because people won't accept invitations!
- 2. We should also make efforts to visit those who may have special needs...
  - a. The sick (both at home and in the hospital)
  - b. Those new in the faith as new converts or new members of the congregation
  - c. Those spiritually weak
    - Making ourselves available to be of service to those with such needs is defined as "pure and undefiled religion" – **Jam.1: 27**

#### **CONCLUSION:**

- 1. More could be said, but I hope it is evident that expedient use of the home can greatly facilitate the sort of fellowship Christ intends for His church...
  - a. A fellowship that is a rich one, primarily spiritual in nature
  - b. But one facilitated through practical means like "**hospitality**" and "**visitation**"
- 2. Can we not see that "**Our Life Together**" needs to extend...
  - a. Beyond the walls of the church building?
  - b. Beyond the few hours we assemble together for public worship?
- 3. A final point to stimulate your thinking on these things...
  - a. "**We must be a friendly congregation, and much more be a hospitable congregation?**"
  - b. The distinction should be evident, which is:
    - i) "**Friendly**" describes what takes place inside the church building
    - ii) "**Hospitable**" describes what goes on in our homes!

The Lord has blessed us all in varying degrees in our homes... let us be wise stewards and use them to the glory of God and the enrichment of "**Our Life Together**"!

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2018 Bible Study Outline



### THE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP: OUR LIFE TOGETHER

#### STUDY 11: LIMITATIONS ON OUR FELLOWSHIP

##### INTRODUCTION:

1. Throughout this study on "**Our Life Together**", the focus has been on enhancing the fellowship that Christians have in Christ, made possible by His precious death on the cross  
- **Eph.2: 14-22**
  - a. Jesus died that He might reconcile us back to God "**in one body**" – **Eph.2: 16**
  - b. We are now "**fellow-citizens with the saints and members of the Household of God**"  
- **Eph.2: 19**
  - c. We have been "**joined together**" as a holy temple in the Lord – **Eph.2: 21**
2. Hope we have been challenged in some way to think about our fellowship, and the importance of doing what we can to nurture it...
  - a. That we strive to develop the family-like intimacy Jesus intended for God's household
  - b. That we appreciate the true interdependence we have as members in the body of Christ
  - c. That we understand how our public assemblies with their various acts of worship help to develop fellowship
  - d. That we receive one another as Christ received us
  - e. That we use our liberty in Christ to serve one another in love
  - f. That we allow the Scriptures with its exhortations and examples to guide us in building fellowship
3. Yet, while fellowship among brethren is wonderful, **sometimes we are called upon to withhold our fellowship** from a brother or sister in Christ...
  - a. We may have to view a fellow disciple as "**a heathen and a tax collector**" – **Matt.18: 17**
  - b. We may have to "**avoid them**" – **Rom.16: 17**
  - c. We might have to "**put away from yourselves that wicked person**" - **1Cor.5: 13**
  - d. We might have to "**withdraw**" ourselves and "**not keep company**" with a fellow disciple  
- **2Thess.3: 6, 14**
  - e. We might not be able to "**receive him into your house nor greet him**" - **2Jn.10**
4. Indeed, there are "**Limitations on Our Fellowship**" we must respect if we are to be true to



the teachings of Jesus and His apostles!

These "limitations" are related to the subject of "**Church Discipline**", and in this final study on "**Our Life Together**" we will briefly touch upon what the Scriptures teach in this regard...

## **I. THE COMMAND TO WITHHOLD FELLOWSHIP:**

### **A. As Commanded By Jesus Himself...**

1. In the case of a brother who has sinned and refuses to repent – **Matt.18: 15-17**
2. Jesus' own words: "**...let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.**"
  - a. Spoken in the context of social relations at the time
  - b. Jews had no social dealings with Gentiles, nor with their Jewish brethren who worked for the Roman government as tax collectors
3. The point is to withdraw social association from a brother who refuses to repent

### **B. As Commanded By His Apostles...**

1. Paul's charge to the church at Rome – **Rom.16: 17-18**
  - a. Involving those who "cause divisions and offenses"
  - b. The brethren were to "note" and "avoid them"
2. Paul's charge to the church at Corinth - **1Cor.5: 1-13**
  - a. Involving a man who had his father's wife
  - b. The church was instructed:
    - i) To "**deliver such a one to Satan...**" - **1Cor.5: 5**
    - ii) To "**purge out the old leaven**" - **1Cor.5: 7**
    - iii) To "**not keep company**" with him- **1Cor.5: 11**
    - iv) To "**not even to eat with such a person**" - **1Cor.5: 11**
    - v) To "**put away from yourselves that wicked person.**" - **1Cor.5: 13**
3. Paul's charge to the church at Thessalonica - **2Thess.3: 6-15**
  - a. Involving those who would not work and support themselves
  - b. The church was instructed:
    - i) To "**withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us**" - **2Thess.3: 6**
    - ii) To "**note that person and do not keep company with him**" - **2Thess.3: 14**
4. John's charge to the elect lady and her children - **2Jn.9-11**
  - a. Involving anyone who would seek their support, and yet not abide in the doctrine of Christ
  - b. They were instructed to "**not receive him into your house nor greet him**"

It is clearly evident that "**withholding fellowship**" is necessary under certain conditions. What is the purpose of placing such a limitation on our fellowship?

## **II. THE PURPOSE FOR WITHHOLDING FELLOWSHIP:**

### **A. To Save The Soul In Error...**

1. One who refuses to repent of sin is in a lost state - **Heb.10: 26-31**
2. By making him (or her) "ashamed" of their sin, perhaps they may repent - **2Thess.3: 14**
3. Consider Paul's words in **1Cor.5: 5...**
  - a. The church is to "**deliver such a one to Satan**"
    - i) That is, to remove all godly influence from that person
    - ii) This is done by withdrawing fellowship
  - b. The purpose is "**for the destruction of the flesh**"
    - i) It is "fleshly desires" (of which pride is a great part) that encourage one to persist in sin
    - ii) But "shame" can go a long way to destroying these works of the flesh
    - iii) Therefore the command to publicly note and withdraw from such a person  
- **1Cor.5: 4, 13**
  - c. The ultimate goal: "**that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus**"
    - i) Our concern is not his (or even our own) temporary happiness
    - ii) But the salvation of his soul on the Day of Judgment!
    - iii) Therefore the need for "tough love" by withholding fellowship

### **B. To Save The Souls of The Other Members in The Church...**

1. This is Paul's point about the need to purge out the "leaven" - **1Cor.5: 6-8**
2. Just as leaven infects the whole loaf, so can do "sin in the camp"!
3. Sin left unchecked will destroy the other members in the congregation
  - a. Either by tempting them to sin in similar fashion
  - b. Or by their failure to exercise the proper discipline
    - i) For they would then be guilty before the Lord on that basis!
    - ii) That was the case of the church in Pergamos – **Rev.2: 14-16**
4. Even if the erring brother does not repent, the church that exercises proper discipline will still be saved!

### **C. To Magnify The Lord And His Church in The Eyes of The World...**

1. This was an effect of the first case of "church discipline" recorded in the New Testament
  - a. The example of Ananias and Sapphira illustrates how seriously the Lord Himself views "sin in the camp" - **Acts 5: 1-10**
  - b. The result was one of "**fear**", yet great "**esteem**", which lead to many conversions  
- **Acts 5: 11-14**
2. The world is not going to take the gospel call to holiness seriously if the church does not deal properly with "sin in the camp"
3. But when a church deals with unrepentant sin in the manner of withholding fellowship, the reputation of the church is held in high esteem
4. When people decide to get serious about sin, where do you think they will go?
  - a. To a church that winks at sin?
  - b. Or one that provides every proper motivation to turn from sin?

## **CONCLUSION:**

1. There is much more that should be said on the subject of "withholding fellowship" as it relates to church discipline
  - a. Indeed, an entire series can be presented on this subject
  - b. Which we may plan to look into at another time, the Lord willing
  
2. But suffice it to make two points about "**Our Life Together**" for now...
  - a. Our fellowship together in Christ has limitations
    - i) While it is true that we are to have "**a receiving fellowship**"
    - ii) ...there may also come a time when we must have "**a rejecting fellowship**"!
  - b. Our fellowship together in Christ needs to be very special
    - i) Not only so that we might enjoy all the blessings Christ intended in the family of God
    - ii) But should it ever be necessary to withhold fellowship as a last effort to save a brother's soul, what is withheld will really be missed!
      - Church discipline often fails because the fellowship never was what it should have been in the first place!
  
3. So Christian fellowship serves a two-fold purpose...
  - a. To "**enhance**" the relationship we have in the family of God
  - b. To "**preserve**" the relationship we have in the family of God

That we might enjoy the fullest blessings of Christian fellowship, let us all do what we can to strengthen "**Our Life Together**"!