

# THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Being part of Jesus's church involves relationships. Foremost is the relationship those in Jesus's church have with God and Jesus (Romans 8:14-17; Matthew 12:46-50; Hebrews 2:11-12). Then, those who are in this relationship with God and Christ are brothers and sisters with one another (Acts 15:36, 40; James 1:2). Therefore, it is critical to appreciate and practice the fellowship designed for those in Jesus's church.

## 1 JOHN 1:1-7

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The Greek word for "fellowship" is "koinonia." It refers to a partnership, joint participation, and sharing in something (like two people in a business or joint venture together). Because God is light with no darkness in Him (no evil or sin), there can be no sharing in the spiritual blessings God provides while living in darkness (sin, Isaiah 59:1-2). However, through Jesus's blood, those who are committed to living in the light enjoy fellowship with God to share in all the spiritual blessings He provides (e.g. adoption as children, grace, redemption, forgiveness, eternal inheritance, Ephesians 1:3-12). Then, those who walk in the light (having their sins cleansed through Jesus) have fellowship with all others who also walk in the light. Therefore, the only criteria that should be used to judge who you have Christian fellowship with is whether another person is also living in fellowship with God (Acts 9:26-28; 2 John 1:9-11; 3 John 1:9-11).

## 1 CORINTHIANS 10:14-22

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Christians must flee from idolatry, including participating in a meal that would connect them with an idol. After all, Christians share in the body and blood of Jesus (i.e. by sharing in the Lord's Supper). Therefore, those who are in Jesus's church share in the blessings in Jesus and must

abstain from anything that does not fit with this fellowship (e.g. idolatry, immorality, false teaching, etc.). For, fellowship with God/Jesus is inclusive of everyone who believes and obeys the gospel to live in the light of God's holiness (Galatians 3:27-28) and exclusive of everyone who does not (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1).

## ROMANS 12:4-5, 10-16

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The fellowship Christians have is such that they are members of one another (intimately connected). This close relationship and mutual responsibilities are evident when you the book of Acts (including the time they spent together and how they took care of one another, Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37). God expects those who are in this fellowship to continue demonstrating great care for one another physically and spiritually. For, He has given those in this fellowship of the saved responsibilities to help one another on their way to Heaven. There are many "one another" responsibilities recorded in the New Testament (vv. 10-16; Galatians 6:1-2; Hebrews 3:12-13; 1 Peter 3:8-12; James 5:19-20; etc.). Each Christian has these responsibilities toward every other Christian, though these will be particularly relevant in the local church.

## EPHESIANS 4:1-6

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The fellowship of Christians is expected to be united. He has given everyone the perfect way of unity through His word and expects those who follow Him to make every effort to maintain this unity (John 17:20-23; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 12:25; Philippians 1:27). Accomplishing this task will require walking worthy of the gospel's call, humility, gentleness, patience, and lovingly bearing with one another. Though there will be challenges to maintaining this unity, it is a task that is required of God's fellowship and one worth pursuing with great diligence. Sadly, there are far too many times that Christians divide over matters of opinion and indifference (contrary to Romans 14), though there are occasions when division is necessary to preserve the teachings and practices of faith God has revealed (1 Corinthians 11:17-22).

## EPHESIANS 5:6-14

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The fellowship in Christ (in the light) consists of everything that is good, right, and true. So, those who want to be in this fellowship must walk (live) in the light. Anyone who would go outside of the light and live in what is evil, wrong, and false is outside of this fellowship. Therefore, Christians who experience this fellowship must not let anyone deceive them. Part of guarding against such deception is to not have any fellowship with the fruitless works of darkness (the evil, wrong, and false). Such people do not have God (2 John 1:9-11; Romans 16:17-18). These are to be exposed as being contrary to the will of God rather than welcomed into the fellowship of God's people!

## 2 THESSALONIANS 3:6, 14-15

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The fellowship of Christians, as we have seen, is a close and intimate one in which Christians ought to be involved in one another's lives every day. However, when a brother or sister in Christ turns away from following Christ (according to the traditions/instructions given through the Scriptures, 2 Thessalonians 2:15) and refuses to repent, such a one must be no longer recognized as part of the fellowship and withdrawn from (1 Corinthians 5:1-13; Matthew 18:15-17). This protects Christians from the evil influence and tries to cause the sinner to be ashamed and repent. When this happens, the relationship the one in sin has with God's family (e.g. physical interaction) will be different so no approval is shown for the sinner's condition.

## CONCLUSION

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There is a rich fellowship Jesus's church experiences. This fellowship begins with the sharing each Christian has with God and Christ Jesus. Then, it extends to the relationships shared with others in fellowship with Jesus. However, those who are not in fellowship with God are excluded from this fellowship (whether because of immorality, false teaching, or anything contrary to the light of God's truth).

## DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

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What does it mean to be in "fellowship" with God and others?

How can you determine who you have fellowship with in Christ?

Who is included in Christian fellowship and who is excluded from Christian fellowship?

What does it mean for those in this fellowship to be "members of one another?"

What responsibilities are included in Christian fellowship?

How does God expect and provide for unity in Christian fellowship?

What fellowship can be had with anything evil, wrong, and/or false?

What actions are required whenever a Christian no longer faithfully follows Christ and refuses to repent?