

Fellowship

"Now it came to pass,
as He sat at the table with them,
that He took bread,
blessed and broke it,
and gave it to them.

Then their eyes were opened
and they knew Him."

(LUKE 24:30, 31)



DEFINITION: Christian fellowship is to be in positive unity with God and other believers; to participate with Christ and with other believers in advancing the kingdom of God via ministry. (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 1:9; 1 Cor. 12:25; 2 Cor. 6:14; 1 Cor. 12:12; 1 Cor. 12:18; Eph. 2:10).

Fellowship Session One: Developing Consistent Fellowship with God.

OBJECTIVE: To outline the behaviors of biblical fellowship. Read Deuteronomy 26:16-19.

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS:

- Have you completed every step of the Membership stage?
- Are you willing to advance through the Fellowship stage?

INTRODUCTION:

Sharing a meal with someone is one of the most intimate acts humans can perform with one another. It involves hospitality, vulnerability, trust, and purpose. Take away any one of those and you disturb the unity and so do not have true fellowship. You might ask, "How is God vulnerable?" God can be injured by our disobedience and stubborn rebellion. We actually hurt ourselves with such behavior but it grieves the Holy Spirit as well. Ephesians 4:30 says "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (ESV). God has made Himself vulnerable by sending His Son to suffer a terrible death for us—a gift that humans can, and often do, disregard and outright reject. It hurts God to see those who are made in His image suffer.

In Luke 24:30-31, we see Jesus serving as the Host, blessing and breaking bread with His disciples, and at that moment He reveals more about Himself (their eyes were opened and they knew Him). It is the great desire of God that we be in loving fellowship with Him and with each other as indicated in the first and great commandment, and

the second which is like it: Love God with everything you are and everything you have, and love your neighbor as yourself.

More than simply hanging out with each other, God wants us to desire and pursue the best for each other, and accomplish the mission we have been assigned. God's desire for this is so strong that it is echoed throughout the Old and New Testaments with statements like Zechariah 7:8-10—And the word of the Lord came to Zechariah, saying, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart" (ESV). 1 John 4:7-9 says—"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us" ESV. Unity with God means that we want what God wants and we do what God does.

Fellowship with God.

God's original plan for humans was that we always be in right relationship with Him and with each other. The Bible records how God created us in his own image, performed the first wedding, and commanded both man and woman to be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the earth. That is to say, God made us like Him and each other, placed us in right relationships, gave us purpose and meaning. God designed us for fellowship.

Satan devised a clever plan to draw humanity out of fellowship with God and into fellowship with himself. He tricked Adam and Eve into committing their first sin against God. Satan deceived them and their fellowship with God was broken. The Bible records how Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge of Good and Evil, which the Lord commanded them not to do. Adam's and Eve's first sin caused all of humankind to be separated from God. This is called "The fall of humankind". (Read Genesis 3:1-13). Because of their sin they went from a place of joy and fellowship with God, to a place of being fearful and hiding from God. Note that God did not give us a spirit of fear.

This is what we do when we sin and get out of fellowship with God. We are deceived by Satan and drawn away by our own lust. James 1:14 says, "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." We will often hide ourselves from God instead of returning to God in repentance, but 1 John 1:9 says this: "If we confess our sins, he [God] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (ESV).

God desires that we be in constant fellowship with Him, but it is up to each of us to give God the time and attention He deserves. Thankfully through Jesus Christ, we can have fellowship with God. God's original intent was that we never be separated from Him. Fellowship with God requires that we develop a relationship with Him and obey Him. Having fellowship with God requires that we have a heart to obey Him and a desire to be in a relationship with Him. Each day, we should enjoy the privilege of having the opportunity to live in a relationship with God. A relationship with God requires daily maintenance.

Spending Time with God Is Not Limited to Sundays.

The Bible says in Psalm 27: 4, "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple." The Psalmist that penned this scripture shows his desire to be in fellowship with God. Spending time in fellowship with

God is not limited to Sunday morning worship services. Actually, the foundation of the Sunday morning worship service is the corporate reflection of everything we have been doing all week with God.

Because of Jesus Christ's sacrifice, because of His dying on the cross, we can experience the presence of God not only in the House of the Lord (church as we know it), but also in our homes, in our cars, on our jobs, and everywhere. Remaining in the presence of God is dependent upon our personal obedience and desire towards God (fellowship). God desires that we have a sincere walk with Him and that we stay in His presence. For in His presence is everything we need. All of the answers to our questions, the peace we need, the healing we need—it's all in the presence of God. The Bible says in Psalm 16:11, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." That is where we want to be. It is to our great benefit to know what God wants, to do what God wants, and to be in God's presence.

People Whose Fellowship Was Approved by God.

Enoch— The Bible says in Genesis 5:22, "And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters." Enoch pleased God. Hebrews 11:5, says, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." This implies that Enoch maintained all of his earthly relationships in proper balance; that his fellowship with God and with his family and friends was right.

Are you pleasing God? Enoch walked with God and is one of only two people recorded in the Bible that was taken up into God's presence without experiencing death.

The Bereans—"Now these were more noble than the Jews of Thessalonica, for they gave serious attention to the word, searching in the holy Writings every day, to see if these things were so." (Acts 17:11 Bible in Basic English). Here was a group of believers, who fellowshiped around the Word of God, in whom God calls "more noble" through Dr. Luke's narration of the Book of Acts.

One of the Seven Churches in Revelation—"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." (Revelation 3:7-9 KJV)

Prayer and Reading the Bible Helps to Develop Your Relationship with God and others.

The psalmist wrote in Psalm 119:11, "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee." This implies that your life will change to line up with the will, the way, and the Word of God. It is important that we recognize that God is holy and righteous, and merciful, and kind, and loving, and He changes not (see Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 6:17-18; 13:8, James 1:17). It is a divine characteristic. The fact that God doesn't change is known as the immutability of God. This is one reason why God is good all the time. In order for us to have fellowship with God, we must change.

God is working with us, helping to renew our minds, continuing to develop the new creation, but He wants us to totally give ourselves to Him. The consistent reading and hearing of the Word of God will show us what we need to change, and the prayer of faith will empower us to yield to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. The prayer of faith can be as simple as praying from the heart, "God help me to agree with Your will, Your Word, Your way, and Your

Spirit.” We will find ourselves moving from glory to glory, more and more into the image of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 3:18). As your relationship and fellowship with God grows you will develop a heightened sensitivity to His guidance. He will begin to reveal to you your life’s purpose. God will begin to give you revelation and understanding of how to live day by day to fulfill what He originally designed for you.

Developing and maintaining a consistent fellowship with God will require that you deny your selfish-self and obey the one true God. Like an athlete or a soldier in training, it will require that you deny your fleshly desires. You will have to live out holiness and righteousness, which is not at all easy. This means that we have to pronounce death to sin in our lives. We will not fulfill the lust of the flesh (pride, lust, jealousy, envy). As we fight to maintain fellowship with God, we will feel the hard pull of the world, the strong desire of the flesh, and the alluring temptations of the devil to forget about God and satisfy the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life. Maintaining our fellowship has to be the most important thing in our lives. You have to genuinely “love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength.”

There can be nothing that will separate us from the fellowship of God through Jesus Christ. We have to be crucified with Christ. What does that mean?

Galatians 2:20 says, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” Meaning, you no longer exist as you once did but the Christ within you lives. This means that old things you used to do before you knew Jesus Christ as your personal savior you no longer do. It is because you have put to death those old sins that bound you. Now you live by faith in Jesus Christ who gave His life just for you.

Galatians 5:24 says, “And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” This means as Christians we are self-disciplined in such a way that we no longer do whatever we want to make ourselves feel better. We can do this because Jesus has delivered us from the penalty of sin, and we are being delivered from the power of sin (sanctified and empowered), and the goal is to be delivered from the presence of sin.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Developing a relationship with God through Jesus Christ requires spending time praying. It is a daily maintenance of your relationship with the Lord, and relationships grow by spending time together. Developing a healthy and strong relationship with the Lord requires spending time with Him.
- Read I Corinthians 1:9.
- What does your time spent with God entail? Write down what you do when you spend time with God.
- The time you spend praying may start off being 10 minutes, but as your relationship grows so will the time you spend with Him. This fellowship and unity with God will develop inwardly but be expressed outwardly. This is true fellowship. Describe your prayer time with the Lord.
- Read the Word of God. Reading the Bible and praying evidences a daily maintenance of your relationship with the Lord. You begin developing a relationship with God through Jesus Christ by spending time praying and reading the Bible.
- Sign the Class Attendance Sheet for each session or class.

Fellowship Session One Quiz

This quiz evaluates students' understanding of the "Developing Consistent Fellowship with God". Students are given 15 minutes to complete this quiz.

Please answer the questions and complete the sentences below based on your reading for this session:

1. What is Christian fellowship? ____
 - a. Eating and drinking together
 - b. Attending an event with someone
 - c. Hanging out with others
 - d. Positive unity with God and other believers
 - e. None of the above
2. God designed us for fellowship. ____
 - a. True
 - b. False
3. How strong is God's desire for Christian fellowship? ____
 - a. God doesn't care one way or the other
 - b. God wants us to be in fellowship with Him
 - c. So strong it is repeated throughout the Bible
 - d. God wants us to be in fellowship with each other
 - e. None of the above
4. Adam's and Eve's first sin is called ____.
 - a. The Great Sin
 - b. The forbidden fruit
 - c. The fall of humanity
 - d. All of the above
 - e. None of the above
5. When we break fellowship with God because of sin we should ____.
 - a. Hide from God
 - b. Run from God
 - c. Be afraid of God
 - d. Confess our sins to God
 - e. All of the above
 - f. None of the above
6. Fellowship with God is limited to Sundays. ____
 - a. True
 - b. False
7. What fellowships below did God approve? _____ (Check all that apply)

- a. The disciples
 - b. The Bereans
 - c. Bethany A. M. E. Church
 - d. The Church in Philadelphia
 - e. Enoch
8. ___ in order to have fellowship with God.
- a. God must change
 - b. We must change
 - c. God and we must change
 - d. All of the above
 - e. None of the above
9. What is the immutability of God? ___
- a. A divine characteristic of God
 - b. A reference to the fact that God does not change
 - c. A reason that God is good all the time
 - d. All of the above
 - e. None of the above
10. What helps us develop and maintain our relationship with God and others? ___
- a. Meditation and isolation (separation from sinners)
 - b. Prayer and the Word of God
 - c. By doing good works
 - d. All of the above
 - e. None of the above
11. God will empower us, but we must ___ with God's will, His Word, His way and His Spirit.
- a. Play
 - b. Read
 - c. Agree
 - d. All of the above
 - e. None of the above
12. What things fight against our fellowship with God? ___
- a. The hard pull of the world
 - b. Pride
 - c. Lust
 - d. The strong desire of the flesh
 - e. Jealousy
 - f. The alluring temptations of the devil
 - g. All of the above
 - h. None of the above