

LESSON 1



CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Scripture Texts: 1 Timothy 1:1-2; 1 John 1:3-7; Acts 2:46-47; Ephesians 4:14-16; Romans 16:17-18

The relationship of saints one to another is spiritual but not figurative. It is real. It is the closest union humans have with one another. The world knows nothing of such a bond. Clubs and Babylonian churches may have a business and social relationship but no kinship, no spiritual fellowship, no joy in one another such as true saints have. Saints are related by the blood of Christ, born of the same Father, possessed of the same Spirit. They are branches connected and growing in the same Vine.

MEMORY VERSE: *God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*
— 1 Corinthians 1:9

Relation of Saints

First Timothy 1:1-2. **Paul . . . ; Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith.** We learn three things from Paul's greeting to Timothy in these verses. (1) Each occupied a true abiding place in the church. Paul was **an apostle of Jesus Christ . . . Timothy, my own son in the faith.** (2) Each entered his position by the spiritual act of God—Paul, **by the commandment of God,** Timothy, as a **son of faith.** (3) They were bound together in a close fellowship of love. These characteristics are present in the church.

First John 1:3-7. **And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.** Here John makes it clear that our fellowship is not through each other but through the Father and the Son. First Corinthians 1:9 teaches us that we "were called unto the fellowship of his Son" by an act of God. To know this brings us full joy because it lets us know that no one but ourselves can break that fellowship. The message is that **God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.** Light has all to do with fellowship because **God is light.** God is the hub of the wheel of fellowship. **If we say that we have fellowship with him [God] and walk in darkness, we lie . . .** True Christian fellowship only exists between those who **walk in the light.** Many who talk about having fellowship are merely talking about friendship. Walking in the light, **as he [Christ] is in the light we have fellowship one with another.** When each one is obedient, we have fellowship with one another through Christ. When one fails to walk in the light, his fellowship is broken with Christ, and, as a result, fellowship is broken with all the saints. We may continue a friendship, but our fellowship ceases to exist. There is no Christian fellowship without righteousness. Jesus said in John 15:5, "I am the vine, ye are the branches." Branches have no connection with one another only as they stay connected to the true Vine.

Singleness of Heart

Acts 2:46-47. **And they, continuing daily with one accord . . .** A fellowship of unheard-of intensity sprang up in this group beginning at Pentecost. People of widely different interests, of contrasting social positions, suddenly found themselves brought together in thrilling fellowship. Verse 42 says, "in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship": in their teachings. God's truth had been revealed to them as to us. Christian fellowship begins with an acceptance of God's truth as it is revealed to us, and fellowship is broken when we fail to accept any part of it. It must be continued (read Philippians 1:3-5). . . . **with gladness and singleness of heart.** Unity of the Spirit is the bond of perfectness that holds a fellowship together, as does charity (see 1 Peter 4:8-10; Colossians 3:14). The words of a beautiful old song of Zion come to my mind as I write:

"How sweet this bond of perfectness,
The wondrous love of Jesus;
A pure foretaste of heaven's bliss,
Oh, fellowship so precious!"

Christ the Head

Ephesians 4:14-16. **That we henceforth be no more children tossed . . .** Here in these Scriptures we find a true description of Christian fellowship. In verse 14 Paul advises each one to become established in the truth. **Grow up into him . . . which is the head, even Christ.** If each one will act as the Head directs, then **the whole body fitly joined together . . . maketh increase . . . unto the edifying of itself in love.** As long as one allows Christ to be Head, fellowship is clear and complete. When one feels he knows better how to act independently of Christ, fellowship is lost. The church is the family under Christ. The health of the family depends upon a healthy relationship with the Head of the church.

Some Things Destroy Fellowship

Romans 16:17-18. **Mark them which cause divisions . . . avoid them.** Some feel that we must fellowship anyone who makes a claim of being a Christian. If there is true fellowship, it will register in the Spirit. True fellowship, as well as broken fellowship, will show up in the fruit of one's life. We can recognize a saint when we meet one by observing whether or not his life is characterized by love for God, for his fellow man, and for truth.

These verses describe some that destroy fellowship. It tells the saints how to handle situations in which these ones will place them. **Mark them . . . avoid them.** They, **by good words and fair speeches deceive . . . the simple**—those weaker saints who are not fully grown in the truth.

Irregular church attendance destroys fellowship. The Bible commends public worship and commands it (see Hebrews 10:25). It is vain to think that we can get along spiritually without church attendance. Then, as now, there were people who believed that they could worship God at home, on the highway, or in a fishing boat as well as in church. We may not approve of certain things which go on in our congregations, but the way to change that is to go to work from the inside and not criticize from the outside.

JUST A THOUGHT

**What is in the well of your heart
will show up in the bucket of your speech.**