

The church is meant to be the center of our life. Fellowship with the church is meant to include our families. Fellowship with our family only excludes the church, but fellowship with the church includes our family.

5 Principles of Christian Fellowship

1. **Intentional Effort**: to preserve unity in general and particular unity based in doctrine. Paul commands us in Phil. 2:1-3, to think the same way, have the same love, and one purpose. Eph. 4:3, "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit." 1 Cor. 1:10, "that you speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you." 2 Cor. 13:11, "be of one mind, live in peace." Rom. 14:19, "pursue the things which make for peace." Rom. 15:5-6, "same mind, one mind, one voice." Acts 4:32, "were of one heart and one soul."

a. Why should we make the intentional effort?

1. Christ and the apostles agree on fellowship and unity. Love is active.
2. When fellowship is neglected, it dishonors the Lord and harms the church, Gal. 5:15.
3. Unity of fellowship is the pathway to heavenly comfort that flows through the body of Christ. There are members who have eyes to weep, hands to help and ears to listen.
4. Damaging of fellowship causes stress to the body of Christ.
5. Lack of unity profanes (makes unholy) the Lord's Supper. That which is holy (the body and blood of Christ) is mistreated and made common by disunity.
6. Unity disrupted hinders the Gospel message.

2. **Spiritual Conversation**: Members should engage in spiritual conversations according to their gifting. Deut. 6:7, we are to speak of God's ways all the time. Mal. 3:16, those that know the Lord speak to another and the Lord listens. Job 2:11, Job's friends came to mourn and comfort him. Eph. 4:29, our words impart grace to the hearers and edify one another. Col. 4:6, our speech should be seasoned with grace towards one another. Eph. 5:4, corrupt talk is not fitting for believers. 1 Thess. 5:11, comfort and edify one another. Heb. 3:13, encourage while it is still called today, so we are not hardened by sin. Jude 20, build each other up in their most holy faith. Heb. 10:24-25, stir one another up to love and good works.

3. **Patient Helpfulness**: bear with one another with meekness in our failings and faults, Gal. 6:1. Eph. 4:32, be kind and tenderhearted forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you. Matt. 18:22, forgive 70 times 7. Mk. 11:25, don't hold bitterness towards another and forgive. Rom. 14:13, lay no stumbling block before a brother to cause them to stumble. Rom. 15:1-2, bear with the weaknesses of our brothers. 1 Cor. 13:4-7, suffer long, be kind, not envy, not puffed up, not rude, not rejoicing in iniquity, bears, believes, hopes, and endures all things. Col. 3:13-14, bear, forgive, and put on love towards one another. The Goal is helping and encouraging other towards Christlikeness.

a. Why do we consider being patient with all? God is infinitely patient with me. God is glorified by the grace He has given to save sinners.

>>Eccl. 7:20-22, remember that you also spoke falsely of others, show grace to others in this.

4. **Generous Love**: voluntarily share and contribute temporal things to others in need, 1 John. 3:17-18, "has the world's goods." 1 Cor. 16:1-2, an open, willing heart has an open wallet. Rom. 12:13, "contribute to the needs of the saints." Gal. 6:10, "let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." 1 Tim. 6:18, "ready to give, willing to share." Heb. 13:16, "do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

- b. **Motivations for giving and sharing:** 1) Christ considers what you do for His people is what you do for Him, Matt. 25: 31-46. 2) Remember the promises for sharing, Proverbs 19:17, "He who is gracious to a poor man lends to Yahweh, and He will repay him for his bountiful deed." Deut. 15:10, "You shall surely give to him, and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him." The Scripture continues, "for this thing the Lord your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand."
5. **Indiscriminate Service:** James 2:1-6, show no partiality and condescend to the weakest brothers. 1 Cor. 1:26-28, God chose not many wise, mighty, noble, but the foolish, weak, despised, base, and things that are not, to confound the wise. **That is us.** We are prone to be attracted to those with more than to those with less. All are one in Christ equally. James 1:9, the humble boast in their coming richness in heaven and the rich boast they will leave earth with nothing, both inherit Christ and His kingdom.

Further Discussion and Application

Steve outlined 11 applications that are imperative to obey and do. Elders aren't able to create a system to make fellowship passive. All must be intentional to fellowship. Review these 11 applications and discuss where you have not kept up and make a plan to incorporate these items in your life with the body of Christ:

1. Be intentional about caring for the needs of others, drawing close to other members.
2. Older saints seek out younger saints, share your life with Christ to them.
3. Younger saints seek out older saints and ask them about their testimony of salvation.
4. Pick (3) people or families to have dinner. Invite ones you barely know to come.
5. Seek to encourage and pray for one another.
6. Weep with those who weep. Draw close to those in pains, Rom. 12:15.
7. Rejoice with those who rejoice, Rom. 12:15.
8. Set fellowship goals. Put them on your calendar and be intentional.
9. Keep a fellowship journal looking for newcomers and see who you often spend time with.
10. Challenge yourself to reach out to a believer who is not like you and get to know them.
11. Pray that efforts of the whole church will draw others to Christ by the love we have and show for one another, John 13:34-35, 15:9-17.

Why must we learn to be patient with all and bear with those in a gentle and loving way when they fall or sin? Why is love and tenderheartedness effective to restore a brother or sister rather than a harsh word not seasoned with grace?

Why must we be intentional about being in the lives of other believers and not waiting for the "right time" to make new friendships and fellowship? Why is the command to love one another always required at all times in our walk with the Lord? What the command that God gave us?