

## Experiencing Christian Life Together

The word of God commands Christians to live in such a way as to look out for each other's interests, to love their neighbor as their own self, and to "pursue the things which make for peace, and the things by which one may edify the other." (Romans 14:19) All this involves **fellowship**. It speaks of a union and a mutuality of life. **Jesus Himself commands Christians to be an active and godly part of the congregation they are with.** (Revelation chapters 2 & 3)

**Christians are called not just to believe, but to belong!** In belonging, Christians are called and commanded by the Lord to cultivate **fellowship** in the congregation they are a part of.

**For fellowship to be cultivated among Christians of a congregation there must be love and humility.** Self-importance, pride, smugness, and arrogance all destroy fellowship quickly. Pride builds walls of separation, humility builds bridges. "... Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility because God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (1 Peter 5:5)

**For fellowship to be cultivated among Christians of a congregation there must be kindness and courtesy.** "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another. (Romans 12:10) Courtesy is being patient when a brother or sister rubs us the wrong way. Courtesy tries to understand where a person is coming from, so you can understand them better. It is treating brothers and sisters with dignity even though they have insecurities, or irritating manners, or poor social skills

**For fellowship to be cultivated among Christians of a congregation there must be a development of trust. Trust is developed when there is a mutual respect and information received is handled in a godly manner.** God's word warns about the devastating effect of gossip. "A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer (gossiper) separates the best of friends. (Proverbs 16:28) .

**For fellowship to be cultivated among Christians of a congregation there must be honesty:** Ephesians 4:15 tells us it is in "speaking the truth in love that we may grow up in all things into Christ." And, "**No more lies, each one speak truth with his neighbor, for we are all members one of another.**" (Ephesians 4:25) Honest frankness is not rudeness; it is not a license to say unwise or inappropriate things. It is not callousness. **When conflict is handled correctly, and there are humble hearts on both sides, we grow closer to each other.**

**For fellowship to be cultivated among Christians of a congregation there must be adequate frequency of contact.** The Bible tells us we are to develop **the habit** of meeting together! A habit is something done regularly, not occasionally on a perchance basis! Godly fellowship takes "stick-to-itiveness"! The Bible tells us: "**Let us not give up the habit of assembling together (meeting together) , as some are doing. Instead, let us strongly encourage one another, and even more so as you see the Day approaching.**" (Hebrews 10:25)

**Fellowship is not built on convenience** No, fellowship is built on the conviction that it is necessary for spiritual health; and one cannot be right with the Lord without it! (Hebrews 10:26-31)

As we look into God's instruction on togetherness and fellowship of Christians **we find at least 10 characteristics in biblical fellowship.** Christians are encouraged and commanded to encourage each other (mutuality), they are to support each other (sympathy), they are to forgive each other (mercy), and aid each other (compassion). They are to speak the truth in love (honesty), admit their weaknesses or sins (humility), respect God given differences (courtesy), and not gossip (trustworthiness). They are to make following Christ their priority, and make the congregation (fellow Christians) where they lived their priority. "By this all will know you are My disciples, if you have love one for another," Jesus said. (John 13:35) **Fellowship** is a result and expression of godly love.

**Ask yourself, if every Christian's fellowship in the  
congregation was like mine,  
would the congregation flourish,  
be sickly, or cease to exist?**

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