

Fellowship and Baptism

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Introduction: One of the most “controversial” subjects in today’s culture is fellowship.

- A. When I speak of fellowship I speak of those who God accepts and then those we should recognize and accept as Christians. **(1 John 1:1-3)**
 - 1. The reason this subject is difficult for many is that our tendency is to accept others on our tastes and standards. (Example: sincerity)
 - 2. Whenever we begin to look at an objective standard as the basis of who we accept as Christians, then the world will attack you (both outside and inside local churches).
- B. Nevertheless God has clearly given an objective standard in both how we become a Christian and how a Christian should walk. **(1 John 1:6-7)**
 - 1. I believe this has been a neglected subject in churches today.
 - 2. I do not know of a more important subject in the Bible. **(2 John 9-11)**

I. Fellowship with God demands a personal faith that will take a stand

- A. Joshua pointed out how to deal with the question concerning Jehovah God and Baal. **(Josh 24:14-15)**
 - 1. How was the answer to this question to be known? Was Joshua a legalist that took away the “freedom” of those who were “open-minded” to Baal?
 - 2. When you honestly seek truth, then all of the smears of the world mean nothing!
 - 3. When you know the truth you stand and seek those who practice it.
 - 4. Could someone have believed God was true but remained with the Baal worshipers so “as to teach them” while yet worshipping Baal?
- B. The truth of any question must be taught to each generation.
 - 1. The “Baal question” was not resolved for a later generation. **(1 Kgs 18:21)**
 - 2. Why couldn’t Elijah just accept the Baal worshipers as “sincere seekers of God?”
 - 3. Why did this generation not know? It was because of a lack of teaching in the home and because of the power of human relationships. **(Ex 23:28, 32-33)**
- C. Human relationships are Satan’s most power weapon against the truth of God.
 - 1. How many in their desire to marry make a change for the sake of the one they have fallen in love with? (Ex. Charlie Brown and the red haired girl – “That’ll change your theology in a hurry!”)
 - 2. Those who have kept statistics about those who marry outside of the Lord’s church show that over 70% fall away.
 - 3. Jesus knew this and warned us ahead of time. **(Mt 10:35-37)**
 - 4. Consider one example of the power of relationships. **(Jn 9:22)**
 - 5. The blind man had unassailable evidence and reasoning but the others were not operating on that basis!

II. Fellowship and Water Baptism

- A. Why has differences on the subject of water baptism historically demanded a separation of fellowship?
 - 1. Jesus placed baptism as a foundational doctrine for all Christians. **(Eph 4:4-6)**

2. Paul indicated that all Christians were brought into fellowship with Christ and His blood at the point of baptism. **(Rom 6:3-4; Gal 3:26-27)**
- B. In the reformation movement the Anabaptist were severely persecuted for their correct belief that only believers should be baptized and that baptism was a burial.
 1. The Bible teaches that only believers should be baptized. **(Mk 16:15-16; Acts 8:36-38)**
 2. The Bible teaches that baptism is an immersion. **(Rom 6:3-4; Col 2:12)**
 3. This created tremendous political and social upheaval. Many lost their lives in proclaiming this truth. Modern day Baptist churches come from this stand.
 4. Consider the confusion and future compromise if this was made an opinion and both “truths” could be equally taught and believed.
 5. Whenever this type of compromise is presented, then God’s word has been laid aside and the future beliefs of that group will be determined by human relationships. Men ask: “Was is the easiest doctrine to practice?” **(1 Kgs 12:28)**
- C. Great controversy exists over the purpose of Baptism.
 1. Baptism is the final step to find forgiveness of sins. **(Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16)**
 2. A failure to understand the purpose of Baptism can result in men being sincerely immersed in water but never having received the baptism Christ instructed. **(Acts 19:1-5)**
 3. This truth is why those churches of Christ had to separate from the various denominations and stand with other Christians upon this truth.
 4. Can one who believes God’s will on the purpose of water baptism work together in fellowship in a denomination that does not?
 5. You may be tolerated if only give financial support to those who differ with you. If you allow all who want to receive Christ be taught contrary to what you say you believe. And that only preachers and literature that teaches contrary to what you say you believe be used. Also you are forbidden to “cause division” by pushing (teaching) what you believe with anyone.
 6. Could you accept those conditions and be taken seriously by anyone that you believe what you say you believe? A separation of fellowship is demanded!

III. The fruits of a compromised fellowship

- A. The most common cause of a compromised fellowship is pride. **(1 Cor 5:1-2, 6)**
 1. Again men will judge by their own sense of relationships and “freedom.”
 2. This intellectual superiority brings compromise! **(2 Cor 11:3-4, 19-21)**
- B. A compromised fellowship is a sure path to unbelief.
 1. Do you realize how few churches believe in the inspiration of the Bible today?
 2. Do you realize how many churches are accepting homosexuality?
- C. A Biblical faith will always stand with those who stand in the truth. **(Heb 11:35-38)**
 1. Should I have left the Baptist church?
 2. Should I have left a local church that was moving into “liberalism?”
 3. The reason I left is because the freedom I found in Christ allowed me to be freed from a practice of sin. **(Rom 6:17-18, 20-22)**

Conclusion: Where would my children be today if I had not taken such a stand?