

The Importance of a Biblical Fellowship (Part 3)

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Introduction: “Why can’t everyone just get along?”

- A. Why can’t all who call themselves Christians simply come together and believe and practice the same thing? **(1 Cor 1:10)**
 - 1. At first glance it seems very simple and possible.
 - 2. The prayer of Jesus makes these questions very important. **(Jn 17:20-21)**
 - 3. Is this a correct approach to the passages? Because perfection is the standard, then should we lower the standard?
 - 4. Are we “united” simply because we have some kind of faith?
- B. Why can’t we just announce everyone’s events and swap pulpits with any group that claims to believe in Christ?
 - 1. We are seeing “non-traditional” house churches forming in several communities that are reaching out to and participating in opening their “circle of fellowship.”
 - 2. Could that which to some is a product of “traditionalism” actually have a Biblical basis?

I. Where do you draw your circle?

- A. It is God’s place to draw circles and not men. **(1 John 1:1-3)**
 - 1. The apostles did not determine the “circle” – it was delivered to them.
 - 2. We should simply give the conditional promises of God to all men without any change whatsoever.
 - 3. These promises and their foundation are called the gospel.
 - 4. There are truths to be believed and promises that are to be obeyed.
(Rom 10:16; 2 Thess 1:8)
- B. What if men drew a different circle? **(Acts 15:1)**
 - 1. A different circle represents a different gospel. **(Gal 1:6-9)**
 - 2. Both are not equal. Only one must be accepted. What if it’s the wrong one?
 - 3. It is not a matter of popularity or of how original and trendy the writer, it is a matter of what has been delivered! **(Gal 1:10-11)**
- C. Do churches today have different “circles?”
 - 1. There are huge differences on almost every aspect of how one is saved.
 - 2. The most trendy writers who have influenced brethren are confessed Calvinist! Is one saved without any conditions? Their beliefs are disguised.
 - 3. What if we extended fellowship to those who believe we are saved at the point of faith without confession or baptism?

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. Should 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. What would have happened?
 5. Compromise on truth leads to convenience becoming the determining factor. Men will 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. Into what were you baptized? (**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.
- D. The certainty of assimilation.
1. What will happen if you joined a local denomination and held to the gospel?
 2. 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*.
 3. 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!
 4. Consider the danger of assimilation. After the civil war nearly 10,000 from the south moved to Brazil.
 5. The *Confederados* also have an annual festival, called the *Festa Confederada*... The festival is marked by Confederate flags, Confederate uniforms....
 6. The modern house church movement is a half-way house to denominationalism.

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? “Tolerance and ecumenism are like father and son. The grandfather is a lack of respect for the authority of the Bible. The existence of ecumenism demands tolerance. The movement the ecumenical unity has involved the discounting of more and more that might be important enough to differ over.” – Bob Waldron, “The Jewel of Consistency”
 2. Do you realize how many churches are accepting homosexuality?

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

- A. Should I have left the denominationalism?
- B. The reason I left is because the freedom I found in Christ. (**Rom 6:17-18, 20-22**)