

The Importance of a Biblical Fellowship (Part 2)

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Introduction: Who is my brother? To whom should we extend fellowship?

- A. These kind of questions touch on important but sensitive areas.
 - 1. There is nothing more important than helping another person to give their lives to Christ by being born again.
 - 2. Even in this effort we must identify the path to Christ and help a person see where they are at.
 - 3. In the ministry of Christ people often were blind to their real condition and needed help to see the way to God. **(Jn 3:3-5, 9-10)**
- B. We do not want to put ourselves in the place of God. We simply want to do as the apostles did and deliver the message they received from God. **(1 Jn 1:1-3)**
 - 1. We cannot read mind and hearts but we can plainly see the way to God.
 - 2. Today many want to make sincerity or outward devotion the basis of fellowship. Paul was devout and sincere and very much lost! **(Acts 23:1)**
 - 3. People are understandably very sensitive when another must make a judgment whether to extend fellowship to another. What does God want?

I. Christians must make a judgment as to whom we should extend 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. Paul had both the church at Jerusalem and then the apostles make judgments concerning fellowship with him.
 - 2. The church at Jerusalem at first refused fellowship and then learned that they should extend it. **(Acts 9:26-28)**
 - 3. The apostles after investigation extended “the right hand of fellowship” to Paul as an apostle. **(Gal 2:9)**
 - 4. We are limited in this area. We can make the wrong judgement because we are not God. There are several reasons why we must do this!
- B. Local churches must determine who is “among them” and who is an “outsider.” **(1 Cor 5:1-2, 11-13)**
 - 1. People can fool us as to where their heart really is. Paul talked about “false brethren.” **(2 Cor 11:26; Gal 2:4)**
 - 2. A man or a group of men can seize control of a church and cast out those who are true Christians. **(3 Jn 9-10)**
 - 3. If men can and do make mistakes then should we avoid making these decisions? No, we must with God’s instructions determine who is part of the local flock. **(1 Pt 5:2)**
 - 4. When fellowship is extended where it should not be then the church will suffer. **(1 Cor 5:6; 11:18-19)**

II. Who is a Christian?

- A. A Christian is one who has trusted in Jesus as the Son of God. **(Jn 3:16, 36)**
 - 1. This belief is not in facts alone but in God and His power. **(Rom 1:16-17)**

2. Many have misunderstood what a living faith means and as a result believe that they are in Christ when they are not.
 3. A dead faith with substitute outward actions and “contributions” for the power of a changed life. **(2 Cor 5:17; James 2:18-20; Jn 3:36 NASV)**
 4. A living faith must be nurtured and protected.
- B. A Christian is one who has turned his heart completely to the Lord. **(Acts 2:38)**
1. The greatest challenge we face is repentance. Do we really trust God?
 2. Repent - *μετανοέω* - strictly *perceive afterward*... (1) predominately of a religious and ethical change in the way one thinks .. *repent, change one's mind, be converted* (MT 3.2); (2) as feeling remorse *regret*.. (LU 17.3, 4)
 3. Repentance comes from Godly sorrow that moves you to surrender.
 4. This is not just a casual decision like deciding to join a club.
 5. Jesus is now viewed as Lord. What constitutes true obedience? Consider the example of the son following his fathers instructions.
- C. A Christian has made the good confession. **(1 Tim 6:12)**
1. When does faith save us? It can never save without repentance!
 2. God requires as a condition of initial forgiveness a specific verbal confession. **(Rom 10:9-10)**
 3. We see an example of this with the Ethiopian Eunuch. **(Acts 8:35-38)**
 4. Under John’s baptism there was a confession of sins. **(Mt 3:6; Mk 1:5)**
 5. Why does God require this? We can see where one would not have been baptized without knowing if one believed. God did say to do this and we do not always know why God requires something! Naaman had to learn this lesson! **(2 Kings 5:10-13)**
 6. The church in which I was raised did not take this seriously!
- D. Every Christian is baptized into Christ to be forgiven by the blood of Christ.
1. In the great commission we learn about a wonderful conditional promise of God. **(Mk 16:15-16)**
 2. Forgiveness of sins is the goal of the promises in the great commission. **(Lk 24:46-47)**
 3. What was preached in Jerusalem? **(Acts 2:38, 41)**
 4. How did Paul receive the forgiveness of sins? **(Acts 22:16)**

III. What if we extend fellowship where God has not?

- A. We could actually stand in the way of helping one find eternal life! **(Ezk 13:22)**
1. When we give in to pressure because of the desire to please men, we have become ashamed of the cross of Christ! **(Gal 5:11; 6:12)**
 2. We need wisdom in how we work with others who believe they are following God but may not have understood and responded to God’s conditional promises.
- B. What message are you conveying to your religious neighbors and family?

Conclusion: How can we more effectively expand the fellowship of God?