

Obedience to God Through Fellowship



Fellowship; with God

Fellowship with one another

Galatians 5:14

*For all the law is
fulfilled in one word, even in
this; Thou shalt love thy
neighbour as thyself.*

Compiled by Dr. Harold Bollinger

Table of Contents

Forward		3
Chapter 1	Fellowship with one another	4
Chapter 2	Walk in love as Christ has given himself for us	6
Chapter 3	Fellowship with God and Believers	9
Chapter 4	We are called into fellowship with Jesus Christ	11
Chapter 5	Jesus entered into fellowship	13
Chapter 6	Do good to everyone.	16

Forward

If you grew up in the church, you might associate the word “fellowship” as something your church family did by meeting for special events.

Fellowship is not an event, no, it should be part of our life as a Christ-follower. Maybe the strongest and most pointed passage about fellowship is from

Hebrews 10 when the author says that some have stopped meeting and are neglecting fellowship.

This is important for all men and women of faith.

As you study the Scripture deal with fellowship, it is hoped that you will see the need of meeting and worshipping with other believers.

Chapter 1

Fellowship with one another

1 John 3:16

By this we know love that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

Nicodemus was afraid, or ashamed to be seen with Christ, therefore came in the night. When religion is out of fashion, there are many Nicodemites. But though he came by night, Jesus bid him welcome, and hereby taught us to encourage good beginnings, although weak.

And though now he came by night, yet afterward he owned Christ publicly. He did not talk with Christ about state affairs, though he was a ruler, but about the concerns of his own soul and its salvation, and went at once to them. Our Saviour spoke of the necessity and nature of regeneration or the new birth, and at once directed Nicodemus to the source of holiness of the heart.

Birth is the beginning of life; to be born again, is to begin to live anew, as those who have lived much amiss, or to little purpose. We must have a new nature, new principles, new affections, and new aims. By our first birth we were corrupt, shapen in sin; therefore we must be made new creatures.

No stronger expression could have been chosen to signify a great and most remarkable change of state and character. We must be entirely different from what we were before, as that which begins to be at any time, is not, and cannot be the same with that which was before. This new birth is from heaven,

Love one another as Christ has loved us.

John 13:34-35

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Before Christ left the disciples, he would give them a new commandment. They were to love each other for Christ's sake, and according to his example, seeking what might benefit others, and promoting the cause of the gospel, as one body, animated by one soul. But this commandment still appears new to many professors. Men in general notice any of Christ's words rather than these. By this it appears, that if the followers of Christ do not show love one to another, they give cause to suspect their sincerity.

Show honor to one another

Romans 12:10

Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

The professed love of Christians to each other should be sincere, free from deceit, and unmeaning and deceitful compliments. Depending on Divine grace, they must detest and dread all evil, and love and delight in whatever is kind and useful. We must not only do that which is good, but we must cleave to it.

All our duty towards one another is summed up in one word, love. This denotes the love of parents to their children; which is more tender and natural than any other; unforced, unconstrained. And love to God and man, with zeal for the gospel, will make the wise Christian diligent in all his worldly business, and in gaining superior skill.

Chapter 2

Walk in love, as Christ has given himself for us.

Ephesians 5:2

And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Because God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you, therefore be ye followers of God, imitators of God. Resemble him especially in his love and pardoning goodness, as becomes those beloved by their heavenly Father. In Christ's sacrifice his love triumphs, and we are to consider it fully.

Fellowship with psalms and hymns.

Ephesians 5:19

Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart.

By fervent prayer let us seek to be filled with the Spirit, and to avoid whatever may grieve our gracious Comforter. All God's people have reason to sing for joy. Though we are not always singing, we should be always giving thanks; we should never want disposition for this duty, as we never want matter for it, through the whole course of our lives.

Always, even in trials and afflictions, and for all things; being satisfied of their loving intent, and good tendency. God keeps believers from sinning against him, and engages them to submit one to another in all he has commanded, to promote his glory, and to fulfil their duties to each other.

Be knit together in love

Colossians 2:2

That their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ.

The soul prospers when we have clear knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. When we not only believe with the heart, but are ready, when called, to make confession with the mouth. Knowledge and faith make a soul rich. The stronger our faith, and the warmer our love, the more will our comfort be. The treasures of wisdom are hid, not from us, but for us, in Christ. These were hid from proud unbelievers, but displayed in the person and redemption of Christ.

Be in full accord with one mind.

Philippians 2:1-2

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Here are further exhortations to Christian duties; to like-mindedness and lowly-mindedness, according to the example of the Lord Jesus.

Kindness is the law of Christ's kingdom, the lesson of his school, the livery of his family. Several motives to brotherly love are mentioned.

If you expect or experience the benefit of God's compassions to yourselves, be compassionate one to another. It is the joy of ministers to see people like-minded. Christ came to humble us, let there not be among us a spirit of pride. We must be severe upon our own faults, and quick in observing our own defects, but ready to

make favourable allowances for others. We must kindly care for others, but not be busy-bodies in other men's matters. Neither inward nor outward peace can be enjoyed, without lowliness of mind.

United believers show the world God's love.

John 17:23

I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

Our Lord especially prayed, that all believers might be as one body under one head, animated by one soul, by their union with Christ and the Father in him, through the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. The more they dispute about lesser things, the more they throw doubts upon Christianity. Let us endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, praying that all believers may be more and more united in one mind and one judgment. Thus shall we convince the world of the truth and excellence of our religion, and find sweeter communion with God and his saints.

We are challenged by fellowship; in showing obedience to God.

Chapter 3

Fellowship with God and with believers.

Matthew 18:20

For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

If a professed Christian is wronged by another, he ought not to complain of it to others, as is often done merely upon report, but to go to the offender privately, state the matter kindly, and show him his conduct. This would generally have all the desired effect with a true Christian, and the parties would be reconciled. The principles of these rules may be practiced everywhere, and under all circumstances, though they are too much neglected by all. But how few try the method which Christ has expressly enjoined to all his disciples! In all our proceedings we should seek direction in prayer; we cannot too highly prize the promises of God. Wherever and whenever we meet in the name of Christ, we should consider him as present in the midst of us.

Our fellow together is also with the father and the son.

1 John 1:3

That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

That essential Good, that uncreated Excellence, which had been from the beginning, from eternity, as equal with the Father, and which at length appeared in human nature for the salvation of sinners, was the great subject concerning which the apostle wrote to his brethren.

The apostles had seen Him while they witnessed his wisdom and holiness, his miracles, and love and mercy, during some years, till they saw him crucified for sinners, and afterwards risen from the dead. They touched him, so as to have full proof of his resurrection.

This Divine Person, the Word of life, the Word of God, appeared in human nature, that he might be the Author and Giver of eternal life to mankind, through the redemption of his blood, and the influence of his new-creating Spirit. The apostles declared what they had seen and heard, that believers might share their comforts and everlasting advantages. They had free access to God the Father. They had a happy experience of the truth in their souls, and showed its excellence in their lives.

This communion of believers with the Father and the Son, is begun and kept up by the influences of the Holy Spirit. The benefits Christ bestows, are not like the scanty possessions of the world, causing jealousies in others; but the joy and happiness of communion with God is all-sufficient, so that any number may partake of it; and all who are warranted to say, that truly their fellowship is with the Father, will desire to lead others to partake of the same blessedness.

Those who walk in the light have fellowship with one another.

1 John 1:7

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

A message from the Lord Jesus, the Word of life, the eternal Word, we should all gladly receive. The great God should be represented to this dark world, as pure and perfect light. As this is the nature of God, his doctrines and precepts must be such. And as his perfect happiness cannot be separated from his perfect holiness, so our happiness will be in proportion to our being made holy. To walk in darkness, is to live and act against religion. God holds no heavenly fellowship or intercourse with unholy souls.

Chapter 4

We are called into fellowship by Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians. 1:9

God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

To all who called upon Christ, the apostle gave his usual salutation, desiring, in their behalf, the pardoning mercy, sanctifying grace, and comforting peace of God, through Jesus Christ. Sinners can have no peace with God, nor any from him, but through Christ. He gives thanks for their conversion to the faith of Christ; that grace was given them by Jesus Christ.

They had been enriched by him with all spiritual gifts. He speaks of utterance and knowledge. And where God has given these two gifts, he has given great power for usefulness. These were gifts of the Holy Ghost, by which God bore witness to the apostles. Those that wait for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, will be kept by him to the end; and those that are so, will be blameless in the day of Christ, made so by rich and free grace.

How glorious are the hopes of such a privilege; to be kept by the power of Christ, from the power of our corruptions and Satan's temptations!

Many members make up one body in Christ

1 Corinthians 12:12

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

Christ and his church form one body, as Head and members. Christians become members of this body by baptism. The outward rite is of Divine institution; it is a sign of the new birth, and is called therefore the washing of regeneration, Tit 3:5.

But it is by the Spirit, only by the renewing of the Holy Ghost that we are made members of Christ's body. And by communion with Christ at the Lord's Supper, we are strengthened, not by drinking the wine, but by drinking into one Spirit.

Each member has its form, place, and use. The meanest makes a part of the body. There must be a distinction of members in the body. So Christ's members have different powers and different places.

We should do the duties of our own place, and not murmur, or quarrel with others. All the members of the body are useful and necessary to each other. Nor is there a member of the body of Christ, but may and ought to be useful to fellow-members.

As in the natural body of man, the members should be closely united by the strongest bonds of love; the good of the whole should be the object of all. All Christians are dependent one upon another; each is to expect and receive help from the rest. Let us then have more of the spirit of union in our religion.

Fellowship with one another as the entered the house of God.

Psalms 55:14

We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company. Let us not be surprised at the corruptions and disorders of the church on earth, but long to see the New Jerusalem. He complains of one that had been very industrious against him. God often destroys the enemies of the church by dividing them. And an interest divided against itself cannot long stand.

The true Christian must expect trials from professed friends, from those with whom he has been united; this will be very painful; but by looking unto Jesus we shall be enabled to bear it. Christ was betrayed by a companion, a disciple, an apostle, who resembled Ahithophel in his crimes and doom. Both were speedily overtaken by Divine vengeance. And this prayer is a prophecy of the utter, the everlasting ruin, of all who oppose and rebel against the Messiah.

Chapter 5

Jesus entered into their fellowship.

Luke 24:13 That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, 14 and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them.

This appearance of Jesus to the two disciples going to Emmaus, happened the same day that he rose from the dead. It well becomes the disciples of Christ to talk together of his death and resurrection; thus they may improve one another's knowledge, refresh one another's memory, and stir up each other's devout affections. And where but two together are well employed in work of that kind, he will come to them, and make a third.

Those who seek Christ, shall find him: he will manifest himself to those that inquire after him; and give knowledge to those who use the helps for knowledge which they have. No matter how it was, but so it was, they did not know him; he so ordering it, that they might the more freely discourse with him.

Christ's disciples are often sad and sorrowful, even when they have reason to rejoice; but through the weakness of their faith, they cannot take the comfort offered to them.

Fellowship while eating together

Acts 2:42

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

In these verses we have the history of the truly primitive church, of the first days of it; its state of infancy indeed, but, like that, the state of its greatest innocence. They kept close to holy ordinances, and abounded in piety and devotion; for Christianity, when admitted in the power of it, will dispose the soul to communion with God in all those ways wherein he has appointed us to meet him, and has promised to meet us.

The greatness of the event raised them above the world, and the Holy Ghost filled them with such love, as made everyone to be to another as to himself, and so made all things common, not by destroying property, but doing away selfishness, and causing charity.

Do not have fellowship with unbelievers.

2 Corinthians 6:14

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

It is wrong for believers to join with the wicked and profane. The word unbeliever applies to all destitute of true faith. True pastors will caution their beloved children in the gospel, not to be unequally yoked.

The fatal effects of neglecting Scripture precepts as to marriages clearly appear. Instead of a help meet, the union brings a snare. Those whose cross it is to be unequally united, without their willful fault, may expect consolation under it; but when believers enter into such unions, against the express warnings of God's word, they must expect must distress.

The caution also extends to common conversation. We should not join in friendship and acquaintance with wicked men and unbelievers. Though we cannot wholly avoid seeing and hearing, and being with such, yet we should never choose them for friends. We must not defile ourselves by converse with those who defile themselves with sin.

Come out from the workers of iniquity, and separate from their vain and sinful pleasures and pursuits; from all conformity to the corruptions of this present evil world. If it be an envied privilege to be the son or daughter of an earthly prince, who can express the dignity and happiness of being sons and daughters of the Almighty?

Bear the burdens of others.

Galatians 6:2

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

We are to bear one another's burdens. So we shall fulfil the law of Christ. This obliges to mutual forbearance and compassion towards each other, agreeably to his example. It becomes us to bear one another's burdens, as fellow-travelers. It is very common for a man to look upon himself as wiser as and better than other men, and as fit to dictate to them.

Such a one deceives himself; by pretending to what he has not, he puts a cheat upon himself, and sooner or later will find the sad effects. This will never gain esteem, either with God or men.

Everyone is advised to prove his own work. The better we know our own hearts and ways, the less shall we despise others, and the more be disposed to help them under infirmities and afflictions. How light so ever men's sins seem to them when committed, yet they will be found a heavy burden, when they come to reckon with God about them.

No man can pay a ransom for his brother; and sin is a burden to the soul. It is a spiritual burden; and the less a man feels it to be such, the more cause has he to suspect himself. Most men are dead in their sins, and therefore have no sight or sense of the spiritual burden of sin. Feeling the weight and burden of our sins, we must seek to be eased thereof by the Saviour, and be warned against every sin.

Chapter 6

Do good to everyone.

Galatians 6:10

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

We are to bear one another's burdens. So we shall fulfil the law of Christ. This obliges to mutual forbearance and compassion towards each other, agreeably to his example.

It becomes us to bear one another's burdens, as fellow-travelers. It is very common for a man to look upon himself as wiser and better than other men, and as fit to dictate to them. Such a one deceives himself; by pretending to what he has not, he puts a cheat upon himself, and sooner or later will find the sad effects. This will never gain esteem, either with God or men. Everyone is advised to prove his own work.

The better we know our own hearts and ways, the less shall we despise others, and the more be disposed to help them under infirmities and afflictions. How light so ever men's sins seem to them when committed, yet they will be found a heavy burden, when they come to reckon with God about them. No man can pay a ransom for his brother; and sin is a burden to the soul.

It is a spiritual burden; and the less a man feels it to be such, the more cause has he to suspect himself. Most men are dead in their sins, and therefore have no sight or sense of the spiritual burden of sin. Feeling the weight and burden of our sins, we must seek to be eased thereof by the Saviour, and be warned against every sin.

Many excuse themselves from the work of religion, though they may make a show, and profess it. They may impose upon others, yet they deceive themselves if they think to impose upon God, who knows their hearts as well as actions; and as he cannot be deceived, so he will not be mocked.

Our present time is seed time; in the other world we shall reap as we sow now. As there are two sorts of sowing, one to the flesh, and the other to the Spirit, so will

the reckoning be hereafter. Those who live a carnal, sensual life, must expect no other fruit from such a course than misery and ruin.

But those who, under the guidance and influences of the Holy Spirit, live a life of faith in Christ, and abound in Christian graces, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. We are all very apt to tire in duty, particularly in doing good. This we should carefully watch and guard against.

Only to perseverance in well-doing is the reward promised. Here is an exhortation to all to do good in their places. We should take care to do good in our life-time, and make this the business of our lives. Especially when fresh occasions offer, and as far as our power reaches.

Stir up one another to love and good works.

Hebrews 10:24–25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and ball the more as you see the Day drawing near.

The apostle having closed the first part of the epistle, the doctrine is applied to practical purposes. As believers had an open way to the presence of God, it became them to use this privilege.

The way and means by which Christians enjoy such privileges, is by the blood of Jesus, by the merit of that blood which he offered up as an atoning sacrifice. The agreement of infinite holiness with pardoning mercy, was not clearly understood till the human nature of Christ, the Son of God, was wounded and bruised for our sins.

Our way to heaven is by a crucified Saviour; his death is to us the way of life, and to those who believe this, he will be precious. They must draw near to God; it would be contempt of Christ, still to keep at a distance. Their bodies were to be washed with pure water, alluding to the cleansings directed under the law: thus the use of water in baptism, was to remind Christians that their conduct should be pure and holy.

While they derived comfort and grace from their reconciled Father to their own souls, they would adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things. Believers are to consider how they can be of service to each other, especially stirring up each other to the more vigorous and abundant exercise of love, and the practice of good works. The communion of saints is a great help and privilege, and a means of steadfastness and perseverance. We should observe the coming of times of trial, and be thereby quickened to greater diligence. There is a trying day coming on all men, the day of our death

Show hospitality without grumbling.

1 Peter 4:9 Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

The destruction of the Jewish church and nation, foretold by our Saviour, was very near. And the speedy approach of death and judgment concerns all, to which these words naturally lead our minds.

Our approaching end, is a powerful argument to make us sober in all worldly matters, and earnest in religion. There are so many things amiss in all that unless love covers, excuses, and forgives in others, the mistakes and faults for which everyone needs the forbearance of others, Satan will prevail to stir up divisions and discords.

But we are not to suppose that charity will cover or make amends for the sins of those who exercise it, so as to induce God to forgive them. The nature of a Christian's work, which is high work and hard work, the goodness of the Master, and the excellence of the reward, all require that our endeavors should be serious and earnest.

And in all the duties and services of life, we should aim at the glory of God as our chief end. He is a miserable, unsettled wretch, who cleaves to himself, and forgets God; is only perplexed about his credit, and gain, and base ends, which are often broken, and which, when he attains, both he and they must shortly perish together.

But he who has given up himself and his all to God, may say confidently that the Lord is his portion; and nothing but glory through Christ Jesus, is solid and lasting; that abideth for ever.

Fellowship is not just something that we try to fit into our Christian life after we get everything else together.

Fellowship will challenge us, encourage us, help us stay accountable, and fellowship is showing obedience to God and his word. Don't neglect this part of the Bible.



To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Verse Concept: Matthew Henry's Concept Bible Commentary.

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*.
Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print