

FELLOWSHIP

Fellowship is one of the most misunderstood words in the religious world. People have no trouble understanding the normal meaning and application of many words and concepts until they look at religion as going by different rules, definitions, and applications.

To make matters worse, the prevailing philosophy in the world today is postmodernism. People are encouraged to make up their own ideas about what is “their” truth, which is supposed to be just as good as any other truth. So nobody is wrong, and nobody is right (except, I assume, the person who says that nobody is right or wrong).

For a long time, churches have called many things fellowship so that the original meaning has been lost. Secondly, even if “fellowship” accurately describes the relationship, activities, and beliefs of a religious group, it may be fellowship in evil deeds instead of fellowship in good deeds (**2 John 9-11**). We must clearly define fellowship that God desires in contrast with the religious world’s fellowship.

“Fellowship” is from the Greek word KOINONIA, which is not only translated “fellowship; it is also: “communion” (**1 Corinthians 10:16**), “contribution” (**Romans 15:26**), “distribution” (**2 Cor. 9:13**); those that have it are: “partners” (**Luke 5:10**), “companions” (**Hebrews 10:33**), “partakers” (**Matthew 23:30**). What they do is “communicate” or “share” (**Galatians 6:6**), “distribute” (**Romans 12:13**), “partake” (**Romans 15:27**).

The very nature of fellowship requires unselfishness. My favorite definition of fellowship is “to put aside personal interests and desires to join with others for a common purpose.” (Linguistic Key to the Greek N.T.) A greater common goal or purpose motivates us to join with others who have the same attitude. Personal interests are not as important. We will also apply some of our resources (time, effort, attention, talents, money) to the greater common priority rather than using them all for selfish gratification.

Our fellowship **in** Christ is based upon our fellowship **with** Christ (**1 John 1:1-4,7**). And maintaining our fellowship with Christ is dependent on our fellowship **in** Christ (**1 John 2:9-10; 3:16-17**). This is what Jesus prayed in **John 17:20-21**: “*I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.*” We gain fellowship with Christ by believing in Him through the apostles’ word. We are to love one another as Christ loved us (**John 13:34-35**). This will make us one **in** Christ. Our higher common purpose is for God to be glorified (**John 17:21-23**).

Jesus is the true foundation of this fellowship. He unselfishly left heaven and became a servant. He suffered much and gave His life for our spiritual life to be possible. In Christ we have already been blessed with every spiritual blessing (**Ephesians 1:3**). Jesus’ unselfish sacrifice of love is the center of the gospel; it is the foundation of our faith. By faith we understand that God’s love is completely unselfish. We seek to respond to God’s loving gift by being unselfish toward others. Since those in Christ share the same faith in God’s love, our fellowship with each other should be especially deep because of our mutual example of the sacrifice of Christ.