

THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

October 4

2009

Understanding Spiritual Fellowship

Spiritual fellowship is the maintaining of our participation together with fellow Christians in the Lord's work. As Christians, we must be able to distinguish between the concept of social fellowship or joint participation in social activities and the concept of spiritual fellowship or joint participation in spiritual endeavors which are clearly revealed to us in God's Word.

The only "fellowship hall" we have in the Lord's church is the meeting house provided with the Lord's money to use in the preaching of the gospel (Matthew 28:18-20), and in which we worship God in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24). This is where Christians worship together and work together in spiritual activities. Our service to the Master has to do with spiritual fellowship - it is not social eating and drinking and it is not fun and entertainment!

Our relationship with one another as Christians and our work together in the cause of the Lord relates to spiritual accomplishments - it has nothing whatever to do with being together for fun and games. When the brethren in the Corinthian church had been guilty of making a common meal of the Lord's Supper (not discerning the Lord's body and blood), they were asked: "*What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and put them to shame that have not?*" They were also told: "*If any man is hungry, let him eat at home; that your coming together be not unto judgment.*" (I Corinthians 11: 17-34).

Spiritual fellowship is that acceptance of one another - that joint participation with one another - that act of sharing and having communion with one another - it is the acting with togetherness in

our service to God. The refusal of fellowship is when the situation or person does not meet the standard of God's Word - not walking in the light - not abiding in the doctrine of Christ - and therefore NOT worthy of our participation or sharing in their sinful doctrines or practices.

Fellowship can be extended and it can be taken away (the refusal to extend). The Word of God shows that it is both a collective and an individual process of either extending or refusal to extend joint participation or fellowship with others (I Corinthians 5:1-13) (II Thessalonians 3:6-14) (II John 9-11).

Some of our own brethren have sought to corrupt the teaching of Romans 14 in their efforts to justify the fellowship of sinful doctrines and practices. When you have an agenda to do evil, and want to justify yourself in the eyes of others, then the perverting of the Scriptures is not really an obstacle to you! How sad it is that brethren would be involved in such actions! The concept of fellowship is clearly seen in Romans 14 where brethren, who were dealing with matters of liberty and conscience - things not sinful within themselves, were told to maintain their participation together in the Lord's work. This chapter clearly indicates that brethren who are dealing with matters in which they differ, (that is - differ in dealing with matters of liberty and conscience), are to maintain their fellowship - their joint participation - with one another in the Lord's work. We must remember that the matters discussed in Romans 14 are said to be good, clean, and pure! There are no sinful doctrines and practices in this chapter, and no man on earth has any right to put such into it!

Christians have fellowship by walking in the light, (I John 1:5-10), and we cannot have fellowship with God or one another when we walk in darkness (Ephesians 5:3-17). We have fellowship with those who preach the gospel (Philippians 4:14-16) (Galatians 2:9), and in the care of needy saints (II Corinthians 8:1-4). We have fellowship at the Lord's table (I Corinthians 10:16-22).

Fellowship is demonstrated in the very terms by which Christians are referred to in the New Testament. They are called fellow heirs, fellow members, fellow partakers, fellow citizens, fellow prisoners, fellow soldiers, fellow servants, and fellow workers. Christians have spiritual fellowship with one another in all of these relationships and activities.

✍️ Dennis L. Reed

Because It Is Right

Reward incentive motivation permeates our society. People respond to rewards just like little puppies do. Some parents think only in terms of rewarding their children, and, they even reward them for being bad. When a parent says to a little child, "If you will quit throwing a temper tantrum, we will go get an ice cream as soon we get away from the Dr.'s office," he is rewarding bad behavior and the child quickly understands how to get what he wants. The "in thing" now in many churches is to offer physical rewards for being religious. That ranges from the "gospel of health and wealth" that says, "If you give \$100, God will give you \$1,000," to appealing to the fleshly appetites of entertainment to get people to come to "church."

Whatever happened to doing right because it is right? Surely, Jesus offers men rewards but those incentives have nothing to do with the sensual desires. In fact, he condemned those who followed him because they were fed – "*Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life,*" (John 6:29). The reward for righteousness is eternal life with God. God expects right behavior, because he is holy and we must be like him to share in spiritual life (1 Peter 1:15-16).

Christians are committed to a way of life that is righteous, because it is the right way to live. Sometimes the righteous life may offer a material advantage but that isn't why the Christian lives that way. At other times, being righteous may be a difficult road and the righteous may be mocked and persecuted. The disciple of the Lord does right when people speak well of him and when they do not – his motivation is doing right, because it is the right thing to do.

✍ Jim R. Everett



HAVE YOU NOTICED?

Have you noticed that those who attend the Bible classes and are always on time for services have just as many children to get ready, have just as far to drive and are just as busy as those who do not attend or are always late. What makes the difference? Could it be attitude?

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

REVERENCE IN WORSHIP

Jesus said, "*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:24). "In truth" means that what we do in worship to God must be in harmony with truth, His word (John 17:17). "In spirit" has to do with the inner man. Our worship must be from the heart. It must be sincere.

To render such worship we must first recognize the majesty of the One we worship. When we realize who He is we will stand before Him in awe and will realize that "*holy and reverend is his name*" (Psalm 111:9). Our behavior will then reflect the reverence we have for Him.

How can we be showing reverence in our worship when we are talking and laughing when we should be listening to God's word proclaimed or when we should be singing praises to God? When you engage in such you are not only failing to worship God yourself but you are disturbing others and making it difficult for them to worship acceptably. Such behavior shows a lack of reverence for God and a lack of respect for fellow Christians.

I hope each and every one of us will examine ourselves and ask, "Does my behavior and conduct indicate reverence and respect for God and His word?" If the answer is "No" then I need to repent.

✍ James Hahn

Belleville church of Christ

5635 S County Rd 200E - Belleville, IN - (317) 539-5258

www.bellevillechurch.net

Schedule of Services

Sun. Bible Study... 9:30 a.m.
Sun. Morning Worship... 10:30 a.m.
Sun. Evening Worship... 5:00 p.m.
Wed. Bible Study... 7:00 p.m.

Elders

Charles Carpenter... (317) 839-3873
James Hahn... (317) 745-1507

Deacons

Leon Nevins... (317) 272-2966
Don Perry... (765) 676-5825
Alvin Stanley... (317) 831-3514

Evangelist

James Hahn... (317) 745-1507