

## Fellowship with a Holy God and His Saints

Our God is a Holy God who desires fellowship with His blood bought saints, and worship from us. He gave us His Word to show us the way He wants us to worship Him in spirit and in truth (**John 4:24**) This truth in Jesus has our Lord as the object. As the Lord has made us all holy priests, we can offer up spiritual sacrifices to Him as part of His house. (**1 Peter 2:5**) As owning Him as Head of His house we can follow Him in spirit and in truth. (**1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 3:6**)

All things should point to Christ as we see “He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence.” (**Colossians 1:18**). We “are gathered” by Himself, and Christ links discipline, prayer, and Him being in our midst with being “are gathered” (**Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:4, 13**). He also links the Lord’s supper with being “are gathered” in (**1 Corinthians 11:20-25**). And with this gathering we are to individually judge ourselves or the assembly and/or God will judge us. (**1 Corinthians 11:26-34**). We also “are gathered” for two or three to speak for edification, exhortation, or comfort. (**1 Corinthians 14:3,26-27**) When we are gathered together with the Lord in our midst, He must have the preeminence in all of His holiness and love. Therefore our linking is tied to but not limited to the breaking of bread. The discipline that is then needed is a result of sin in our lives, the lives of other dear believers, or those that we or they are linking to.

- A. The Representation of the Church on Earth is Twofold:
- a. The Local Assembly of believers who “are gathered” by the Spirit of God by the Word unto all that Christ’s name stands for (**Matthew 18:20; 1 Corinthians 1:9**), on the ground of “the one body” (**Ephesians 2:16**). See E. below about “the one body.” They should be representative of the whole body of Christ. (**1 Corinthians 12:27**) “Now ye “ (the assembly at Corinth) “are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”
  - b. The truth of the “one body” mandates the Unity of Assemblies (**1 Corinthians 1:2; 4:17**) This is the purpose of letters of commendation between assemblies (**Romans 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 3:1; Acts 18:24-28**)]
  - c. Each assembly is a local representation of the whole Church and recognizes its actions in the name of the Lord and according to God’s Word as authoritative and binding everywhere. This is practically expressed in all the local assemblies within the circle of fellowship. (**Matthew 18:18, 1 Corinthians 1:2**)
- B. Only our Lord can reveal His mind to us, and we learn it through comparing the whole Word of God. (**2 Peter 1:20-21; 1 Corinthians 2:9-14; 2 Timothy 3:16-17**) Understanding the fellowship we have with the Lord and other believers can be explained in part by Old Testament examples **1 Corinthians 10:6,11-13,18-22**. Other Old and New Testament examples can also be helpful in understanding these precious truths of the God’s dealings with man. (**Romans 15:4**)

## Fellowship with a Holy God and His Saints

- c. Individuals are defiled by linking with moral or doctrinal evil.
  - a. **Haggai 2:10-14** (Example: One bad apple will spoil the bunch. The good apples do not make the bad apple good.)
    - i. **Leviticus 5:3** – Uncleaness as shown in vs 1-10.
    - ii. **Numbers 19:20** – Uncleaness is caused by linking to impurity per vs 1-22.
  - b. **1 Corinthians 15:3, 12, 33** – Christ’s doctrine is true and all else is false and corrupting.
  - c. **2 Corinthians 6:14-18** – No yoke with unbelievers.
  - d. **2 John 7,10-11** – Linking with false doctrine is being a partaker of it.
  - e. **Mark 7:2,5,7,15, 1 Corinthians 8:7** – If we do not follow man made traditions such as what we eat, then we are not defiled. We should be careful not to be offensive to other believers.
  - f. **Hebrews 12:12-16** - We can be defiling to others by not living a holy life.

Note: As the Lord leads us, we should share time with other believers, including those with whom we cannot break bread. However, our degree of relationship with these believers is to be based on truth that we share regarding Christ’s person or work. (**1 John 1:7-9**)

- D. Assemblies are defiled by receiving someone that has linked with moral or doctrinal evil.
  - a. **Leviticus 14:44-45** – The whole house is unclean.
  - b. **Numbers 19:13-20** – The whole tent is unclean and it takes time to clean it.
  - c. **Joshua 7** – Achan’s sin affected all of Israel.
  - d. Leaven speaks of sin – compare the below verses:
    - i. **Matthew 13:33**
    - ii. **Matthew 16:6,11-12**
  - e. **1 Corinthians 5:1, 6-7** – moral evil.
  - f. **Galatians 5:7-9** – doctrinal evil. This is any linking with teaching or actions that deny the person or the work of our Lord. **2 John 1:9-11**. For example: One false doctrine is not allowing the Holy Spirit to lead whoever HE will when HE gathers us together with Christ as the head. **Matthew 18:18-20** (The Lord is in the midst), **1 Corinthians 11:3, 20; 1 Corinthians 14:23-29; 1 Peter 2:5, Ephesians 5:23-24**
  - g. **2 Timothy 2:19 and 22** – From our (man’s) perspective there are two groups, 1- Vessels that profess to be saved, but only the Lord knows. 2- Vessels that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.
  - h. **2 Timothy 2:20-21** – From God’s perspective there are three groups, 1- Vessels to honor, 2- Vessels to dishonor, and 3- Vessels to honor which are sanctified (set apart). To be a vessel to honor which is sanctified, we need to leave (to be set apart from) the mixture of honor and dishonor. If another believer will not

## Fellowship with a Holy God and His Saints

separate from a vessel unto dishonor then they themselves cannot be a vessel sanctified and therefore we must separate from them.

- E. Scripture teaches a unity of assemblies proclaiming the truth. There should be the same privileges, responsibilities, and practices in each assembly that concern our blessed Lord's honor and glory.
- a. **1 Corinthians 1:2** – Sanctified and Called Saints.
  - b. **1 Corinthians 4:17** – Teaching.
  - c. **1 Corinthians 7:17** – Walk.
  - d. **1 Corinthians 11:16** – Discipline.
  - e. **1 Corinthians 12:25-27** – Care.
  - f. **1 Corinthians 14:33** – Prophesying and Peace.
  - g. **1 Corinthians 14:34** – Order.
  - h. **1 Corinthians 16:1** – Collection.
  - i. **Galatians 1:2** – The churches of Galatia.
  - j. **Revelation 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:29; 3:6; 3:13; 3:22**
- F. The unity of a “circle of fellowship” is also maintained by knowing whom we should and should not accept a letter of commendation from, as shown in scripture. Should we accept it from just anyone professing to be a Christian? No! We should gladly receive those with a letter of commendation who are practicing the truth of the one worldwide body of Christ linked together (in the “circle of fellowship”), as the previous verses have brought out. We cannot 1) refuse someone from this unity of assemblies who has a letter of commendation, 2) deny a letter of commendation to someone that is in our local assembly to be sent to another local assembly, or 3) break bread with other believers that are not in our “circle of fellowship”. There is **one body** of Christ! We should be attempting, as a local assembly to be an expression of that one body (**1 Corinthians 12:27**)
- a. **Acts 9:26-27** – Saul could only “join” with the disciples with the commendation of Barnabas. As we saw in **1 Corinthians 11:26-34**. “are gathered” is a joining with. Therefore this would include the breaking of bread.
  - b. **Acts 18:27** – Here we see that Apollos with the letter of commendation was received or “accepted fully”
  - c. **2 Corinthians 3:1-3** – A letter of commendation, or email, while encouraging is not needed if we are known to be in fellowship with those believers.
  - d. **Romans 16:1** – Letter commending a sister to be received.
  - e. **Philippians 2:29 (2:19-30)** – Receive them and esteem them as fellow believers.
- G. While being in fellowship with other believers is based on the person of Christ (bread) and work of Christ (cup), it is not just the breaking of bread, but includes all aspects of our time together, and responsibility to each other.

## Fellowship with a Holy God and His Saints

- a. **Acts 15:36** – Communicating with all the churches.
- b. **2 Corinthians 11:28** – Daily care for the churches.
- c. **1 Corinthians 12:13-31** – Allowing the Lord to use us, and appreciating how He is using others.
- d. **Ephesians 4:7; 11-16**
- e. **Romans 12:3-8**

Note 1: “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup” (**1 Corinthians 11:20, 28-32**), This is a test each person should do before taking of the Lord’s Supper to see that we are discerning what the body (person) and blood (work) of the Lord really means. Then, so let him eat. It is not a decision on if we should take the emblems but an action to do before taking the emblems. One example would be to examine (judge): (1) the company we keep (our associations), (2) the habits we have, (3) our affections; (4) our motives; (5) our priorities ;(6) our thoughts.

Note 2: An example we have of how our Lord talked with a seeking soul who challenged him is in **John 3:9-11**. Nicodemus did not receive, or possibly understand, our Lord’s witness at first. The Lord challenged Nicodemus’s reception of the truth, but not his motives. The Lord did not give up but went on to explain the truth in a different way. He did not change the truth because it was not understood, but explained the same truth a different way. As He said “I am the way, the truth, and the life” **John 14:6**. Our understanding of the truth will be imperfect at best, but as we grow, we will show His love and His truth more perfectly.

Note 3: For example: The word “communion” in **1 Corinthians 1:9**, and **10:16-17** means fellowship. We must **know** a person before we can have fellowship with that person. In our lives today, the Lord says: “Wherefore by their fruits ye shall **know** them” (**Matthew 7:20**). The Lord has given the local assembly the responsibility to receive a person into fellowship via the breaking of bread (**Matthew 18:17-20; Romans 15:7**) Thus, the local assembly cannot do so until they **know** the person, which obviously requires time to learn (1) if that person is anchored in sound doctrine, (2) about that person’s lifestyle and associations, and (3) if that person manifests fruits of the spirit. **1 Timothy 5:22** clearly instructs us to “Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men’s sins: keep thyself pure.” In (**2 John 7, 9-10**) we see that if someone is not confessing the truth and abiding in the doctrine concerning the person and work of Christ then we do not truly have fellowship with them in Christ. If we fellowship with those who teach false doctrine or live an ungodly lifestyle, then we become partakers of their evil deeds. This could include someone who comes to us individually or to the local assembly attempting to teach doctrines which are unscriptural.

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