

# Remembering the Lord With People Who Are Not Familiar To Some In Our Assembly

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In contemplating a subject that is not spoken of directly in Scripture, one must carefully explain each step, being cognizant of the fact that he is prone to jump to his preconceived answer without hitting each consecutive step in logical sequence. The subject of occasional fellowship is just such a subject. It is a subject seldom even spoken of in the general churches (what we sometimes, rightfully in some cases, refer to as the “systems of men”). The reason for this is twofold: on the one hand, the major denominations are what is referred to as sectarian and therefore do not need to concern themselves with occasional fellowship since one must be a member of that church to take part in the Lord’s Supper or communion, so called. On the other hand the “nondenominational” churches often believe your taking part in Communion is between you and God. They teach you are the one who examines yourself to determine if you are eligible to take part there is no “horizontal” aspect to communion in their teaching. In this case there is really no point in the discussion since it is their belief that we have no right to judge anyone, therefore separation between believers (or anyone who professes to be a believer) is in reality has no bearing on this type of gathering. Therefore the discussion is limited to those who are attempting to honor the Lord in keeping guard over who takes part in their remembrance meeting.

The first thing one must establish is why we even care who is taking part in our remembrance meeting. There is more than one reason for our concern. The first one is that the Lord asks us to separate from evil (1 Corinthians 5:13, But those who are outside God judges. Therefore “put away from yourselves the evil person.”,)

(2 Timothy 2:19 “Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.”). The preceding verses make it pretty plain that we are to separate from Christians who are living immorally (1 Cor 5) and those bringing bad doctrine (2 Timothy 3, Jude, 2 and 3 John, Gal 5). So obedience to our Lord is one reason to not break bread with people we aren't familiar with.

In the verses in 1 Corinthians (5:6-8) the Spirit refers to leaven we learn here that the sin that was being allowed in the assembly leavened the whole lump. It's a familiar picture of the yeast we put in bread that makes it rise. When I make bread I put in just a teaspoon and a half of yeast to make a 2 pound loaf of bread. When you put the yeast in and mix it together, the bread, the whole loaf rises, not just a 1 1/2 teaspoon chunk of it. In the same way these verses are saying that a little bit of sin gets into the group and affects everyone in that group. It's not that every person who is in that lump or loaf of bread has necessarily sinned in the same way, but for some reason in the Lord's eyes they are tainted by the sin of the person they are having fellowship with who has this obvious and uncontested sin in their life. The same thing is referred to in Galatians, some people made their way into the assembly and tried to convince them that salvation by faith alone wasn't enough. In chapter 5 the assembly in Galatia is warned, like the Corinthians, that fellowshiping with these people who have brought bad teaching into their assembly is equivalent to the 1 Corinthians 5 section in that like leaven and it will leaven the whole lump. So what is the implication? Simply that when we are in an assembly (or church) that has someone who is either living

immorally or teaching bad doctrine, even though we are not involved in the immorality or the bad doctrine, the leaven of what they have done has tainted us, made us as unholy as the person who has done the sin. This doesn't happen in our family, if one person is a bad dude, we aren't all (necessarily) in the same category. It doesn't happen on our baseball team, we can play baseball with the worst of characters and not be affected. But for some reason (possibly due to the Lord's great love for His assembly - see Ephesians 5:25-27 and His desire to see His assembly reflect His holiness) in the assembly, what we each individually do rubs off on everyone. 2 Cor 6:17 says "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." The Lord's standards for holiness in His assembly may be a bit higher than ours. In 1 Peter 1:15-16 we are told "but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "be holy, for I am holy." The holiness that characterizes Him is to characterize us as well. We are to be a reflection of our Lord in how we act, that is what He is doing in His assembly, His work in us is to "sanctify (set us apart) and cleanse her (His church) with the washing of water by the word." It's a very high standard, one that requires a person to "examine himself" (1 Cor 11:28) before he takes part in the remembrance meeting.

If a person is meeting with someone who is living a life that is known to be inconsistent with the Christian walk or is meeting with someone who is teaching doctrine opposed to the truths of Scripture, is that person part of the lump that has been infected with the yeast that 1 Cor and/or Galatians speaks of or are they exempt because we know them personally and are aware they

are not personally involved in sin? What does Scripture say? If what Scripture says is inconsistent with what we want to believe do we ignore it because we like the person or for other personal or relational reasons?

In regard to the holiness of our Lord mentioned above, if there is a question of reception, due to His holiness and the truth that we are to reflect that holiness, it would seem we would rather err on the side of waiting and having an opportunity to determine where this person stands on important issues and if they are willing to not go back to a place where they will continue the association with the yeast-filled loaf of bread.

In our case or the case of another person in our assembly, when we leave our assembly even for one Sunday and break bread at a church of a friend or relative, we are associating ourselves with that group and every person in that group. Consider the following from research by the Barna research group: “(17% of practicing Christians have a biblical worldview) coming from an OmniPoll conducted in an online study of 1,066 U.S. adults in July of 2015. Barna defines “biblical worldview” as believing that absolute moral truth exists; the Bible is totally accurate in all of the principles it teaches; Satan is considered to be a real being or force, not merely symbolic; a person cannot earn their way into Heaven by trying to be good or do good works; Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth; and God is the all-knowing, all-powerful creator of the world who still rules the universe today.” These are basic truths pertaining to the Christian faith, not merely brethren beliefs, this is eye opening. The apostasy that was in its infancy in the apostles days is full blown in our world today. As we have read in 1 Cor 5 and Galatians 5, we have become infected by the leaven of anyone in that church who fits the

descriptions set out in these two passages (and others). You might say, “well, there is no leaven in this particular church”. If that is the case, we should all be with them. They should be given the opportunity to talk with us and see if we can in good conscience and in obedience to our Lord, meet with them on a permanent basis. The Lord desires that we meet with all people who call on Him out of an undivided heart (2 Tim 2:22). We are the body of Christ, His body is not divided, there is nothing positive about having to be separate from other believers who are faithfully walking with the Lord. We should be together and they are very welcome to join us as we work together to become an increasingly more clear reflection of our dear Lord Jesus Christ.