

# “Fellowship”

1 John 1: 3-7

Introduction: “What a *fellowship*, what a joy divine, leaning on the everlasting arms...”

- A. What is this fellowship?
- B. What does it mean to “fellowship” someone?
- C. We need to consider the word's 1) basic meaning 2) biblical usage and 3) blatant misuse.

Discussion:

## I. The Basic Meaning Of “Fellowship”

- A. English
  - 1. “Fellow” - “Originally, a person who shares; partner or accomplice.”
  - 2. “-ship” - “The quality, condition, or state of, as in fellowship, friendship”
- B. Greek
  - 1. “Koinonia” - “(a) communion, fellowship, sharing in common .. (b) that which is the outcome of fellowship, a contribution” (KJV: Fellowship, Contribution, communion, distribution, communicate, communication)
  - 2. “Koinonos” - “Denotes ‘a partaker’ or ‘partner’” (KJV: Fellowship, partaker, partner, companion)
  - 3. “Koinoneo” - “to have fellowship” (KJV: Fellowship, distributing, partaker, communicate)
  - 4. “Sun-koinoneo” - “To have fellowship with or in” (KJV: Fellowship with, communicate with, partaker of, partaker with, companion)
  - 5. “Metochē” - “partnership” (KJV: Fellowship)

## II. The Biblical Usage Of “Fellowship”

- A. Spiritual union of *all* faithful brethren with the Godhead. (1 John 1:3; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 2:1)
  - 1. Because all partaker of the same characteristic(s) - light. (1 John 1:5-7).
  - 2. Union so close that each is said to be in the other (cf. John 15:4; 1 John 2:24; Rom. 8:7)
  - 3. Union established at baptism: into Christ (Gal. 3:26,27); into church (1 Cor. 12:13).
  - 4. Union maintained by walking light. (1 John 1:7-9)
- B. Spiritual union of brethren in local congregation.
  - 1. Local church is not called specifically called a “fellowship” in N.T. , but the idea in descriptions.
    - a. Members “joined together” - hence, “joint participation” - fellowship (Eph. 4:16; Acts 9:26)
    - b. Members received and expelled from this partnership/fellowship. (Rom. 14:1; 1 Cor. 5:13)
      - (1) Possible to be wrongfully received or retained into this fellowship. (1 Cor. 5)
      - (2) Possible to be wrongfully rejected or expelled from this fellowship. (3 John 9-10).
- C. To share in the things of another - either directly or as an accomplice.
  - 1. The sufferings of Christ. (Phil. 3:10).
  - 2. The unfruitful works of darkness, rather than reproving them. (Eph. 5:11)
  - 3. The sins of others. (2 John 9-11; 1 Tim. 5:22 ).
- D. Certain acts that signal a recognition of the state fellowship with another.
  - 1. Eating at the Lord's table, Israelite altar, or Idol's table. (1 Cor. 10:14-22)
  - 2. Making certain contributions to another. (Acts 2:42; Rom. 15:26; Phil. 4:15)
  - 3. Giving the “right hand of fellowship” (Gal. 2:9).
  - 4. What about attending services of group cannot fellowship? That depends!
  - 5. What about using in our services members of churches we could not fellowship?
  - 6. J. W. McGarvey is a good example of fellowshiping error while teaching the truth.<sup>1</sup>

## III. The Blatant Misuse of “Fellowship”

- A. Making Biblical fellowship synonymous with social fellowship.
  - 1. “Fellowships” - meals, games, social gatherings etc. - Not Bible fellowship.
  - 2. “Baptism” means washing or dipping but a swimming party not Bible baptism.
- B. Making “withholding fellowship” the same as “withdrawing fellowship” or “church discipline.”
  - 1. In church discipline, *spiritual* fellowship is withdrawn by the local church, but so is *social* fellowship by its members (cf. 1 Cor. 5).
  - 2. A Local church cannot withdraw from a denomination or its members, but can withhold - not use members or announce activities, etc. in way to signal fellowship.

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<sup>1</sup> Search For The Ancient Order, Vol. 2, p. 442

3. A Local church cannot withdraw from members of another congregation, but can decline fellowship (use in services, announce meetings, etc.)

Conclusion:

- A. Biblical Fellowship is primarily our partnership with God and brethren.
- B. Biblical Fellowship is expressed in various acts of spiritual service.
- C. Biblical Fellowship is not same a social fellowship. (cf. 1 Cor. 11:22ff)