

DISCIPLESHIP COURSE

PART VI: CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

SCRIPTURE READING: Heb. 10:24-25; Acts 2:42-47; 9:5; John 13:34-35; Eph.4:1-7; 11-16 ;1 Cor. 12:12-27; 1 John 3:11-20; 4:11-21.

MEMORY VERSE: John 13:34-35;

PURPOSE: To understand the importance of fellowship with other Christians. What we as believers get out of it and what we put into it.

LESSON: When a person is born-again into the family of God the Lord Jesus will lead that person to unite with a local church or assembly. The reasons for this are many but at first it is for the new converts protection, growth and development. Later, provided the new convert gets through the struggles of the baby period and avoids the pitfalls of the enemy he will be used of God within the local fellowship or church to help develop and grow other new Christians. Praise the Lord, it's just great the way HE works.

I. WHY CHRISTIANS ATTEND CHURCH AND FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS:

A. It would be difficult to image a baby being born into a family and not loving it's parents, it's brothers and sisters. Babies are so loving and are so loved by others even though they can be really cranky and have to be cared for much of the time. Yes, there are many things mature Christians have to over look in babies. However because the love of God is in our hearts we do love them, protect them and do our best to help them grow. When we are born into God's family, His nature of love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit so that we love others. Especially one another. (Rom. 5:5; John 13:34-35). It stands to reason that if we love someone we want to be with them. One of the reasons that we know for sure we are true children of God is our love for the brethren. (1 John 3:14). If we do not love our brothers and sisters in the Lord then that is a sure sign that something is wrong with our relationship with God. (1 John 4:20).

B. This is the primary reason that our Heavenly Father leads a person who is saved to unite with a local church. In fact he will almost be driven by the Holy Spirit to unite with a local assembly. (Acts 2:42-47). This is also why the enemy seeks to use people in the local churches to hurt, misuse and abuse new converts. He, Satan wants them to separate themselves from the fellowship of the church so that they will not grow and develop properly. Young Christians need to be aware their Christian brothers and sisters are not perfect they are human. Also not all church members are brother and sisters. The Greek word for fellowship is "KOINONIA", which means, "a common sharing with others"; "communion"; "fellowship". "and all that believed were together, and had all things common." (Acts 2:44).

C. There is a togetherness or UNITY in fellowship, which produces much strength in the Body. There is ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BODY, ONE BAPTISM etc.

1. We all share a common interest: JESUS
2. We all have a common ENEMY: SATAN
3. We all need MUTUAL HELP, ENCOURAGEMENT and EXHORTATION. (Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Cor. 12:12-14).

D. There is HELP and ASSISTANCE among the members for each other. There is spiritual strength and growth through unified PRAYER, FELLOWSHIP and SHARING. "No man is an island." Someone has said, "You may attempt to swim the Atlantic ocean by yourself and make it, but it will be a whole lot safer with many others swimming together and a lot less lonely."

E. As disciples we become BODY CONSCIOUS. There is LIFE in every part or member of the BODY. ALL parts are essential to the WHOLE. When the enemy attacks a member or part of the body he is attacking a part of YOU. Whether we realize it or not a weakened member is a HURT and a BURDEN to us ALL. (1 Cor. 12:18-22).

F. Our common enemy seeks to weaken the body, to tear it down or to hinder our effectiveness through DIVISION, STRIFE, DISUNITY and DISSIMILATION. My, how the enemy seeks to use YOU i.e. your MOUTH, your ATTITUDE, your ACTIONS or lack of ACTIONS etc. to hinder the ministry of the church. To disrupt the unity of the SPIRIT. TO DIVIDE and TO CONQUER. To hinder the ministry of the SPIRIT within the church and its members. To do harm, hinder and to speak disparagingly of your church and its members is to be used by the EVIL ONE. To do any harm whatever to any member in any manner is to do HARM TO JESUS HIMSELF. IS TO HURT HIM!! The other side of the coin is also true; to do GOOD to any member and the church is to do good to HIM. (Acts 9:5; Matt. 25:37-40; 44-46; Heb. 10:24-25).

II. QUESTIONS:

1. How do you feel about your LOCAL CHURCH?
2. Name two or three areas that you feel that your church needs some improvement.
3. Will you commit to pray daily about these matters and to do whatever else the Lord directs you to do?
4. Is there anything YOU can do to help in these or some other areas?
5. Has God been dealing with you about some need in your church family that you can assist with?
6. How do you feel about all the people in your church?
7. Has the enemy used YOUR mouth to talk about or to criticize others? If yes, do you realize the severity of this matter? Have you repented and ask God to forgive you?
8. Do you really LOVE God's people, HIS children? Why would you want to hurt them?
9. What does your present and past actions, attitudes and words indicate about your love for God's children?
10. Do YOU support your local church with your PRESENCE, your TITHES, your TALENTS and your PRAYERS?
11. Here are some things to think about. Please do:
 - > If every member of YOUR church were JUST LIKE YOU, what kind of church would you have?
 - > Would there be any prayer for people? How much?
 - > Would there be services on Sunday? Sunday night? Wednesday night?
 - > Would the church bills be paid? Would the pastor be paid?
 - > Would the mechanical needs of the church, the repairs of the equipment etc. be done?
 - > Would there be any Sunday school teachers. Would there be a Sunday school?
 - > How about the cleanliness of the building?" IF ALL THE MEMBERS WERE JUST LIKE YOU"
 - > Would people get their feeling hurt by what was said?
 - > Would visitors feel at home and be welcomed?
 - > Would the members be critical of each other?
 - > Would the members quit because their feelings were hurt?
 - > Would the members quit because things did not go their way?
 - > Would the members be so busy with personal affairs or pleasures; would they be so lazy or indifferent that nothing could be accomplished?> Would the Sick be visited?
" IF ALL THE MEMBERS WERE JUST LIKE YOU"
 - > Would the LOST be witnessed to?
 - > Would those in jail be visited? Would they even be written to?
 - > Would the hungry be fed? WHAT, a can of soup?
 - > Would the POOR be clothed? With what, some old wore out discarded clothes?
 - > Would the widows in the fellowship have a helping hand?
 - > Would the lonely in the NURSING homes and SHUT INS be visited?
 - > Would these elderly and infirm people be prayed for? Would they have volunteers who would take them to the HOSPITAL, the DOCTOR, to the GROCERY STORE?"IF ALL THE MEMBERS WERE JUST LIKE YOU"
 - > Would the missionaries be cared for? Do you know the missionaries your church supports? Have you ever had any of them into your home? Would the missionaries have financial support?
 - > Would church attendance be good or would the member be home watching TV or their favorite TV minister. Perhaps fishing or taking care of some more important matters.
 - > Would the members know the WORD? Could they win someone to CHRIST? Could they minister the word to someone in need?
 - > Would the members be sharing happiness, love and joy among themselves?
 - > Would there be a summer camp? Would there be a youth ministry? Would all these activities be dead due to a lack of interest or other more pressing matters?
 - > Would the members be TOUCHY, OVER SENSITIVE and WITHDRAWN?
 - > Would there be a music ministry? Would there be a praise & worship service?
 - > Would everybody want their own way and get their feelings hurt if they didn't get their way?
 - > Would the unity of the Spirit be maintained because the people would be forgiving of each other and not hold grudges and not allow a root of bitterness to prevail among them?
12. When your pastor has to stand before God and give an account of your attitude, actions and works, what do you suppose he will say about you?
13. What do you think Jesus meant when He said that we were to get the beam (log) out of our own eye before we tried to get the splinter out of someone else's eye? (Matt. 7:1-5)

14. Do you realize that to pass judgment upon someone else is to bring judgment upon yourself. Not the judgment of men, which is really unimportant but the judgment of God. Many Christians have lost their JOY, their PEACE and their HAPPINESS because of such foolishness. Quite often if there has been no repentance, their lives are filled with TROUBLES, TURMOIL, STRIFE, BITTERNESS, CONFUSION, WORRIES, FEARS and ANXITIES because their attitudes toward some member or the church and because of their mouths. Some are even so BLIND AND BITTER that they blame GOD for their problems.

15. Can you see beloved that the church is YOU and the improvements must start with YOU? What will YOU do?

16. These questions are not intended to make someone feel guilty or condemned. Nor are they ask just so that we can have a better church fellowship. They are ask so that we can examine ourselves and help all of us to realize our problems (sins) and to lead us to repentance so that we can all enjoy the fullness of the blessings of God in our lives. WILL YOU JOIN ME? MAY GOD HELP US ALL AMEN.

THANK YOU!

GOD BLESS YOU!

ISN'T JESUS WONDERFUL!