

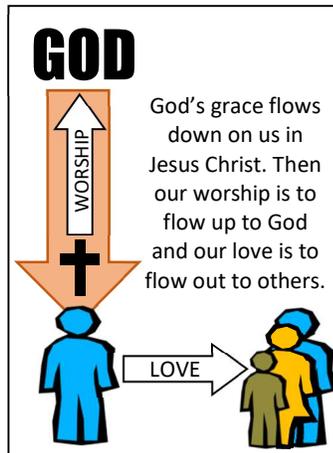


Lesson 7

CHURCH: CONNECTING TO THE BODY

Just as surely as God desires to lead us to a knowledge of genuine Christian fellowship, so surely must we be overwhelmed by a great disillusionment with others, with Christians in general, and, if we are fortunate, with ourselves. By sheer grace, God will not permit us to live even for a brief period in a dream world. He does not abandon us to those rapturous experiences and lofty moods that come over us like a dream. ...Only that fellowship which faces such disillusionment, with all its unhappy and ugly aspects, begins to be what it should be in God's sight, begins to grasp in faith the promise that is given to it. ...He who loves his dream of a community more than the Christian community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter, even though his personal intentions may be ever so honest and earnest and sacrificial.

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*



The God-Centered Life is a life of loving God and loving others (Matt. 22:36-40). Our love toward others begins with our family. Husbands, wives, parents, and children are to show the love of Christ toward each other. But not everyone has a family and some families are so wracked by sin that relationship is virtually impossible. God's solution for sin's devastating effects on us and on the family is

the creation of a new family, the church. God is our Father. Christ is our older brother. The Holy Spirit is our common DNA. (cf. Eph. 2:19, 4:3; 1 Tim. 3:15; Gal. 6:10; Heb. 2:11).

THE PRIORITY OF FELLOWSHIP

- Our love for one another impacts our _____ with God (cf. Matthew 5:23-24; 1 John 3:14, 23; 4:7-8, 20-21).
- Our love for one another impacts our _____ to the world (cf. John 13:34-35; 17:20-21).
- Our love for one another impacts our _____ in the Lord (cf. Psalm 133:1-3; Philippians 2:1-2; 4:1-4).

There are many things which a person can do alone, but being a Christian is not one of them. As the Christian life is, above all, a state of union with Christ and of union of his followers with one another, love of the brethren is inseparable from love of God.

—William T. Ham

Fellowship. Greek, *koinonia*, "a sharing in common, partnership, joint participation, community."

Interestingly, the word "disciple" is not used to describe believers after Acts 21:16. The rest of the NT describes believers as brothers and sisters in Christ.

True worship is not enhanced by better music, better prayers, better architecture, or even better preaching. True worship is enhanced by better relationships between those who come to worship. —John MacArthur, Jr.

Jesus gives the world the right to judge whether you and I are born-again Christians on the basis of our observable love toward all Christians.

—Francis Schaeffer

THE PRACTICE OF FELLOWSHIP

By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. —1 John 3:16

- Love is _____.
- Love is _____.
- Love is _____.

In Acts 2:42-47, we are given a glimpse into the church living in love.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

THE PRAYER FOR FELLOWSHIP

I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. —John 17:20-21

- Our unity is a _____ on Jesus' heart.
- Our unity is a _____ of the Triune God.
- Our unity is a _____ that Jesus is real.

Walking the God-Centered Path This Week

- *Pursue fellowship.* Are you connected to other believers?
- *Preserve fellowship.* Are you harboring anger toward another believer? If so, repent of any part that you have played, seek reconciliation (if possible), and release things into God's hands.
- *Practice fellowship.* Write a note of encouragement to a believer.
- Complete the Lesson 8 study on *Gifts: Serving in the Body*.

Agape love is selfless love, a conscious act of the will, a deliberate decision to put others ahead of ourselves. —Billy Graham

If you cannot mold yourself entirely as you would wish, how can you expect other people to be entirely to your liking? —Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471)

Satan always hates Christian fellowship; it is his policy to keep Christians apart. Anything which can divide saints from one another he delights in. Since union is strength, he does his best to promote separation. —Charles H. Spurgeon

The love which springs from self-conceit or self-interest ends in being cruel because it demands an infinite satisfaction from another human being which it will never get. —Oswald Chambers

Unity is necessary to the outpouring of the Spirit of God. —A. W. Tozer

The unity for which he prays is a unity of love; it is, in fact, their participation in the unity of love which subsists eternally between the Father and the Son. —F.F. Bruce

You don't create unity in the church. It's already there. All you can do is destroy it. —John MacArthur, Jr.

We cannot expect the world to believe that the Father sent the Son, that Jesus' claims are true, and that Christianity is true, unless the world sees some reality of the oneness of true Christians. —Francis Schaeffer