

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE CHURCH

1 JOHN 1:5-9

INTRODUCTION:

1. Fellowship is one of the keys to church growth.
2. A church will never grow beyond its fellowship.
3. If the fellowship is right, growth occurs.
4. If not, the church will decline and eventually die.

5. 1 John 1:5-1-9

I. THE MEANING OF FELLOWSHIP

- A. V.6, "Fellowship" – koinonia, beautiful word
- B. The sharing together of a common life. Bond of love and unity that keeps God's people one.
- C. Fellowship is two fellows in one ship. It suggests a binding partnership.
- D. More than handshaking, friendly smiles.
- E. It is a love that faces problems and difficulties with a commitment toward resolution.
- F. Fellowship is the determination to love one another and stay together.

II. TWO ASPECTS OF FELLOWSHIP

- A. **Vertical:** v.6, "We have fellowship with Him."
 1. Disobedience breaks our fellowship with God.

2. Therefore, we cannot have a right relationship with others.
3. A broken fellowship with God, however, can be restored.
4. V.9 – 3 key words
 - a. Confess – agree with God
 - b. Forgive – erase, cancelling a debt
 - c. Cleanse – catharsis, to purge, remove that which is unhealthy

B. **Horizontal:** v.7, “Fellowship with one another.”

1. Things must be right with God before they can be right with others.
2. One of the first signs that something is not right with God is when people withdraw from others.
3. When we are having fellowship with God, we will move toward others.

III. **TWO TYPES OF FELLOWSHIP**

A. **Exclusive**

1. Have you ever been excluded?
2. Carl Sandburg – “The harshest word in the English language is the word ‘excluded.’”
3. The world excludes others, the church should never have this attitude.
4. When we begin to draw lines in the church, the church is no longer a church.

B. **Inclusive**

1. 1 John 2:2, "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world."

2. John 3:16

3. Matthew 28:19-20

IV. THREATS TO FELLOWSHIP

The church in Acts experienced great fellowship, and then Satan began to attack as we see in Acts 4,5, and 6.

A. Satan attacked through external opposition. Acts 4

1. The Sadducees and religious leaders launched an attack on the church. They charged the church not to speak to anyone about the name of Jesus.

2. How did the church respond to this external pressure? They prayed to God.

3. Acts 4:29-32

4. There will always be critics.

5. Our possibility of overcoming Satan's attack of external opposition is not in our knowledge of the word. It is not in our psychology. It is in the Lord Himself.

B. Satan attempted to destroy the fellowship of the church through the invasion of hypocrisy. Acts 5

1. Annanias and Sapphira observed what was happening in the church. People were receiving attention and joy through selling their property and giving the proceeds to the church. They sell their land and kept part of it. They wanted to appear totally committed, but they were not. God protected the fellowship of the church.

C. Satan attempted to destroy the fellowship of the church through internal dissension. Acts 6

1. Acts 6:1, "In those days, as the number of disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint by the Hellenistic Jews against the Hebraic Jews that their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution."
2. The church was growing. Great and rapid growth is desirable but dangerous.
3. There was rising tension of spiritual maturity.
4. "Complaint" – murmur KJV, word sounds bad, "goggusmos"
5. How was internal dissension resolved in the N.T.? by mature leaders. They acted instead of reacting.
6. When the need was met, the problem was resolved.
7. The fellowship was restored. V.5, "The proposal pleased the whole company."

V. BALANCED FELLOWSHIP

A. Person Centered

1. Not number centered
2. Not dollar centered
3. Not building centered
4. Not program centered
5. We must meet the needs of others.

B. Bible Centered

1. 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."
2. James 1:22, "But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."
3. Every class, every group, every individual should commit themselves to obey whatever command of God that is discovered in His Word.

C. Christ Centered

1. Colossians 3:23, "Whatever you do, do it enthusiastically, as something done for the Lord and not for men."
2. Great motto for life.
3. Every activity and every event must be Christ centered.

CONCLUSION: