

WHAT A FELLOWSHIP

LESSON 1: FELLOWSHIP BEGINS WITH THE WORD

1 John 1:1-4 (KJV)

WHAT IS FELLOWSHIP?

- ❖ The word fellowship comes from the Greek word *koinonia*
- ❖ It carries the idea of:
 - Sharing • Partnership • Participation • Communion • Having something in common
- ❖ Biblical fellowship is more than:
 - Being in the same place • Eating together • Belonging to the same church • Knowing the same people • Enjoying the same activities
- ❖ Christian fellowship grows out of what believers share in Christ
 - A common Savior • A common faith • A common Word • A common spiritual life • A common purpose
- ❖ The early church connected doctrine and fellowship together - Acts 2:42

FELLOWSHIP BEGINS WITH THE WORD

- ❖ John begins with what the apostles personally experienced concerning Jesus - 1 Jn. 1:1
 - They heard Him • They saw Him • They watched Him • They touched Him
- ❖ Their message was based on truth, not rumor or opinion
- ❖ They received the truth about Christ and then declared it to others - 1 Jn. 1:3
- ❖ Faith comes through hearing the Word of God - Rom. 10:17
- ❖ The Word gives believers a common foundation even with differences
 - Personalities may differ
 - Preferences may differ
 - Opinions may differ
 - The Word remains the standard

FELLOWSHIP GROWS THROUGH WHAT WE SHARE

- ❖ John said, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you" - 1 Jn. 1:3
- ❖ What they received from Christ, they shared with others
 - Fellowship includes sharing: The Word • Our testimony • Encouragement • Prayer • Wisdom • Spiritual support
- ❖ The Word should dwell richly among believers - Col. 3:16
- ❖ We should be able to help one another with what God has shown us through His Word
- ❖ Sometimes another believer needs:
 - A word of encouragement • A biblical reminder • Someone to pray with them • Someone to help them see what Scripture says

FELLOWSHIP CONNECTS US TO EACH OTHER

- ❖ John wanted his readers to “have fellowship with us” - 1 Jn. 1:3
- ❖ Christianity was never intended to be lived completely alone
- ❖ God often uses other believers to help us
 - Grow • Heal • Learn • Endure • Serve • Stay encouraged
- ❖ Believers are called to consider and encourage one another - Heb. 10:24-25
- ❖ Fellowship causes us to think about somebody besides ourselves
- ❖ You can attend church and still avoid fellowship
 - Come to worship • Sit through service • Hear the Word • Give your offering • Leave without really connecting to anyone

FELLOWSHIP CONNECTS US TO GOD

- ❖ John said, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” - 1 Jn. 1:3
- ❖ Our fellowship with each other grows out of our fellowship with God

VERTICAL FELLOWSHIP

- ❖ Fellowship with: God the Father • Jesus Christ

HORIZONTAL FELLOWSHIP

- ❖ Fellowship with: Brothers and sisters in Christ • The church • The body of Christ
- ❖ Our vertical relationship affects our horizontal relationships
- ❖ Walking in the light helps us have fellowship with one another - 1 Jn. 1:7

THE WORD TEACHES US HOW TO FELLOWSHIP

- ❖ The Word tells us how to respond when relationships become difficult
- ❖ WHEN SOMEONE HURTS US - Go to the person instead of talking around the person - Matt. 18:15
- ❖ WHEN SOMEONE IS STRUGGLING - Help bear their burden - Gal. 6:2
- ❖ WHEN SOMEONE NEEDS ENCOURAGEMENT - Build one another up - 1 Thess. 5:11
- ❖ WHEN FORGIVENESS IS NEEDED - Be kind, tenderhearted and forgiving - Eph. 4:32
- ❖ WHEN PERSONALITIES CLASH - Forbear and forgive one another - Col. 3:13
- ❖ Without the Word, we may respond according to:
 - Anger • Pride • Feelings • Assumptions • Personal preference

FELLOWSHIP SHOULD PRODUCE JOY

- ❖ John wrote “that your joy may be full” - 1 Jn. 1:4
- ❖ There is joy in:
 - Worshipping together • Learning together • Praying together • Serving together • Laughing together • Helping one another • Watching each other grow
- ❖ Scripture describes unity among believers as both good and pleasant - Ps. 133:1
- ❖ ❖ God did not design the church to be a collection of isolated believers
- ❖ ❖ He designed us to walk together

WHAT WE MUST REMEMBER

- ❖ You cannot have true Christian fellowship without Christ
- ❖ You cannot maintain healthy Christian fellowship while ignoring the Word
- ❖ The Word:
 - Gives us our common foundation • Teaches us how to treat one another • Corrects our attitudes • Guides us through conflict • Keeps Christ at the center
- ❖ Fellowship is strongest when believers are growing in the Word together

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between attending church and having fellowship?
2. Can people be friends without having biblical fellowship? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think John connected fellowship with what he had “seen and heard”?
4. How does knowing the Word help us deal with problems between believers?
5. What can we do as a church to create stronger biblical fellowship?

WHAT A FELLOWSHIP

LESSON 2: WHEN FELLOWSHIP GETS HURT

Ps. 55:12-14

FELLOWSHIP BRINGS BOTH PROXIMITY AND INTENSITY

- ❖ Fellowship brings people close enough to share:
 - The closer the relationship, the greater the potential for help or harm
 - Our proximity comes with responsibility to each other – 1 Cor. 12:25-26

HURT FROM SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU LANDS DIFFERENT

- ❖ Because of our connective nature, it can be more detrimental to be harmed by each other
 - Goes against Bible and our expectations – Psa. 55:12
 - Is indicative of ungodliness present in the fellowship – hatred, self-magnification
 - Harm came from a known, close person – Psa. 55:13
 - Received the same Word and worship and still held broke fellowship – Psa. 55:14
 - They had taken “sweet counsel together”
- ❖ David saw this person as his equal – Psa. 55:13
 - Note that David didn’t see himself as higher or better than, but equal
- ❖ Betrayal can leave us asking:
 - Why did they do this?
 - Was the relationship ever real?
 - Can I trust anyone again?
 - Did I miss the warning signs?

JESUS HAD TO DEAL WITH THIS

- ❖ Jesus also experienced betrayal from someone close to Him - Matt. 26:47-50
 - Judas was not a stranger but had walked with Jesus, heard His teaching, and shared in ministry

DON'T GET STUCK ON WHAT IT USED TO BE – DEAL WITH WHAT IT IS

- ❖ The hurt gets amplified when you remember what was – Psa. 55:14
- ❖ Sometimes what makes betrayal painful is remembering what the relationship used to be
 - Grieve the person
 - Question can you trust again
 - Miss the relationship so either avoid closeness at all cost or corrupt closeness since you feel you will get hurt anyway
 - Live as if you are behind a locked door that you have given the only key to the person who hurt you
 - Can cause you to question everything and everybody

HOW THIS HURTS FELLOWSHIP

- ❖ We treat church or anyone trying to be present for us with
 - Suspicion – 1 Cor. 13:5
 - Withdrawal – Heb. 10:24-25
 - Fear – 2 Tim. 1:7
 - Anger – Eph. 4:26-27
 - Bitterness – Heb. 12:15
- ❖ Instead of healthy boundaries, we put up walls

Healthy Boundaries	Hindering Walls
Guard your heart with wisdom – Prov. 4:23	Close your heart because of fear – 2 Tim. 1:7
Recognize danger and respond wisely – Prov. 22:3	Become suspicious of everybody – 1 Cor. 13:5
Address the person and the problem directly - Matt. 18:15	Withdraw from people instead of dealing with the hurt - Heb. 10:24-25
Pursue peace when possible – Rom. 12:18	Allow bitterness to remain and spread – Heb. 12:15
Forgive while using wisdom about trust – Eph. 4:31-32	Refuse to forgive because you do not want to be hurt again - Col. 3:13
Allow healthy people appropriate access – Prov. 13:20	Keep everybody out because one person hurt you - Prov. 18:1

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND WHEN FELLOWSHIP IS HURT?

1. TAKE THE HURT TO GOD

- ❖ David was honest about what he was feeling – Psa. 55:1-2
- ❖ God is not intimidated by our pain
- ❖ Prayer gives us a safe place to process hurt before reacting to people

2. REFUSE TO FEED BITTERNESS

- ❖ Put away bitterness, wrath, anger and evil speaking - Eph. 4:31
- ❖ Replaying the offense repeatedly can keep the wound open

3. HANDLE THE MATTER BIBLICALLY

- ❖ Go directly to the person when appropriate - Matt. 18:15-20
- ❖ Avoid spreading the offense to people who are not part of the solution

4. FORGIVE

- ❖ Forgiveness – Eph. 4:31-32
 - Forgiveness releases our right to live in bitterness and revenge – Rom. 12:19
 - Forgiveness does not mean pretending nothing happened, calling wrong right, ignoring repeated harmful behavior, or restoring the same level of trust immediately – Luke 17:3
 - Trust can be broken quickly but may take time to rebuild – Pro. 25:19
 - Reconciliation requires more than one person – Mat. 5:23-24
 - Peace should be pursued when possible - Rom. 12:18

5. HOW EACH OTHER ACCOUNTABLE

- ❖ Our actions don't just affect us – 1 Cor. 12:25-26
- ❖ Ignoring the issue isn't accountability – Eph 4:15
- ❖ Things should be handled in accordance with Scripture – Mat. 18:15-17
- ❖ Real repentance should produce evidence of change – Mat. 3:8

6. USE WISDOM

- ❖ Be wise in how relationships are restored – Pro. 4:7
- ❖ Forgiveness and trust are related, but they are not identical – Pro. 25:19

7. LOVE

- ❖ Lead with love following Jesus example
 - Don't let betrayal destroy your capacity to love
 - Judas betrayed Him - Matt. 26:48-49
 - Peter denied Him - Luke 22:54-62
 - The disciples scattered - Matt. 26:56

8. PATIENCE

- ❖ It may take time – Ecc. 3:1; Rom. 12:12; James 1:4

FELLOWSHIP CAN SURVIVE HURT

- ❖ Hurt does not have to have the final word
- ❖ Some relationships can be restored, some changed, and some ended
- ❖ Our relationship with Christ must remain steady even when relationships with people become difficult

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does betrayal from a close friend hurt differently from opposition from an enemy?
2. What are some ways hurt can affect future relationships?
3. What is the difference between forgiveness and restoring trust?
4. How can believers set healthy boundaries without becoming bitter or isolated?
5. What can the church do to help people heal when fellowship has been hurt?