

Back to the Basics

Fellowship with Jesus (1)

Memory Verse:
1 John 1:3

In our previous lessons, we looked closely at Jesus, the Son of God. Along with Jesus being the Son of God resurrected from the dead and the Christ, we also saw Jesus as our King, our High Priest, our Mediator, our Redeemer, our Savior, our Creator, and the Christ. Considering the greatness of Jesus Christ, one might be surprised to learn that we can be in close fellowship with Him. Why would someone as great and mighty as Jesus have anything to do with lowly beings such as ourselves? However, the Bible teaches that fellowship with Jesus is not only possible, but required for one to enter into Heaven.

Let's Talk About Spiritual Fellowship

While there are many different areas of one's life wherein he or she could be in fellowship with someone else, the area of reatest concern is that of spiritual fellowship. To help understand spiritual fellowship, let us consider the meaning of the word "fellowship." The word "fellowship," is defined as follows: "1 : COMPANIONSHIP, COMPANY 2 a : community of interest, activity, feeling, or experience b : the state of being a fellow or associate 3 : a company of equals or friends : ASSOCIATION 4 : the quality or state of being comradely" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary) In other words, to have fellowship with someone is to have a common interest, activity, experience, participation, etc. The key to fellowship is that which you have in common.

Since we are studying spiritual fellowship as defined by the Bible, let us consider the following Greek definitions.

- Q Koinonia - *noun* - "1) fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, intercourse" (Enhanced Strong's Lexicon)
- Q Koinonos - *noun* - "1) a partner, associate, comrade, companion 2) a partner, sharer, in anything" (Ibid)
- Q Metoche - *noun* - "1) a sharing, communion, fellowship" (Ibid.)
- Q Koinoneo - *verb* - "1) to come into communion or fellowship with, to become a sharer, be made a partner 2) to enter into fellowship, join one's self to an associate, make one's self a sharer or partner" (Ibid.)

Q Sugkoinoneo - *verb* - "1) to become a partaker together with others, or to have fellowship with a thing" (Ibid.)

To summarize the above definitions, we find that the general principle of fellowship is: To be in association of, to participate with someone in something, to share, to have in common, to partner with someone in something, to join in something, etc.

The inspired writers spoke of fellowship or the principle of fellowship in four different lights.

Q First, the Bible refers to a Christian's relationship to the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

Q Second, the Bible refers to a Christian's relationship to other Christians.

Q Third, the Bible refers to Christians working together in matters pertaining to the Lord.

Q Fourth, the Bible refers to a person's relationship with the works of darkness.

Please understand that there is a difference between spiritual fellowship and other areas of fellowship seen in the world. Not all fellowships or joint participation violate our spiritual fellowship with the heavenly Father. If a fellowship violates or compromises our spiritual fellowship with God, then we are to avoid that worldly fellowship, maintaining our proper spiritual fellowship.

Where Does Spiritual Fellowship Begin?

Spiritual fellowship cannot exist unless it first exists with God. A person must turn to Jesus Christ to enter into fellowship, partnership, sharing, or communion, with the heavenly Father.

Fellowship with God was severed when Adam and Eve sinned. (cf. Genesis 3:1-24) From that time forward, all who conceded to the temptations of sin have been separated from God. The apostle Paul wrote, "*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned . . .*" (Romans 5:12) The death of which Paul spoke was the spiritual separation caused by one sinning against God.

From the beginning, God had a plan which would restore that wonderful fellowship. This restoration was spoken of by the apostles as a mystery "*which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God . . .*" (Ephesians 3:9) God gave the privilege of revealing the mystery of the restoration of fellowship with Him to Paul and the other apostles. Consider first Colossians 1:25-29:

of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily. (Colossians 1:25-29; cf. Romans 16:25-26)

According to Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus, God gave Paul the "*dispensation of the grace of God.*" (v 2) God, through revelation, made known to Paul the mystery "*which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets.*" (v 3-5) The mystery revealed was "*that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel.*" (v 6) Paul was to "*preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ.*" (v 8-9) (Ephesians 3:1-9)

When a person follows the "mystery of salvation," they will partake of the "unsearchable riches of Christ." In order for a person to share in the "mystery of salvation," they must abide by the will of God, which was preached by Jesus and His apostles. (cf. Matthew 7:21; Hebrews 2:3-4) Let us review the "mystery of salvation."

- Q Jesus taught, "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*" (John 3:16, NKJV)
- Q Jesus taught, "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.*" (Mark 16:15-16, NKJV)
- Q Jesus taught, "*Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things.*" (Luke 24:46-48, NKJV)
- Q Peter taught, "*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*" (Acts 2:38, NKJV)
- Q Peter taught, "*Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,*" (Acts 3:19, NKJV)
- Q Paul taught, "*that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*" (Romans 10:9-10, NKJV)

A person who believes in Jesus Christ is to repent and be converted. At the point of conversion, there are several wonderful blessings which fall upon the converted.

- Q God saves the converted. (John 3:16; Mark 16:16)
- Q God forgives the converted of all their past sins. (Acts 2:38)
- Q The converted arises from the watery grave of baptism to walk in a newness of life, having been set free from their bondage to sin. (Romans 6:3-7)
- Q The converted has put on Jesus Christ, having been baptized into Christ. (Galatians 3:26-27; Romans 6:3-4)
- Q The converted was baptized into the body of Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:12-14)

- Q The Lord added the converted to the church, which is the body of Jesus Christ. (Cf. Acts 2:38, 41, 47; Ephesians 1:22-23)
- Q The converted is conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote, *“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”* (Romans 8:28,29)
- Q The converted is in fellowship of Jesus. Paul wrote, *“God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”* (1 Corinthians 1:9)
- Q The converted is in fellowship with the heavenly Father. John wrote, *“that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.”* (1 John 1:3)

Fellowship with God is seen in the fact that Christians are His children. To the church in Rome, Paul wrote, *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”* (Romans 8:4-17) As we just read, not only are Christians children of God, but they are joint heirs with Jesus Christ. This relationship through the “spirit of adoption” would not be possible without of fellowship with the heavenly Father.

Fellowship with God is also seen in that we are partakers of His divine nature. Peter wrote, *“Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”* (2 Peter 1:1-4) The Greek word which the translators rendered as “partakers” is *koinonos*. (See page 75 for the definition.) Christians are to be partakers (partner, companion) of God’s divine nature. This partaking would not be possible if fellowship with God was not possible.

Christians are to maintain their fellowship with the heavenly Father by continuing to walk in the light. The apostle John wrote, *“This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”* (1 John 1:5-7) Walking in the light means to live our lives according to Jesus Christ and His teachings. We are to “walk” or live in the light of the word of God, letting it guide our lives in everything we say and do. If we depart from this path of righteous living, then we depart from our fellowship with God. (We will discuss this point in greater detail in lesson eleven.)

In Fellowship with Brethren

Your fellowship with other Christians is contingent upon your maintaining your fellowship with the heavenly Father. (1 John 1:3-7) If you are walking in the light, then you are in fellowship with Jesus and, therefore, in fellowship with other faithful followers of Christ. If, however, you walk in darkness, then you have left the fellowship of Christ and your brethren.

Your fellowship with other Christians is based upon your sharing a common fellowship with Jesus Christ. In addition to this commonality, there are other areas wherein we share or jointly participate in spiritual matters. Consider the following examples:

- Q We walk in the light of the gospel. (2 Corinthians 4:3,4)
- Q We are fellow citizens of the household of God. (Ephesians 2:19-22)
- Q We are partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel. (Ephesians 3:1-6)
- Q We are citizens of heaven. (Philippians 3:20-21)
- Q We are sanctified. (Hebrews 2:11)
- Q We are of one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel. (Philippians 1:27; Romans 15:5-7)
- Q We strive to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:1-6)

In addition to these areas of commonality, we also share together in the work of our Lord. Consider the following examples of shared works:

- Q We participate in the worship of our heavenly Father. (John 4:23-24)
- Q We can work with others to teach the lost. Paul considered Titus his “*partner and fellow worker.*” (2 Corinthians 8:23)
- Q We can support preachers. (Philippians 4:15; Galatians 6:6; cf. 3 John 1:5-8)
- Q We can extend the “*right hand of fellowship*” to fellow labors. (Galatians 2:9)
- Q We help saints when they are in need, when the opportunity and means arise. (Romans 12:13; 2 Corinthians 8:1-7)

As Christians, we should enjoy the spiritual fellowship or the commonality that we share with one another. Let us rejoice with those of like precious faith. Let us work with those with whom we are in spiritual fellowship.

Ten Questions

1. Give a brief definition of fellowship. _____

2. Paul wrote, “Therefore, just as through one man _____ entered the world, and _____ through _____, and thus _____ spread to all men, because all _____ . . .”
3. What was revealed by the Spirit, which “in other ages was not made known to the sons of men”? _____
4. “He who believes and is baptized will be _____; but he who does not _____ will be condemned.”
5. According to Galatians 3:26-27, into what is a person baptized? _____
6. According to 1 Corinthians 12:13-14, into what is a person baptized? _____
7. According to Ephesians 1:22-23, the church is the same as what? _____
8. How does a Christian maintain his fellowship with the heavenly Father? _____

9. According to this lesson, of what two things are Christians fellow citizens? _____

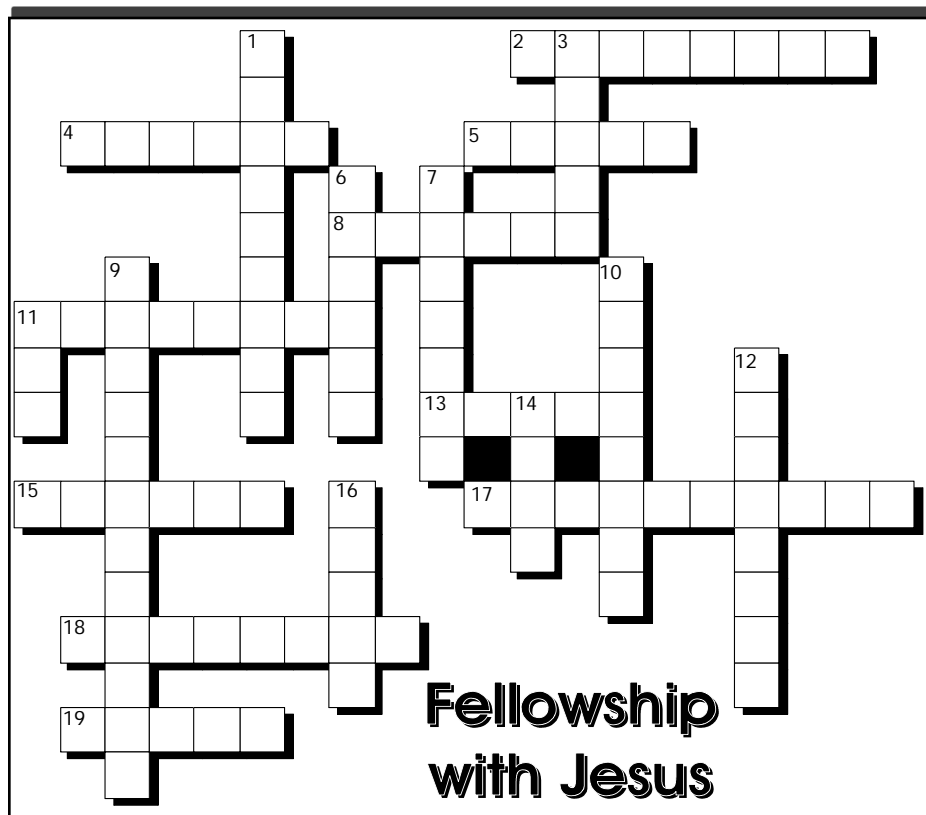
10. According to Ephesians 4:1-6, what are Christians to strive to maintain (endeavor to keep)? _____

True or False

1. T or F : God’s plan for man’s salvation was a mystery to man until revealed by the apostles.
2. T or F : Paul wrote, “. . . that the Jews should be fellow heirs, of the same body, . . .”
3. T or F : Paul wrote, “For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, . . .”
4. T or F : Acts 2:38: One is forgiven after he repents, but before he is baptized.
5. T or F : Mark 16:16: One is saved after he believes and is baptized.
6. T or F : Romans 10:10: One is saved after he believes, but before he confesses.
7. T or F : Romans 6:3-7: One walks in a new life after he is baptized into Jesus’ death.
8. T or F : John wrote, “. . . our fellowship is with the Father and with His son Jesus Christ.”
9. T or F : Those in fellowship with God are “partakers of the divine nature.”
10. T or F : A Christian can walk in darkness and stay in fellowship with God.

A Little Fun

(Use the lesson text to answer these questions.)



Across

2. "... but you received the Spirit of _____ by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.' ..."
4. "_____, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ ..."
5. "... He also predestined to be conformed to the _____ of His Son, ..."
8. "Go into all the world and _____ the gospel to every creature ..."
11. "of which I became a _____ according to the stewardship from God ..."
13. "... For with the _____ one believes unto righteousness, ..."
15. As many as have been baptized into _____, have put on Christ.
17. "God is faithful, by whom you were called into the _____ of His Son, ..."
18. "He who believes and is _____ will be saved; ..."
19. "... and the _____ of Jesus Christ His son cleanses us from all sin."

Down

1. "Repent therefore and be _____, that your sins may be blotted out, ..."
3. "... And thus _____ spread to all men, because all sinned ..."
6. "For by one _____ we were all baptized into one body ..."
7. This Greek word means, "1) a sharing, communion, fellowship."
9. Paul was to "preach among the Gentiles the _____ riches of Christ."
10. "... That the _____ should be fellow heirs, of the same body, ..."
11. "Therefore, just as through one _____ sin entered the world, ..."
12. "... Which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy _____ and prophets."
14. "... which from the beginning of the _____ has been hidden in God ..."
16. "For God so _____ the world that He gave His only begotten Son, ..."

Passages in this Lesson

Genesis 3:1-24	pg 76	Galatians 2:9	pg 79
Matthew 7:21	pg 77	Galatians 3:26-27	pg 77
Mark 16:15-16	pg 77	Galatians 6:6	pg 79
Luke 24:46-48	pg 77	Ephesians 1:22-23	pg 78
John 3:16	pg 77	Ephesians 2:19-22	pg 79
John 4:23-24	pg 79	Ephesians 3:1-6	pg 79
Acts 2:38	pg 77	Ephesians 3:1-9	pg 77
Acts 2:38,41,47	pg 78	Ephesians 3:2	pg 77
Acts 3:19	pg 77	Ephesians 3:3-5	pg 77
Romans 5:12	pg 76	Ephesians 3:8-9	pg 77
Romans 6:3-4	pg 77	Ephesians 3:9	pg 76
Romans 6:3-7	pg 77	Ephesians 4:1-6	pg 79
Romans 8:4-17	pg 78	Philippians 1:27	pg 79
Romans 8:28,29	pg 78	Philippians 3:20-21	pg 79
Romans 10:9-10	pg 77	Philippians 4:15	pg 79
Romans 12:13	pg 79	Colossians 1:25-29	pg 76
Romans 15:5-7	pg 79	Hebrews 2:3-4	pg 77
Romans 16:25-26	pg 76	Hebrews 2:11	pg 79
1 Corinthians 1:9	pg 78	2 Peter 1:1-4	pg 78
1 Corinthians 12:12-14	pg 77	1 John 1:3	pg 75,78
2 Corinthians 4:3,4	pg 79	1 John 1:3-7	pg 79
2 Corinthians 8:1-7	pg 79	1 John 1:5-7	pg 78
2 Corinthians 8:23	pg 79	3 John 1:5-8	pg 79