

**Demystifying
Biblical
Christian
Fellowship**

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Christians have all kinds of ideas concerning Christian fellowship. It is so common to observe that most Christians equate fellowship as friendship. So socializing among Christians is considered fellowship. Is this biblically correct? But what actually is Christian fellowship? Is it just keeping company and maintaining friendship with others, especially among Christians. Is Christian fellowship only restricted to those with their own group or church? Who are those qualified for Christian fellowship? Who are those to be avoided in any form of fellowship? Are there any special privileges in Christian fellowship? What does Christian fellowship entails? What is the Scriptural basis for withholding fellowship with other Christians? What is the purpose of withdrawing fellowship from some other Christians? Is fellowshipping with other Christians important and necessary? And a host of other questions relating to Christian fellowship can be asked. But what does the Bible teach concerning Christian fellowship? Hence, it is needful to study the Bible to address all these issues concerning Christian fellowship without which, Christian fellowship will be misunderstood and mistaken as only having earthly friendship that involves social interaction and nothing more.

Christian fellowship is something many Christians have often taken for granted. Some do not really know what it means to be in fellowship with the cause of the gospel as revealed in the New Testament. In fact, many Christians are thinking in the line on the earthly level of fellowship and even going into the childish extent of befriending those who are friendly to them and withdrawing friendship from those who are not very friendly towards them. We witness such childish acts in children when they quarrel and fight over toys and they do not befriend each other almost every other day. But they may make up very quickly and forget about some unpleasant incidents experienced not too long ago. Sadly this cannot be said about Christians having the wrong idea of Christian fellowship when their understanding of Christian fellowship is only restricted to socializing with other Christians on earth usually for tangible benefits. The animosity between the brethren whether being wronged by others or being taught wrong by their religious leaders often binds them till the day they reach the grave.

The Scriptures do have a lot to teach concerning Christian fellowship. The word “fellowship” occurs twice in the Old Testament and fourteen times in the New Testament. Christians often have the wrong concept or understanding concerning biblical fellowship, especially in these day and age of denominationalism. Christians affiliate themselves with their respective denominations and they take pride in the distinctive of their respective denominations. They boast themselves of their denominations and become contentious like the days of old between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. They glory in their membership of a certain denomination and challenge others to do better than them especially where numbers are concerned. It is like children taking part in telematches with their pomp-pomp girls cheering them on. They think they are taking part in a competition to see who will win in the end and some even going to the extreme of claiming their group as the only true New Testament Church believing this will give them the edge to keep their members together and prevent membership from declining. They sincerely believe they will emerge as the ultimate winners in this Christian competition gone mad.

So the devil provides them with an alternative as many see the sick schisms manifested over years of rivalry to come together again under the banner of ecumenicalism. This provides a platform for “dialogue” among the denominations and sects in the name of Christian fellowship. They prefer to talk about what they agree to be true and sweep under the carpet issues that separate them. This fellowship extends to earthly benefits in the world of

business and camaraderie in many other fronts when common threats are perceived. Hence, it is fashionable to claim that we are “interdenominational” or “non-denominational” hoping to catch a larger audience in the Christian market place. This indeed sounds good to the fallen mind hoping to walk the middle ground trying to avoid all those theological landmines scattered by different denominational groups that disrupt unity.

Of course, the discerning Bible student knows that such “Christian” unity and fellowship is false and the Holy Bible was written before anyone started a movement to become a denomination that separates genuine Christians and keeps them from fellowshiping with one another in the true sense of Christian fellowship as taught in the New Testament. The ideals of Christian fellowship as revealed from the Holy Bible are very different from what many Christians perceived to be true in their own understanding tainted by denominational prejudices and pride. In fact, Christian fellowship extends beyond the realm of this sun where many Christians fail to see. Some Christians are so frightened by their denominational or church leaders that it is a no-no to have Christian fellowship outside of their own denomination or group and the Baptist Briders’ view of the Lord’s Supper is a case in point. This pits brethren in the flesh at home who may belong to different church groups or denomination. Their antagonistic attitude can sometimes even be felt during a family gathering. Therefore, it is paramount to study the Bible far away from any denominational teachings as far as Christian fellowship is concerned in order to live what Christ expects of Christians on this short pilgrimage on earth with joy.

The secular teaching of a fellowship gives the idea such as companionship, camaraderie, comradeship, friendship and partnership. This is not entirely wrong. However, in the biblical context, fellowship is more than just these ideas as expressed by fallen men on earth. It has a divine perspective of entering into a relationship with the Creator God where men have become separated from God because of the fall. The first mention of the word “fellowship” is found in Leviticus 6:2: **If a soul sin, and commit a trespass against the LORD, and lie unto his neighbour in that which was delivered him to keep, or in fellowship, or in a thing taken away by violence, or hath deceived his neighbour;**

This verse concerns trespass against the Lord with regards to earthly possessions where a relationship is established between the parties. Such a fellowship concerns an agreement that is binding on the parties whether written or verbally expressed where a relationship is understood to have been formed between the parties. More importantly, the Lord holds the guilty party responsible for fraud in the event of possession removed where a fellowship is understood to have existed between the parties. A fellowship cannot exist without a relationship. However, a relationship does not always imply the existence of a Christian fellowship. Two men may be neighbours in relationship but they are not involved in a Christian fellowship as one is a Christian and the other is not. Two women may be sisters in the flesh but they are not united in a Christian fellowship because one of them is saved and the other is not. A fellowship without a relationship is an abandoned ship on the loose with no one on board. A Christian fellowship without a divine relationship with the Creator God is a fellow not on board the ship of Zion sailing unto Beulah Land.

The second time the word “fellowship” shows up is found in **Psalm 94:20: Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?** Here is an instance where there is clear demarcation between two camps. The psalmist was crying out to God for judgment and deliverance as revealed from **Psalms 94:16-19: Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity? Unless the LORD had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence. When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O LORD, held me up. In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.**

Immediately after this, the psalmist questioned whether the Lord is in fellowship with the throne of iniquity where mischief is derived. In other words, is the Lord in cahoots with the workers of iniquity? Or is the Lord fellowshipping with the wicked and they are in the same camp? Of course we know this is not the case. So the word “fellowship” is understood to be a relationship established between parties. As we move into the New Testament, Christian fellowship is uniquely Christian where Christ has made it possible for born again believers in Christ to enter into a divine relationship with the triune God and with one another in the form of a fellowship. This fellowship is uniquely for Christians concerning the gospel and the things of Jesus Christ. It has nothing to do with secular matters such as business networking among Christians and people in this world or joining an alumni group to promote an institution of learning.

The first time the word “fellowship” occurs in the New Testament is found in **Acts 2:42: And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.**

The empowerment of the Church had just taken place on the day of Pentecost after the preaching of Peter and others where three thousand souls were added to the Church (Acts 2:41). These believers had joined themselves to the Church and were in constant interaction with other believers. Moreover, they were living out their new lives in Christ according to the doctrines taught by the apostles. They had entered into a fellowship visibly observed and understood but not necessarily expressed on a written piece of paper or certificate or a membership roll. This is a lively fellowship and not a dead fellowship in written form on paper and ink where members just show up for voting once in a while. This fellowship in fact does not cease even when a child of God is promoted to glory as Christ is the living Head of this fellowship in heaven interceding for His saints on earth to do His will. So here is a fellowship that is alive that encompasses a host of Christian activities endeavouring to honour Christ and live for Him.

This must be distinguished from the modern day of church activities which are not only meaningless but burdensome to believers sapping them of their energies and putting them under the bondage of professional event organizers keeping them busy around the church house while their own house fall into decay and their own children turn into rebels. The term “fellowship” has become so abused that it is now the norm to see churches forming all kinds of fellowships. You have the “Businessmen’s Fellowship”,

“Married Couple’s Fellowship”, “Young Adult’s Fellowship”, Men’s Fellowship”, “Women’s Fellowship”, “Teen’s Fellowship” and many more. All these are just man-made schemes to enable members to socialize with one another which often times end up with gossips and even worse, ungodly activities. In fact, some fellowship activities are just glorified matchmaking events, which unfortunately, at times lead some Christians to commit fornication and adultery. Personally, I use to know of a preacher who would bring his entire small group of church members to the movies and attend martial art lessons. Thus fellowship groups are designed to keep members happy together so that they remain in their respective churches because their understanding about fellowship is just earthly social interaction among members. They justify this by claiming that all these fellowship groups will keep members away from the world. Yes, indeed they are kept away from the world but they are also being kept away from the reality of this world so much so they remain blissfully ignorant that they have come under the bondage of an unbiblical “churchianized” world that leads to ignorance of the Scriptures and spiritual pride. So when one is unhappy or if there is any disagreement with someone within the fellowship group, which usually has nothing to do with Bible doctrines, he quickly finds himself out of fellowship. This is how childish Christians can become when they do not study the Bible and apply precepts from the Bible on anything.

The fellowship of the saints mentioned in Acts 2:42 is saints fellowshiping with one another for a cause. The cause is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not some meaningless socializing to make one another feel good and happy and talk about the latest movie and fashion in the world. It is not to discuss about the latest trend in losing weight or health supplements to keep one healthy. Next, believers in Christ are told what Christian fellowship really entails in **1 Corinthians 1:9: God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.**

This Christian fellowship is unique in the sense that it is not horizontal and earthly in nature but it is vertical and spiritual in nature. It is not visible to the naked eyes but visible to the spiritual eye through the eye of faith. Such fellowship in Christ goes beyond the earthly realm of socializing among members. This fellowship is permanent and will not expire upon physical death of its members. It does not necessitate any human earthly instrument to pen their names into a membership roll to certify them to be true members of such a fellowship. Membership entrance is by grace though

faith in the Blessed Son of God who died for them on the cross of Calvary. So whether the denominational leaders like it or not, all born again Christians are in fellowship with Christ, and their attempts to cause disruption to fellowship between Christians on earth are futile because they have already entered into this fellowship with the Son of God without their permission and with one another where no men on earth can sever. It must also be remembered that the believers in Corinth were the most carnal Christians during that time and these believers had been called unto the fellowship with the Son of God. If our modern day self-righteous religious leaders have their way in writing the Bible, they will protest and insist in excommunicating such Christians by calling them names and insisting that they do not belong to the true New Testament Church. In their own puffed-up mind, they cannot accept the fact that those quarrelsome babes in Christ in Corinth can be part of the Bride of Christ for this will tarnish their godly standing among their godly peers.

Though the believers in Corinth were carnal and lacked spiritual understanding, yet the apostle Paul took pains to teach them the right way of the Lord. One such issue they had to grapple with was the issue of fellowship even though they had been called unto the fellowship of Christ. **But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. (1 Corinthians 10:20)** Here the believers in Christ were ignorant about their high calling being called out of darkness into Christ's marvelous light. They need to be taught about their earthly conduct to live to please Christ, their Saviour instead of fellowshiping with unbelievers in religious infidelity giving them equal footing as though unbelievers are accepted by God in their false way of worship. The throne of heaven will never have fellowship with the throne of iniquity and believers in Christ are to learn such elementary truths. Christians are to express their faith in Christ and not be found wanting in this important issue of fellowshiping with Christ. Christians are not to be unequally yoked together in fellowship with unbelievers as commanded by the apostle Paul: **Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? (2 Corinthians 6:14)**

Light and darkness can never be bedfellow in fellowship likewise the righteous and the unrighteous. The idea of fellowship goes beyond the daily interaction with unbelievers for Christians. Interacting with unbelievers in

school and workplaces is not considered a fellowship. In fact, believers are supposed to interact with the lost world otherwise who is going to be the shining light in this sin cursed world and bring the gospel to lost sinners? But self-conceited religious leaders ever eager to protect their own sheep will warn their followers not to fellowship with other believers that do not belong to their groups as well as the world at large. Some form of “Christian” industries within the church walls soon emerge to protect Christians from the world and as such, there are now many occupations found within the hierarchy of the church. Career paths can now be charted out to those interested in pursuing a career in the ministry. Serving the Lord is no longer a calling but sometimes even a lucrative career alternative working in a “Christian” environment.

However, distinction must be made between interacting with people in this world and yoking up with them. Interacting with people in this world does not constitute a fellowship in the biblical sense but being unequally yoked with the unrighteous, especially in marriage, carries more than the normal day to day interaction in business dealings. Unequally yoked with unbelievers is seen to be in partnership with them and giving them equal status in the things of Christ where the believers’ lives become entangled in such a form of fellowship where progress in their walk with Christ becomes hindered or made impossible. Fellowship with Christ and other believers are very special privileges to be treasured. Only members of the Body of Christ, the Bride of Christ have this unique and unsurpassed privilege to enter the throne in heaven to fellowship with the triune God. There are many ways where believers may fellowship with one another on this earth because they have all entered unto the fellowship of the Son of God. One way of fellowshiping with the saints is concerning giving where such a fellowship can minister to other saints in need. The apostle Paul related this way of fellowship to the Christians in Corinth: **Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. (2 Corinthians 8:4)**

Here the believers in Corinth were told the believers in Macedonia had insisted that Paul received their gifts in spite of their own poverty in earthly possessions so that they might be involved in this fellowship of ministering to the saints (2 Corinthians 8:1-3). The believers in Corinth needed to be taught how they might participate in earthly fellowship with other saints. They are not supposed to live in their own small self-centred world. Like other believers, they had been called unto the fellowship of the

Son of God and they can become involved in fellowshiping with other saints, especially during their times of need. Then some may contend that how can we fellowship with other believers when we do not agree with everything they understand to be true. Is this just an excuse so we might have license to cease fellowshiping with other Christians? Actually, the early day Christians also encountered such issues whether fellowship could be conferred to the believers won to the Lord by Paul and Barnabas. It was concerning the issue of circumcision where some contended that it should be a standard biblical requirement for all Christians to observe. So the issue was discussed in Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 15. Paul also told the Christians in Galatia that he was given the right hand of fellowship by the brethren in Jerusalem over this matter. **And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. (Galatians 2:9)**

It needs to note that the issue concerns the purity of the gospel of Christ where salvation is by grace through faith in Christ and not of works. Today's issues are just too many that do not concern the purity of the gospel of Christ but Christians break fellowship over the most minor issue. Some issues are just plain silly. It is indeed laughable when self-righteous men can list all kinds of articles of faith where some do not even concern the gospel or the person of Christ and justify their position in not fellowshiping with other Christians. Fellowship in Christ is a theological fact no matter what professions of faith or biblical standards self-righteous Christians erect to prevent Christians from fellowshiping with Christ and others. Such fellowship even includes the fellowship of the mystery where the saints in past ages were not aware of according to the apostle Paul: **And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: (Ephesians 3:9)**

The mystery here is how Christ has broken down the middle wall of partition and united in Christ both Jews and Gentiles into one Body called the Church, also known as the Bride of Christ. This was totally unknown to the Old Testament Jews where God was dealing with them as a nation to be a light in the world. So the New Testament Christians are in a very privileged position to be in fellowship with Christ regardless of how some self-conceited Christians view them and do not wish to fellowship with them. Because of such a rich and wonderful privilege of fellowshiping in

Christ, Christians are told to be mindful of their position and status: **And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. (Ephesians 5:11)** This is consistent with the exhortation given to the Christians in Corinth not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. Having fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness would betray their sweet fellowship with the risen Lord and Saviour. This fellowship in Christ must be stamped from the gospel as written by Paul: **For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; (Philippians 1:5)**

Without the gospel of Christ, there will be no fellowship with the Son of God and no fellowship among the saints. Moreover, this fellowship in Christ also extends to the fellowship of the Spirit of God: **If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, (Philippians 2:1)**

As can be seen, the fellowship taught in the New Testament is not the fellowship many Christians think it should mean. All born again believers in Christ are called unto the fellowship with the Son of God as well as the Spirit of God yet believers on earth erect all kinds of obstacles and formulate policies to hinder fellowship among the saints on earth with the most ridiculous reasons some can imagine. Many think that fellowship between saints is joyous occasions of eating and drinking which is not wrong in any way. However, fellowship in the gospel of Christ in fact calls for the sufferings of the believer in Christ that is often not mentioned let alone much appreciated. **That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; (Philippians 3:10)** It seems many like the idea of fellowship as in feasting but as far as sufferings are concerned, most would shrink from such a fellowship and pass on this privilege to others. One wonders whatever happens to the Scriptural commandment of: **Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. (Romans 12:15)**

The gospel involves the sufferings of Christ on the cross of Calvary. Christians are baptized unto the death, burial and resurrection of Christ so likewise, suffering for Christ also forms part and parcel of the believers' walk on this earth. It is funny that many Christians think that fellowship is just simply extending friendship that they can so easily confer and withdraw. When it concerns sufferings for Christ, no one would like to suffer with you let alone suffer for you in fellowship. It is very sad indeed that whenever a

Christian is downcast and in dire need where fellowship from other saints is needed most, it is often unavailable from the closest of Christian friends. So many sufferings saints realize that the sweet fellowship they thought they enjoy from their fellow brethren all this while turn out to be fair weather friends operating on self-preservation mode. Hence, when Christians form a warped idea of fellowship in Christ, their ideals of fellowship become earthly, sensual and devilish. Such fellowship is only to please the flesh and tickle the mind into thinking that they are indeed having sweet and biblical fellowship. The apostle John tells us that Christians fellowship also involves God the Father in **1 John 1:3: That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.**

Therefore, Christian fellowship in the New Testament is a fellowship with the triune God and not just with men or believers in Christ. It goes beyond the earthly realm of human activities and sail right into the throne room of the Most High in sweet communion with the Godhead. This fellowship with the triune God calls for a proper conduct for the believers in Christ otherwise no matter how we claim to have this true fellowship with God, our claim is false and without biblical basis as written by the apostle John: **If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. (1 John 1:6&7)** It is more than contradiction when a Christian is unbecoming in his conduct on earth and yet claims that he is in fellowship with the triune God just because he is socializing with Christians mistaken as fellowship. This is false fellowship devoid of all blessings from heaven.

The fellowship the New Testament speaks of is a fellowship that encompasses the things of Jesus Christ. It does not concern the world at large where a Christian may be working in the world as it does not mean that he is in fellowship with the world as far as the biblical sense of the word “fellowship” is concerned. A Christian may need to attend school, work in the world to make a living, interact with the world at large but whatever he does, he is a Christian and he is supposed to be a shining light to bring the gospel to the people in this world. This does not in any way constitute fellowshiping with the world. This is made very clear by the apostle Paul when he wrote to the believers in Corinth.

I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person. (1 Corinthians 5:9-13)

So when Christians here think that fellowship is just keeping company with other Christians, they are dead wrong. Keeping company does not necessarily mean that a Christian is fellowshiping with someone whether this person is a fornicator or a drunkard. In fact, Paul gave Christians license to keep “company” with such people in the world otherwise, they have to be living in outer space. Sad to say, so many self-righteous Christians are so spiritual that they can only fellowship among their own group of believers. They are so spiritual that they have to work in a Christian environment within the four walls of the church building. Such methods of separation from the world are not biblical and not taught in the Bible. This is nothing more than spiritual escapism. In fact, this obsession about separation from the world is bordering on paranoia. These are just marketing gimmicks to make them look good so that they may take pride in their own self-conceited spirituality among their Christian peers. So when religious leaders teach about separation from the world, they often misapply biblical teachings and they become so far off the mark that Christians they influenced are so frightened about interacting with sinners in this world. As such, working in the secular market place to make a living becomes a burden.

The apostle Paul also wrote the same instruction to Christians in Thessalonica: **Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. (2 Thessalonians 3:6)** So one wonders why so many Christians have the wrong idea about biblical separation. The religious elites keep telling them to separate from the world so much so that they have lost touch with the reality in this world. They no longer understand sinners in this world and they know not how to reach them for Christ. They no longer know how to empathize with the people in this world in their struggle of their sinful nature and miseries that accompany them where the gospel is the only hope for them. They forgot they were once like the lost people in this world having no hope, without God in this world and outside the commonwealth of Israel. They take delight in keeping company with their own kinds, which is the only type of fellowship known to them in order to keep them spiritual by avoiding any social interaction with the people in this world. The truth of the matter is that the New Testament actually teaches the child of God to separate from misbehaving Christians more than from the sinners in this world.

The Bible does teach Christians whom to withdraw from fellowshiping with. Surprisingly, those whom Christians need to withdraw their fellowship in terms of keeping company are not the people of this world though they may be fornicators or covetous people. The people Christians need to avoid company are Christians or professing Christians where one may call a brother is a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. Here is the biblical principle and object of biblical separation. Christians are to separate from Christians who are fornicators, idolaters, railers, drunkards or extortioners. These Christians have turned into practitioners of iniquities and hence required to be quarantined from other Christians. Christians are not told to separate from other Christians just because they perceive them to be worldly and have not lived up to their own standards of godliness. Christians are not to separate from a Christian woman just because she wears pants where pants can also be part of a woman's attire in other culture. Christians are not to separate from another Christian just because he wears shorts because such attires are acceptable to people living in the tropics. Christians are not to separate from other Christians based on their own whim and fancy about many other standards that may not even be biblical.

The standards laid down on biblical separation are very clear. No one can misapply such clear guidelines. A worldly Christian may not be a fornicator. He may be a babe in Christ like those believers in Corinth. Paul did not call Christians in other churches to separate from believers in Corinth where Christians in our days are so fond of indulging in their own high-mindedness. If a brother who is indeed a fornicator or a drunkard or an idolater or a railer, then there is a need to separate from him. Such action is needed in hopes of repentance and bringing him back to the faith as taught by the apostle Paul: **But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. (2 Thessalonians 3:13-15)**

The breaking of earthly fellowship in the form of withdrawing company from other Christians who have sinned as a fornicator or a drunkard or an idolater and so on are biblical and necessary. This is outward sinning in the flesh and breaking of Christian fellowship serves to restore such Christians in the future. It is much like self-regulation many professional bodies practice in the world because they want to uphold their good name and standing. It is not the withdrawing of fellowship from other Christians who lack spiritual understanding or growth to make one feel good and superior that is acceptable in the sight of God. A Christian may not understand that the English Holy Bible is the Authorized Version where the Scriptures in English are given by inspiration. This is not ground for withdrawing Christian fellowship from them. This is pure high-mindedness which exhibits the wrong motives and attitude in defending the words of the living God. It is right and needful to defend the Authorized Version and contend with those who seek to destroy the Holy Bible but it is wrong to despise those who may not know this issue or who may have been misled by those who have been deceived into believing that they do not have an inspired and infallible Holy Bible.

Another type of sinning Christians as an extension of those who are covetous are singled out to be candidates where Christians ought to avoid because they are found to be false teachers teaching rebellion against the words of God.

Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not

despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. (1 Timothy 6:1-5)

A covetous man is always very concerned about gain be they monetary rewards or numbers in membership of his own social club some mistakenly thought it is a church. Such people who are destitute of the truth can twist biblical truths to mean gain is godliness. The apostle Paul called these people men of corrupt mind seeking to corrupt others as they major in perverse disputings. Moreover, they are proud and they are cunning doting about questions and strifes of words. These know-nothing high-minded people's intention is to cause strife, railings and evil surmisings. One can imagine the trouble such people can cause to the church and the damage done to the young Christians. As such, breaking of fellowship with such people is a must otherwise warm fellowship with other Christians would be rendered impossible.

In addition, withdrawing of fellowship must be practised concerning the enemies of the cross: **Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) (Philippians 3:17-19)**

There are those who have chosen to be enemies of the cross seeking to destroy Christians in their faith in Christ. Such could be false brethren infiltrating churches to cause troubles. Others may be Christians who have sinned and have not repented like those whom Christians are told to withdraw company according to 1 Corinthians 5:9-13. The conduct of Christians who are fornicators and such like indeed causes much harm to other Christians and stumbles the weaker ones. This is when breaking of fellowship is necessary to uphold the name of Christ and His honour.

Besides, another group of enemies of the cross are those seeking to bring Christians back into bondage. Regarding such people, the apostle Paul desired that these troublemakers be cut off from them: **I would they were even cut off which trouble you. (Galatians 5:12)** These are the people who insist on returning to the Law and require Christians to submit to circumcision. This issue was already dealt with by the apostles in Jerusalem where Paul and Barnabas were given the right hand of fellowship to continue in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ because salvation does not necessitate circumcision practised by the Jews of old. Extending fellowship to these enemies seeking to bring Christians back into bondage where Christ has set them free is an act of treason as far as pure gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is concerned. The gospel of Christ is precious and it is this only avenue where sinners can be saved from hell fire. As such, breaking fellowship with such like is important and biblical. It is the spiritual health of Christians that are at risk in such a high stake of spiritual brinkmanship authored by the devil. Moreover, the apostle Paul also taught Timothy whom he should withdraw from in order to safeguard his ministry.

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. (2 Timothy 3:1-7)

This group of people comes in all many forms, shapes and sizes but they all have one thing in common; they are outwardly religious having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. Inwardly, such people are horrendous as the natures of such people are no better than the beasts of the field. They put up a front of godliness but they practise iniquity, some of the worst form. Ever wonder why the apostle Paul told Christians in Corinth to withdraw from a brother who is a fornicator or a drunkard or an idolater? It is precisely because of such enemies who destroy the faith of many sincere and weak Christians. Such people love to creep like the serpent of old and they creep into houses as described in verse 6 and 7 and such enemies can be ever learning but will never be able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Fellowshipping with such enemies is like dancing with the wolves. Foolish Christians who disobey the Scriptures do it at their own risk.

The apostle John also commanded Christians to withdraw fellowship from another group of enemies of the cross. This group is those who deny the deity of Christ and that Christ did not come in the flesh, God the very God.

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: (2 John 7-10)

In fact, not only fellowship is not to be given, it is that such enemies are not permitted to even enter into their house. There can never be any agreement with such enemies. Christians are not to enter into any relationship with these people by fellowshipping with them and granting them God speed in their work to destroy the faith of Christians in Christ. Asking God's blessing upon such people is tantamount to betrayal of Christ and the gospel. There is no point in trying to fellowship with such people hoping to "win" them over unto the Lord. When the Scriptures command Christians to turn away from such people, it is folly to think they can attempt this mission impossible and win the trophy. So many Christians have spent much time trying to reason with heretics but to no avail. The Bible teaches Christians to mark them and avoid them. Christians must have nothing to do with such people as far as Christian fellowship is concerned. Scriptural breaking of fellowship must be practised or risk falling into the snarl of the devil. True Christian fellowship is for a cause and this cause is the gospel of Christ. Without the gospel, there will be no fellowship in Christ. All activities for earthly Christian fellowship must be Christ-centred. Questionable activities in the name of Christian fellowship that lead to ungodliness as well as wickedness such as unwanted pregnancies cannot be considered biblical fellowship. Therefore, earthly fellowship must be centred around the gospel and the defence of the gospel and for the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hence there is a need to practise biblical separation and withdraw fellowship from individuals as commanded by the Scriptures. However, it is also equally important not to practise separation based on every whim and fancy of church leaders trying to protect their pet doctrines and self-righteous pursuit of this “holier than thou” attitude towards others. Attending fellowship meetings does not necessarily mean that Christians are fellowshipping which often times they are nothing more than glorified gossip session or business prospecting or networking meeting. Fellowshipping with the brethren is more than socializing with one another. It is fellowshipping for a cause like the saints of old. This cause is the gospel of Christ and concerning the things of Jesus Christ. Practising biblical fellowship with Christians is important and it must be understood that the practise of withdrawing fellowship from others is based on Scriptures and not on personal prejudices and preferences. Withdrawing fellowship from groups or individuals is meant to protect Christians from the wiles of the devil and not meant to make one feel good or superior. Separating from Christians who are young or immature or weak in the faith is simply a self-righteous attempt in self-promotion and self-glory. Young and immature Christians do show some eccentricities at times but who are the religious leaders who refuse to accept them when they are already accepted in the beloved? In fact, such weak Christians need Christian fellowship from mature Christians most so that they may grow in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Young and weak Christians need role models in Christ and this is where fellowship from mature Christians is useful.

It must also be remembered that the Scriptures are written in such a way that is free from denominational biases. True Christian fellowship according to the Scriptures transcends all creeds and dogmas penned by men. In fact, New Testament fellowship comes from the throne in the highest where a born again believer in Christ is called unto fellowship with the triune God and no man-made standards erected by self-conceited Christians can break a believer’s fellowship with this magnanimous God who loves him and sent His Son to die for him on the cross of Calvary. Though religious leaders may continue to put up fences to prevent Christians from fellowshipping in the true biblical sense on this earth across denominational boundaries, the fellowship with God takes precedent and no man can take away their joy in this sweet communion with Christ. The Lord will even open the eyes of sincere believers to seek and find true believers in Christ to fellowship on this earth to exhort and encourage one another during this

short pilgrimage on earth. May Christians understand the biblical perspective and requirement in Christian fellowship and know who not to extend the right hand of fellowship. This is for his safety as well as the well-being of other fellow Christians seeking to live for Christ. The Lord knows how to deal with those enemies of the cross and those sinning Christians who refuse to repent will sooner or later be delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh so that their spirits might be saved when they turn from the faith and stumble other Christians.

Therefore, Christian fellowship in Christ is a fellowship with God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. More importantly, it is God who delights to fellowship with His own redeemed sons of God through Christ. Furthermore, no men on earth, be they the religious elite or denominational dogmas, can sever this fellowship between the Christian and God. For God does know those that are His: **Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. (2 Timothy 2:19)**

Because Christian fellowship originates from above through Christ where a child of God is given the privilege to fellowship with the full Godhead, fellowshipping among saints on earth should also take place naturally and unhindered. Let not any Christian be deceived by his own religious elite into thinking that fellowship among saints on earth is restricted to those from his own church or own church groups or denomination. Christian fellowship is for the cause of Christ and furthering the glorious gospel of Christ. This does not however imply that there is no value in social interaction among the saints. Notwithstanding, if fellowship is simply for sole the purpose of social interaction, it will lose the purpose and character of true biblical Christian fellowship. This kind of fellowship will soon degenerate into social clubs where the cause of Christ becomes secondary. Encouraging and provoking one another unto love and good work for Christ will vanish. Practising Christian fellowship is a serious matter and not to be taken lightly.

Withdrawing fellowship from any individuals or groups of people must be practiced according to Scriptural commandments and such candidates must be clearly marked for avoidance. Whenever breaking of fellowship with others is necessary, it must be based on sound biblical basis and not on every whim and fancy according one's preference or prejudice. It

must never be based on some religious leaders drawing out some spiritual standards which may or may not be Scriptural to begin with. It must be remembered that withdrawing fellowship from younger or immature Christians perceived to be worldly is not taught in the Bible for such are those who need fellowship with mature Christians most to help them in their walk with the Lord. Though much patience is required in such undertakings, much reward will be reaped as well. There will be many trials and tribulations in a Christian's life. Fellowship with the triune God will see them through this short pilgrimage on earth. Fellowshiping with the saints on earth is more than just social interaction. It is done for a cause and that cause is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Fellowship with fellow brethren in Christ helps to sustain one another and encourage one another to provoke unto love and good work for Christ. The very essence of Christian fellowship in Christ with God and with the saints is best illustrated and summarized in the prayer uttered by the Lord in John 17.

Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

This sweet and wonderful fellowship in Christ is a unity of the faith in union with the Godhead as well as in unity with the saints on earth as well as those in heaven. Physical death has no effect on such a fellowship. This is divine and biblical fellowship the Lord Jesus Christ has enjoined the saints with God and with one another and hence let no men put brethren asunder in fellowshiping with one another. Let all saints accept one another as equal in Christ and esteem others better than themselves in fellowship. Indeed God has sanctified His people for Himself and there is no reason why Christians cannot freely fellowship with one another except with those unruly and wicked Christians and professing Christians the Lord has condemned according to Scriptures. Let no high-minded and self-conceited religious elites set up fences to prevent this sweet and warm fellowship where the

saints can enjoy this side of heaven where the fellowship in heaven is one day perfected forevermore.

If you have been blessed with the reading of this book and you wish to contact the author, you may write to him at charles@kjp-asia.com.