

# OUR CHURCH IS A FELLOWSHIP

Text: Ephesians 2:14-18

Sermon notes from message preached by Rev. Arthur W. Rich  
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How grateful I am for the fellowship of this church. One of the great miracles is how a group of people can have fellowship together in the local church.

The cynic says this is impossible. Jean Paul Satre wrote a play entitled: “*No Exit*”. In this play, three people are locked together for eternity. Unable to escape, they irritate, torture, and enrage one another until the only male character, Garcin, exclaims: “Hell is other people.” But Christianity comes along and says: “Heavenly fellowship with other people”/

The German philosopher, Schopenhauer, says that people are like a pack of porcupines on a freezing winter night. So cold in sub-zero weather, they press close together for warmth, but as soon as they press close; they jab and hurt each other. Soon they pull away from each other. Every time they try to get close together, they jab and hurt each other. Perhaps porcupines cannot get close to each other, but Christians can.

Whenever God’s people cannot have fellowship with each other somewhere sin has crept in. Sin came into the Garden and broke up the fellowship between God and Man. Sin came between two brothers, Cain and Abel.

Jesus intended the church to be a fellowship, the greatest fellowship in the world, extending across the pew and around the world. This fellowship grows out of the fellowship of God. The greatest fellowship there ever has been, or ever will be is the fellowship between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Before there was a world, they dwelled together, three persons in one godhead, in a fellowship of life, love and light.

1. Life, because they were one essence
2. Love, which requires an object to exist. God the father had objects for love, the Son and Holy Spirit. Likewise the Son has an object of Love in the Father and the Holy Spirit.
3. Light. There is no sin present. The root of sin is selfishness. But in divine fellowship, there is no shadow of selfishness, no black cloud of sin.

## God wants us to have fellowship of LIFE, LOVE and LIGHT.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we share the same **life**...the life of Christ.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we share the same **love**... a love cultivated by the Holy Spirit who indwells us

As followers of Jesus Christ, we share the same **light**. We are taught by Jesus to “walk in the light, even as he is in the light”

First John 1:7 states: *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.*

Such a fellowship of life, love and light is possible only in Christ’s church. It is not possible in a lodge or civic club. I have belonged to several civic clubs, many of which are great institutions. But I can sit alongside of a club member who refuses to accept Christ as Savior. Many clubs today may ask me to pray or bless the food but instruct me not to mention the name of Jesus Christ.

The only one who can bring traditional enemies together is Christ. In our text today, Ephesians 2:14-18 we read:

*14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;*

*15 Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;*

*16 And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:*

*17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.*

*18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.*

There are four characteristics of a true fellowship: **DIVERSITY, UNITY, EQUALITY and RESPONSIBILITY**

## I- DIVERSITY

As I turn to the Disciples of Christ, I am impressed with the diversity. Two things stand out; first, they were **average** men. They came from Main Street Israel. They were not political leaders; they were not the socialites of the day. Second, they were **individual** men. These were not twelve copies from the same mold, not twelve men of like character or emotions. Peter was headstrong, Andrew was loyal, and James and John were called the sons of Thunder, no doubt because of their quick temper. Thomas was doubtful, Matthew was a tax collector, despised by most of the Jews. Jesus did not obliterate the differences and distinctives of these men, he molded them.

As I turn to the early church I see great diversity. Diversity of age, Diversity of sex, Diversity of economic status. How grateful I am for the diversity within this local church. We are not an exclusive assembly of middle class snobs. Some of you have more of the world's goods than others, some are highly educated, others less so. Some are leading businessmen; others are devoted workers in their trade. But we have fellowship together. God forbid that a church should ever get to the place where a man with shabby clothes cannot feel at home in the fellowship.

## II-UNITY

It is one of the great wonders of the Gospel that these differences of age, sex, race, economic status, and social position can all be submerged into a blessed oneness.

In the book of Ephesians, oneness is a reoccurring theme. I found seven areas of oneness.

- 1- **ONE BODY:** "So we being many are one body in Christ. We are baptized into one body.
- 2- **ONE SPIRIT:** The Holy Spirit. By his operation we are born again and added to the body.
- 3- **ONE HOPE:** The hope of the final glorification when we shall be like the Lord and with the Lord
- 4- **ONE LORD:** God's only Son, the Lord Jesus Christ
- 5- **ONE FAITH:** Only one system of truth. The Holy Scriptures inspired by God
- 6- **ONE BAPTISM:** A baptism instituted by John the Baptist, and ordained by Jesus, both in word and action
- 7- **ONE GOD:** The Father of all.

It is our joy to preserve the unity. We do not make the unity, God does that. How do we live in a way to preserve the unity God made?

- 1- We must walk in humility. We must remove our pride from the picture. Jesus said in Matthew 11: 29 *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*
2. We must walk in longsuffering. Too many Christians are short tempered. We must be willing to step back from the difficult situations that come within the body and be willing to see things as others see them. Those of you who have been happily married for very many years know what I am talking about.
3. We must have forbearing for one another. As the apostle Paul put it in Colossians 3: 13 *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.* To put it another way, how would you fare if Christ responded to your sins the way you react when someone sins against you. Can you honestly pray "forgive us our trespasses in the same manner as we forgive those who trespass against us?"

## III-EQUALITY

We once stood equal on the footing of sin. There are no differences between us. Whether you are a great evangelist like the Rev. Billy Graham, the pastor of a Church, the chairman of the Deacons or the inmate sitting in prison who realized his need of a savior. Romans 3:23 says: "For ALL have sinned and fallen short." We are equal on the ground of the cross. All of us wear the price tag of Calvary. Jesus made the same sacrifice for each of us.

#### **IV-RESPONSIBILITY**

Christian fellowship is not only a privilege, but it is a responsibility. Each of us has the responsibility to pray for one another, to serve one another, and to extend a helping hand to one who stumbles in his daily walk.

First Corinthians 12: 7 *But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.*

8 *For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;*

9 *To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;*

10 *To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:*

11 *But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.*

12 *For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.*

13 *For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.*

14 *For the body is not one member, but many.*

All of our fellowship is around Christ.

Dr. C. Darby Fulton, former Executive Secretary of the Board of World Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States tells of a time when he was riding on a train in Korea. In came an old man and sat across the aisle from Dr. Fulton. The man obviously wanted to converse with Dr. Fulton, but the language barrier prevented their communication. Still the old man continued to pour out a torrent of words. Dr. Fulton shook his head: "I don't speak Korean," he said. But still the man kept on talking until he suddenly used a word YESU. Dr. Fulton responded "YESU, Jesus?" as if to say do you know him. Dr. Fulton explained "We had fellowship together despite our language barrier because we both knew YESU. If you know Jesus you too have a fellowship of **DIVERSITY, UNITY, EQUALITY, AND RESPONSIBILITY.**