

## **Introduction:**

One thing we want to have in our congregation is true Christian fellowship. We meet together and worship and this is good fellowship. Yet, when services end, we shouldn't let the relationship with one another cease until the next collective meeting time. We should want to spend time with our brethren in between assemblies.

**Romans 12:10** "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another"

How do we do this? It's an individual action "one to another". We think of our brothers and sisters in a kindly way, want to be with them and show them tenderness. This is something we **owe** our brothers and sisters.

Honor is often translated as price, as in 1 Cor 6:20 you are bought with a price. Honor means to value something. Honor is something we give to another because we value them, and if we do value them, we owe them this honor. We owe our brothers this preference because we value them.

## **I. How should Christians treat each other?**

So that all men can identify them by their actions one towards another

**John 13:34-35** "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

It's something we need to show to all men. We love by putting our brethren before us, in meeting with them and giving to them.

We can't love God and not your brethren

**1 John 4:20-21** "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."

If we avoid our brethren, having nothing to do with them except at the church building, what are our **actions** saying?

That's a message we should read, because God certainly can.

Loving each other is COMMANDED, if we claim to love God, we obey him.

**John 15:17** "These things I command you, that ye love one another."

**We are to have unfeigned (sincere) love**

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**1 Peter 1:22** “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:”

Out of a pure heart, not thinking of ourselves but our brother and we need to do this fervently – not half heartedly. This is a special relationship between brethren – brothers and sisters in Christ.

We are taught of God to love one another. It is God's will that we do so.

**1 Thessalonians 4:9** “But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for you yourselves are taught of God to love one another.”

It is taught by God today through the Word. Are we getting the lesson?

Christian love is summed up by the inspired apostle John

**1 John 3:14-18** “ We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.”

We know...

And if we don't have that love? – Death!

If we hate our brother and avoid him, God calls us a MURDERER! Just as if we suffocated something depriving them of air they needed to sustain life.

We see God loved us – by the laying down of Christ's life. We must follow that example.

There are many ways we can lay our lives down. One way is by giving up of our time and things we might want to do and instead visit with our brothers and sisters. Visiting, writing them a card or note, calling them. Seeing one another on Sunday isn't enough.

When we see our brother have need – they need a ride, or an encouraging word, or food or clothing it is our individual responsibility to respond – our responsibility! According to God

One way in which we show our love is through hospitality:

**1 Peter 4:9** “Use hospitality one to another without grudging.”

Ungrudging hospitality – you have to want to do it.

### **II. Fellowship among first century saints (They did not act as though some brethren were unclean, they all participated)**

An O.T. principle applies

**Psalms 133:1** “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”

Good, best for all, it’s something to be desired, and it is something that should be pleasant to us. What if it isn’t, where is the problem? We look to ourselves to see what the problem is and root it out. A purification that is good for us – in God’s sight.

Daily with all things common

**Acts 2:42-46** “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,”

Gladness, being with their brethren with whom they shared a great hope and in which they encouraged one another.

They were together, Not divided, they were like minded.

**1 Corinthians 1:10** “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”

They were not supposed to break off into cliques or small circles. There were to be no divisions among them.

They were to have the same love

**Philippians 2:2-5** “ Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

The type of love that would give to others for their benefit just as Christ gave for us.

Not division but true affection, feeling the other’s pains and joys

**1 Corinthians 12:25-26** “That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer,

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all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.”

All the members suffer, All the members rejoice. We all are to be participating.

They were to be of one heart and one soul;

**Acts 4:32** “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.”

There was to be no difference among them, in heart, soul, or necessities.

Now for the test. Do we do these things? The heart, being the soil in which the seed (word) is planted, if the same, will then be good ground and receptive of the truth

**Luke 8:15** “But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.”

Do we hear God’s word and bring forth fruit as he has taught us through the word? We should examine ourselves to see if we can do better.

### **III. The issue of “withdrawing fellowship”**

Another act of love is urging a brother or sister to repent

**Revelation 3:19** “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”

How is that rebuke accomplished?

**Hebrews 12:5,6** “And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”

We know what is good for us to do, from God’s word. ALL of us know – we are **taught** from God’s word. We need to use it.

When there are those that walk disorderly, not according to the order shown us in the Bible, the Bible COMMANDS we withdraw ourselves

**2 Thessalonians 4:6** “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.”

It is to be done in a way in which we treat that individual as a brother not enemy

**2 Thessalonians 3:14-15** “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.”

Those times in which one causes division he or she must be marked and avoided

**Romans 16:17** “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.”

Marking a divisive person is an action of protecting the flock. Those from within are Satan’s most effective tool

**Acts 20:28-30** “ Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.”

Private issues among brethren need to be handled the biblical way

**Matthew 18:15-17** “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear *thee*, *then* take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell *it* unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

When brethren REPENT we must be forgiving

**Matthew 18:22-35** “Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my

heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses”

### **Conclusion:**

All things done to and for brethren ought to be done in love, with consideration for their souls –feelings, ours or theirs, are secondary. Brethren should act as family, doing the hard things as well as the easy things, not leaving anything undone for we are all one in Christ Jesus. And God has a common goal for all of us:

**Ephesians 4:13** “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:”

Because we are family, the children of God

**Galatians 3:26** “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”

But if you are outside of Christ you are not in the family – and the only way into Christ is through repentance, turning to God, and obedience by which we **show** our faith:

**Galatians 3:27** “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

[Sermon 6/12/2011 by Ed Kelleher at West Columbia church of Christ. All scriptures read and projected on screen during the sermon.]