

# Family Fellowship

(Philemon 4-7)

FROM the time a child is old enough to begin involving himself with other people, good parents are trying hard to teach him to share with others. A common remark is, "Son, you must share your toys." We recognize that to be a part of a family and a society we must willingly share our goods with others. In the family of God this concept is called *fellowship*. It means to share, to be partners, or to have joint participation in something. Without fellowship in the church, we cease to be a real family at all and become a group of people who just meet together in the same building. We become disjointed, uninvolved with one another and, therefore, frustrated because we recognize something is missing. Contrast that with a family that shares deep love with each other and thoroughly enjoys being together. They can laugh or cry together and feel with one another. This is the family relationship God wants in the church (Acts 2:42-47).

## **I. FELLOWSHIP INVOLVES REMEMBERING EACH OTHER IN PRAYER (Philemon 4)**

Paul began this letter after his greeting by saying, "I pray for you. . . ." He closed many of them by saying, "Brethren, pray for me. . . ." It is great to see brethren come before us publicly to say, "I need your prayers!" In reality, we all need one another's prayers. We should ask others for their prayers and also tell others we are praying for them. Prayer is such a vital part of fellowship because our fellowship begins with a fellowship with God (1 John 1:5-7).

## **II. FELLOWSHIP IS "TOWARD ALL THE SAINTS" (Philemon 5)**

We have a right to have closer friendships with some than with others, such as Jesus had with Peter, James, and John. But fellowship is different. It is exclusively shared with other Christians (Ephesians 5:11; Acts 2:42; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18). It is shared fully with every Christian (James 2:1-9). We are to extend the right hand of fellowship to all who come in (Galatians 2:9). An exclusive fellowship that does not accept some parts of the body of Christ is divisive rather than encouraging. All of us are partners with God and with one another.

## **III. FELLOWSHIP ACKNOWLEDGES EVERY GOOD THING (PHILEMON 6)**

"Every good work" is to be a part of our lives. Real fellowship never reaches the conclusion that only the good works in which we are involved are important or valuable in the kingdom. It is the cumulative effect of all kinds of good acts being done that builds the body of Christ. We must acknowledge all of them and not criticize.

## **IV. FELLOWSHIP IS REFRESHING TO THE HEARTS OF THE SAINTS (Philemon 7)**

Our worship should leave us edified, encouraged, and with a feeling of readiness to take on the world with God's help. We are partners for life. When one has a problem, fellowship

means we all want to help. When one does good, we all encourage him. When a new member comes into the family, we overflow with love and acceptance toward him.

## **CONCLUSION**

Let us continue steadfastly in fellowship. It will build a great family for God.

—Leon Barnes

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