

Comparing True Fellowship with God & Fellowship among Believers: the Importance of Problem-Solving Devices & Status Quo Spirituality

13. Modern-day Christianity often emphasizes fellowship with people as a substitute for fellowship with God. In other words, it is suggested that one's spiritual life is advanced by having fellowship with others. It is not.
14. Spiritual growth is what advances the spiritual life. These two things cannot occur unless the believer functions within the status quo of spirituality which establishes fellowship with God under the filling of the Holy Spirit.
15. John is going to draw a contrast between living in the Light and living in darkness. This is his illustration, utilizing the terminology of the Gnostic heretics, of the absolutes of status quo spirituality and status quo carnality.
16. If one is living in darkness he does not have fellowship with God and therefore is not spiritual. Personal sin breaks fellowship with God. As Peter put it, he is no longer a partner with God but rather with his sinful nature.
17. The Lord put it this way in His famous Sermon on the Mount:
Matthew 6:24 - "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other."
18. But in grace God has provided a recovery procedure that enables every believer to reestablish fellowship through the filling of the Holy Spirit. It is the simple procedure of confession *alone* to *God* alone.
19. When people emphasis supersedes God emphasis, then fellowship with God is replaced by social events that are conducted ether in private homes or in the local church.
20. When Christian fellowship is the major emphasis at a local church it indicates that the pastor believes fellowship with God is somehow expressed by his flock having a social life with each other.
21. It must be emphasized that there is absolutely nothing wrong with proper Christian fellowship. To be proper however, it must be a natural outgrowth of the pastor placing the emphasis of his message on having true fellowship with God.
22. True fellowship with God is made possible by the filling of the Holy Spirit and is increased through the development of reciprocal love that leads to personal love for God.
23. Therefore, fellowship with God is tantamount to spiritual growth. Spiritual growth is dependent upon the filling of the Holy Spirit. The filling of the Holy Spirit is dependent upon rebound.
24. When one's priorities are properly arranged with God and Christ at the top, then meaningful fellowship can occur among believers. But spiritual advance is accomplished through one's fellowship with God not fellowship with people.
25. Often, fellowship with people includes the sharing of meals. Many in the congregation prepare favorite dishes and bring them to the church and all break bread together.

26. This is common and there is nothing wrong with it but it must never be considered the priority over Bible study nor should it ever be considered a means of spiritual growth. It is in reality a social function which allows the believer the opportunity to associate with fellow members of the royal family.
27. Our New Place will be equipped with a social area where tea and crumpets will be served during Sunday halftimes and where meals can be served whenever scheduled.
28. This area will provide opportunity for members of the church to have more contact with each other beyond passing in the hallway. It will also provide opportunity to practice problem-solving devices since we all are fallen and in need of grace. We'll see how well it all works.
29. Such fellowship can be motivational or it can be detrimental. It is motivational when those involved have grace orientation. It is detrimental when certain personalities exhibit propensities toward legalism or lasciviousness.
30. Fellowship is enhanced when believers do not have their eyes on self, people, or things, but on the Lord. Christian fellowship demands flexibility regarding the nonessentials. There are certain beliefs and attitudes that are not heretical or evil but simply "different."
31. Fellowship is unfortunately broken when essential doctrines are violated and requires the positive believer to become inflexible.
32. This latter situation demands mental and sometimes physical separation but this principle does not provide license to publicly denounce a fellow believer. Unconditional love requires that the violation be prosecuted by the Supreme Court of Heaven.
33. Fellowship cannot be enjoyable if you have unrealistic expectations about fellow believers. All have trends and all sin. None is perfect. Therefore true tolerance is the willingness to accept a person for who he is.
34. As long as he is not a threat to your spiritual growth, or to that of members of your family, then he is to be treated in grace. If you are grace oriented—maybe you are, or maybe you aren't—then your lifestyle, character, and behavior will become a testimony to him of the power Bible doctrine has in the life of the believer.
35. Although Christian fellowship is primarily social interaction it does provide believers opportunity to demonstrate to others, through cordiality, the impact doctrine has had on their lives. This witness is not direct but indirect and often can be silent, manifest by one's demeanor rather than his words.
36. Such social gatherings can provide spiritual R&R: Relaxation & Refreshment, but it may never supersede the study of Bible doctrine as Priority One in the believer's life.
37. True fellowship is described in the following passage from Philippians in which we find four consecutive first class conditions—arguments based on the assumption of reality.