

# Following Christ – Fellowship



## Slice F4

### Fellowship

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## 1 Memory Verse

### Hebrews 10:25 (ESV)

25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

## 2 Fellowship - Connecting to a Community of Christians

While for a believer to spend time alone communing with God and studying His word, no believer should be an island unto themselves, this is not the Lord's will for us. We are called to serve and support others, and this is best done in the body of Christ, where each person has a gifting to contribute to the functioning of the church.

The church with the family of God is a sanctuary away from the world, where a believer can be spiritually recharged. A believer who does not join a fellowship isolates themselves from the support, encouragement, upliftment, and the necessary guidance and correction they need to help them mature in the Lord.

As the nation of Israel was making its way through the wilderness during the exodus, a despicable nation, the Amalekites, looked to attack the Israelites. They cowardly avoided attacking the main body but rather continually targeted weaker groups that became isolated from the main body. Satan uses the same tactic, those believers who are isolated from fellowship become spiritually weaker and may, therefore, become easy targets for Satan.

To achieve the plan and purpose God has set out for us, we need regular to attend church regularly. No believer can develop the nine fruits of the spirit in isolation. Love is the key to attaining the other eight fruits of the spirit; without love we cannot have joy, we will not have peace, we will not be patient, or develop the other fruits. No believer can practise true Christianity without love, as love is the basis of God's character. Love cannot be practised in isolation; it needs a community in which to operate.

### 1 John 4:16 (ESV)

16 ... God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

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**John 13:34–35 (ESV)**

**34** A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. **35** By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'

We learn to give of ourselves, show empathy towards others and become servants within the body of the church community. Many marriages are now ending in divorce because people enter the covenant with a selfish ideology of what the marriage relationship can do for them. Unfortunately for the self-centred, marriage only works well when both parties are committed to serving the other in love. Church attendance is similar, a person needs to find their gifting and to then serve others in the community of believers.

## 3 The Church Is a Family



A Church is a family of brothers and sisters in Christ. It is no exaggeration to say that many believers become closer to their church family than they are to their relatives.

**Galatians 6:10 (NIV84)**

**10** Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the **family of believers**.

**1 Peter 3:8 (NIV84)**

**8** Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, **love as brothers**, be compassionate and humble.

Within the church are home groups where the members of the church gather weekly for meetings and can care for each other, help each other, support each other, and pray for each other, while also spending time studying God's word in a group setting. The home groups become a nuclear family within an extended family.

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## 4 The Church is a Body

Scripture uses the metaphor of the body to describe the church:

### **1 Corinthians 12:12 (NIV84)**

**12** The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.

### **Ephesians 4:16 (NIV84)**

**16** From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

The metaphor of the body is used to emphasise that each person has a gift that they must use for the smooth functioning of the church. No one body part can be seen to be more important than another; all the parts of a body are required to work for the body to be fit and operate efficiently. Anyone who has stubbed their little toe knows that they will be walking with a limp until the pain subsides. No body part can function in isolation, each part of the body requires numerous other body parts to support its function.

## 5 We are Sheep in a Flock

The analogy that we are the sheep is not a flattering one; sheep are a hapless and bewildered bunch of dim-wits, prone to stray and wander.

In 2005 in Turkey, a suicidal sheep jumped off a cliff and was followed by 1 500 others! About 1 100 survived by landing on a pile of soft wool (dead sheep). It seems believers can likewise be disoriented, and can easily be led astray. Following man's wisdom, as we continually do, will result in our spiritual fall into a worldly pit.

So, sheep need a Good Shepherd who cares for His sheep and believers, fortunately, have that in Jesus, who said:

### **John 10:11 (NIV84)**

**11** 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

God appoints under shepherds - the elders – and they are given the responsibility of caring for God's flock. Pastor is one of the five-fold ministries that are a gift from God to each church, and 'pastor' literally means 'shepherd'. Paul gave the following instruction to the elders:

### **Acts 20:28 (NIV84)**

**28** Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

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## 6 We are Part of the Church

For many people, the word 'church' means a building but this is not at all accurate. The word the apostle Paul used for church is the Greek word '*ecclesia*', which means 'called out ones'. The term is unique to Jesus who said: 'I will build my church' (Matthew 16:18). The church is, therefore, those who are called out of the world by Jesus to be a people to Him. So, the 'church' is not a building but rather a people called out by God for service. A group of believers gathered under a tree in a field is a 'church'.

In the early days of the church, this was a reality, where meeting outdoors was not uncommon, however, most church gatherings would take place in the homes of the more affluent believers.

Being a 'called out one', the question each believer needs to ask is what was I called out for? What service does God want you to provide to the community called 'the church'.

### 6.1 *Benefits of Being Part of a Church*

There are several benefits that can be attained by becoming part of a body of believers.

#### 6.1.1 Guidance

Every Bible-based church will teach sound doctrine, enabling the believer to grow in understanding, stand on a firm foundation of God's word and receive wise counsel for everyday living.

#### 6.1.2 Support

As has already been stated, the church is a family of believers who are there to support each other in all circumstances.

#### 6.1.3 Role models

Each family has mothers and fathers, mature believers who will be examples for others to follow.

#### 6.1.4 Specialised Ministries

Each church should exhibit have a large range of spiritual gifts, which will be of assistance to the sound development and support of a believer.

#### 6.1.5 Protection

Paul warns the Ephesians (6:10-20) of the need to put on the full armour of God because believers are continually in spiritual warfare against a persistent foe, the devil. A believer

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in a family of God should be under the care of the pastor (Galatians 6:1), but also covered by the prayers of their home group.

## 6.1.6 Healing

A church should be a place where believers can find spiritual, emotional and physical healing, especially in the home groups. The church is a sanctuary where the wounded can go to find love and receive healing.

## 6.1.7 Encouragement

Every believer feels the weight of the world on their shoulders at times, and this is where the family of God is so necessary. The support, encouragement and counsel of other believers is essential: 'Encourage one another and build each other up' (1 Thessalonians 5:11). 'Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ' (Galatians 6:2).

## 6.1.8 Growth

A church will provide opportunities for its members to grow through sound teaching in a Bible school and home groups. Also, there are opportunities for a person to be mentored in the use of their giftings and to become a vital cog in the mechanism that is the church.

## 7 Become Involved

It is imperative for the growth of a believer that they become involved in their church. The benefits to the individual are many and some have been listed. The question should arise in the believer's mind as to how they can contribute to the life of the church. There are both earthly and eternal rewards for the believer who selflessly gives of themselves to support others. Each believer should continually be seeking God for what His plan and purpose are for their life is and to reveal what their gifting is. This is often only revealed after a lengthy period of searching and serving.

Becoming a faithful member of the church and a home group is a responsibility that Jesus expects of all His disciples.

## 8 Practically

- Join a home group.
- Make yourself available to serve. Here I am Lord use me - Isa 6:8.
- Be a brother and sister in the family of God.

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## 9 Proclamation

'I declare that I am an integral part of the family of God, God's family, the Body of Christ. I am committed to fellowship, to not neglecting the gathering of the saints and to be involved at every level that the Holy Spirit leads me into'.

## 10 Prayer

'Father thank you for taking me out of this world and from the dominion of the evil one and placing me in the Kingdom of Your Son, now His Body. Help me to fellowship and become one with Your people and to work out Your plans and purposes for my life with Your people – the Church'.