

FELLOWSHIP: APPLICATION AND PRACTICE

as it might be taught to an adult Bible Class

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REVIEWED, WITNESSED  
Might be Taught to an Adult Bible Class

Fellowship: Application and Practice  
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It must be a purpose of this paper to be a companion to Pastor Kurt Lueneburg's paper on Fellowship: The Scriptural Principle as it might be taught to an adult Bible Class. Although I have not previously had the good opportunity to see his paper, I shall attempt to present a sequel. Another purpose is to present something for lay people. Since lay people are mostly involved with their own local congregation this is the thrust of this presentation. A third purpose is to be a practical guide for pastors or their substitutes to use. I myself have not field tested this material. I do not intend to copyright any part of it. However, it may spur you to revise, edit, or start afresh your own. I know of no other course to follow. A fourth observation is evident. This plan to apply fellowship principles is geared for a select group within the church - an adult Bible Class. This would be a good place to start. But what about the whole church? What about pulpit preaching? What about every organization of the church?

The subject matter is immensely broad. Volumes have been written on Synod Fellowship, Altar and Pulpit Fellowship, Prayer Fellowship. But our subject is even wider, including every aspect of church life, group life, family life, individual life within the church and outside the confines of faith brothers and sisters. This presentation is only narrow in that it illustrates aspects of fellowship.

To begin with, I leaned heavily upon statements made by the then Professor Carl Lawrenz of Wisconsin Lutheran Theological Seminary in his Essay on CHURCH FELLOWSHIP in which he writes,

"Church fellowship is every joint expression, manifestation, and demonstration of the common faith in which Christians on the basis of their confession find themselves to be united with one another.

Faith as spiritual life invariably expresses itself in activity which is spiritual in nature, yet outwardly manifest, e.g., in the use of the means of grace, in prayer, in praise and worship, in appreciative use of the "gifts" of the Lord to the church, in Christian testimony, in furthering the cause of the Gospel, in deeds of Christian love."

These seven areas of manifestations form the basis of my paper. Because I believe Christian love for one another is so essential to church fellowship, I have devoted an extra page to prove that point, along side of a page on confessing one's faith.

W. H. ...

CHURCH FELLOWSHIP IS A CONFESSION OF A COMMON FAITH

1. Saving faith confesses faith. Romans 10, 9-11

"That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."

- a. What does a person need in his heart to be saved?
- b. What will he do with his mouth?

2. Common faith leads to common confession. Romans 15, 5-7

"May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."

- a. What unites believers together?
- b. What kind of confession do united believers give?
- c. Where do they make such a united confession?

3. Such common confession of faith embraces the entire Word of God.

John 8, 31

"To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples."

- a. What is included by "teaching"?
- b. How do we continue in them?

4. Such common confession of faith opposes error. Rev. 22, 18-19

"I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book."

- a. Is there any room for additions to the Bible?
- b, " " " " " subtractions to the Bible?

5. Such common confessions of faith are important. Eph. 4, 14-15

"Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ."

- a. As infants we need to grow in what areas?
- b. What do we need for this spiritual growth?
- c. What is our aim?

6. Such common confession of faith aims for complete unity.

John 17, 21-23

"That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one. I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

- a. What kind of unity was Jesus praying for?
- b. What will this unity bring to the world?

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CHURCH FELLOWSHIP MANIFESTS ITSELF IN THE USE OF THE MEANS OF GRACE

1. It uses only the Bible as its source of faith and life. II Tim. 3, 15-17

"and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work"

- a. How much of the Bible is inspired?
  - b. What is the purpose of Bible study and teaching?
  - c. When do pastors, teachers, parents and students agree on the meaning of the Bible?
2. It listens to pastors and teachers who are united in their doctrine. Acts 2, 42

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

- a. Was there a difference in the teachings of the apostles?
  - b. What united them into one fellowship?
3. In a church fellowship you settle religious controversies based upon the Bible. Acts 15, 1-29 Gal. 2, 1-16
- a. What controversy disturbed the church at this time?
  - b. How was it settled?
  - c. What official document did the church adopt?

4. In church fellowship you patiently try to build up weak faith. Acts 1, 6-8

"So when they met together, they asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel? He said to them; 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

- a. What did the apostles not understand?
- b. How did Christ instruct them?

5. Persistent adherence to false doctrine/practice calls for the termination of church fellowship. Romans 16, 17-18

"I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people."

- a. What are we to watch out for?
- b. With what are we to compare their teaching?
- c. Why should we avoid them?

6. Such common faith fellowship uses the sacrament of Baptism correctly. Acts 2, 38-41

"Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off - for all whom the Lord our God will call.'"

- a. What does correct baptism do for the sinner?
- b. What is a correct baptism?
- c. How did these people show their common faith?

7. Such common faith fellowship uses the sacrament of the altar correctly. I Cor. 11, 17-34

- a. What does correct communion do for the Christian?
- b. What is a correct communion?
- c. How had some not shown their common faith?
- d. To whom must we deny communion for their own good?
- e. When must we refuse communion ourselves?

CHURCH FELLOWSHIP MANIFESTS ITSELF IN JOINT PRAYER

1. Those who are united in faith pray together. Acts 1, 14 &  
Acts 2, 42

"They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers... They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

- a. Why did they unite in prayer?
- b. Why would their prayers be heard?

2. United prayers confess a common faith. Matt. 6, 5-13

"But when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. This is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'"

- a. In what way were the disciples to show they prayed properly?
- b. What does the Lord's prayer confess?
- c. Who only can truly unite in praying the Lord's prayer?

3. United prayers meet a common objective. Acts 4, 23-31

"On their release Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. 'Sovereign Lord,' they said, 'you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: 'Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One.' Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand

should happen. Now, Lord, consider threats and enable your servants to speak your work with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.' After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly."

- a. What was the common concern of these people?
- b. For whom did they unite in prayer?
- c. What did their common prayer confess?

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CHURCH FELLOWSHIP MANIFESTS ITSELF IN PRAISE AND WORSHIP

1. Those who are united in faith worship together. Acts 2, 46-47

"Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people."

- a. Where and when did they meet for worship?
- b. What united them in worship?

2. Weak Christians need encouragement to worship together. Heb. 10,25

"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

- a. Who should encourage joint worship?
- b. How should Christians encourage others to worship together?
- c. What are the goals of joint worship?

3. Joint worship builds up the common faith and life. Col. 3, 16  
Eph. 5, 19-20

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God."

"Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

- a. What did their worship service teach?
- b. Who did they thank?
- c. How would this effect their faith and life?

CHURCH FELLOWSHIP MANIFESTS ITSELF IN THE USE OF THE "GIFTS" OF THE  
LORD TO THE CHURCH

1. It uses Pastors and Teachers. Eph. 4, 11-13

"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

- a. Who gave special gifts to certain men?
- b. How were they to use their gifts?
- c. What is the goal of their efforts to train?

2. It uses people with special "gifts". Rom. 12, 3-10

"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgement, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully."

- a. What special "gifts" do some people have?
- b. Are these the only "gifts" people have?
- c. How are these "gifts" to be used in the church?

3. Like Timothy I Tim. 4, 13-14 II Tim. 1, 6

"Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you."

"For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands."

- a. What special "gift" did Timothy have?
- b. How was he to use it?

4. Like Stephen and the other six men of the Jerusalem church.  
Acts 6, 1-7

"In those days when the number of disciples was increasing the Grecian Jews among them complained against those of the Aramaic-speaking community because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, 'It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.' This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procosus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them."

- a. What special "gifts" did these men have?
- b. How did they serve the church?

5. Like Priscilla and Aquilla. Acts 18, 24-28

"Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquilla heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately."

- a. What special gift did Priscilla and Aquilla have?
- b. How did they use it?

6. Like Lydia. Acts 16, 13-15; 40

"On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. 'If you consider me a believer in the Lord,' she said, 'come and stay at my house.' And she persuaded us....After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and encouraged them. Then they left."

- a. What special gift did Lydia possess?
- b. How did she use it?

CHURCH FELLOWSHIP MANIFESTS ITSELF IN CHRISTIAN TESTIMONY

1. Joint faith gives joint expression. Eph. 4, 3-6; 15-16

"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to one hope when you were called - one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all....Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grown and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

- a. What common faith do Christians share?
- b. What common confession do they make?

2. Joint faith witnesses the same to the world. Acts 8, 1 & 4

"On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria... Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went."

- a. What did persecution do to the church at Jerusalem?
- b. Who witnessed to the world?
- c. What did they say?

3. A Christian prepares to give a public confession of faith.  
I Peter 3, 15-16

"But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander."

- a. What do Christians prepare to do?
- b. How do they confess their faith with words?
- c. How do they confess their faith with actions?

CHURCH FELLOWSHIP MANIFESTS ITSELF IN FURTHERING THE CAUSE OF THE GOSPEL

1. They preach the Gospel to the world. Acts 2, 44-47, Acts 4, 4 & 31, Acts 11, 19

"All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

"But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand. After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly."

"Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews."

- a. How did the church grow so quickly?
- b. Who was it that spread the good news?
- c. What was the result?

2. They send out preachers-teachers. Acts 11, 22-24, Rom. 10, 14-15

"News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord."

"How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

- a. Who sent Barnabas to Antioch?
- b. What was the result?

3. They help enlist and train preachers-teachers. II Tim. 1, 5 & 6  
3, 15-17, 4, 1-2, Acts 16, 1 - 5

"I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in

your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also. For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands."

"and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

"In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage -- with great patience and careful instruction."

"He came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was a Jewess and a believer, but whose father was a Greek. The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey. So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers."

- a. Where did Timothy get his basic training?
- b. Who enlisted and trained him to be a teacher-preacher?

4, They support teachers-preachers. Acts 16, 13-15; 40

"On the Sabbath, we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Tyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us."

"After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and encouraged them. Then they left."

- a. Who accepted the Gospel at this meeting?
- b. What did she do to support those who preach the Gospel?

5. They help start churches. Acts 11, 19-21; 25-26

"Now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message only to Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord."

"Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch."

- a. Who started this church?
- b. Who expanded this church to include Greeks?
- c. Who became their missionary pastors?

CHURCH FELLOWSHIP MANIFESTS ITSELF IN DEEDS OF CHRISTIAN LOVE

1. In sharing food. Acts 2, 46

"Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts."

- a. Who shared this food?
- b. Where did they share it?

2. In sharing material wealth. Acts 4, 32-35

"All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was with them all. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need."

- a. What did some fellowship people need?
- b. How were they supplied?

3. In fellowship greetings. I Cor. 16, 19-20

"The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house. All the brothers here send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss."

- a. In what special way were people of mutual faith greeted?
- b. What special motive did they have?

4. In special efforts to help a weak member. Gal. 6, 1-2  
I Thess. 5, 14

"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."



"And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone."

- a. What special burden of sin happens in a fellowship?
- b. What should we do about it?
- c. What should we do for the weak?

5. In special care for the needy. Matthew 25, 37-40

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'"

- a. What special cases of need are there in this fellowship?
- b. Who is to care for these?
- c. Whom are we loving if we do?

6. In any and all care for the fellowship. Gal. 6, 10

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

- a. Who is first on our list of people to help?
- b. Who is second?
- c. What is included by "opportunity"?

CHURCH FELLOWSHIP CANNOT EXIST WITHOUT MUTUAL CHRISTIAN LOVE

1. It is basic. John 13, 34-35 Phil. 2, 1-2

"A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another."

"If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose."

- a. What unmistakable sign does joint faith give?
- b. What kind of love is it?
- c. Where do we get it from?

2. It motivates the use of the means of Grace in our fellowship.  
Heb. 10, 24-25

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

- a. For what purpose were those meetings held?
- b. How did they use the means of Grace?
- c. What was their motive?

3. It motivates fellowship prayers. Acts 12, 5; 12

"So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.... When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying."

- a. For whom were they praying?
- b. What was their motive?

4. It motivates fellowship, praise and worship. Eph. 5, 2; 19-20

"and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God...Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make

music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

- a. What kind of worship is encouraged?
- b. What motivates us?

5. It motivates using "gifts" in our fellowship. I Cor. 13, 1-4

"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing."

- a. The gift of tongues is nothing without what?
- b. The gift of prophecy is nothing without what?
- c. The gift of faith to perform miracles is nothing without what?
- d. The gift of possessions and liberality is nothing without what?
- e. The gift of self-sacrifice is nothing without what?

6. It motivates the spread of the Gospel. Eph. 4, 15

"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ."

- a. Who are to speak the truth?
- b. What is to be their motive?

7. It motivates our deeds of love for one another. James 2, 14-17

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such a faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."

- a. What does true faith produce?
- b.           What           does           true           love           do?

In conclusion let me say that this assignment and topic calls for a great deal more work than I was able to give it. Because of its tremendous importance and the lack of previous work to study and compare, it should be given to a person who is skilled in conducting Bible Classes or of writing such material. It should then be field-tested and then produced for general use.

Having spent 16 years of my ministry in a large inner-city church at Milwaukee, I realize more fully the implications of this paper. Most of the members of that church lived a good distance away from the church and passed by many open doors to come. The reason why they did not follow the white-flight to the suburbs or suburban churches was, we found, the fellowship which they enjoyed in this church. We concluded that the teaching and practice of church fellowship in all aspects pays off. It is like the cement that ties the building blocks together, certainly the work of the Holy Spirit.

We also implemented structured fellowship. Fellowship dinners were increased where people got acquainted by design. Food give-away programs were promoted to help the needy. Members on a voluntary basis became faith brothers and sisters to new members on a yearly basis. Children during and after confirmation were paired off to be faith friends. Our church had always been known for its friendly greetings and warm handshakes. By the time I left cross-cultural fellowship had been achieved. Blacks were working well with the whites.

Church fellowship is so important. Yet how much is taught in our Catechism or Adult Instruction. How many of our hymns fit the topic, especially Christian love for one another. A chapter on this subject should be included in "Shepherd Under Christ."

In our local churches do we preach about it or talk to our organizations about it? Do we foster it in a structured way? If we are to model our churches after the first church, Luke lists "fellowship" second after the "Word". Faith and love must be the earmarks of the true church.

We live in an open and free society here in America. It is more difficult perhaps in these times to foster church fellowship than in the days of severe persecution. What I am concerned about also is what visitors to my church, and we have ten each Sunday, see and hear. Are they impressed by our joint faith and mutual love? Do we really act like faith brothers and sisters? And what do we tell the world out there? Do we get a favorable report from them as the early church?

I have learned much in preparing this paper. I hope to implement some more ways to improve the teaching and practice of church fellowship within my congregation. Perhaps you will too.

W. D. M.