

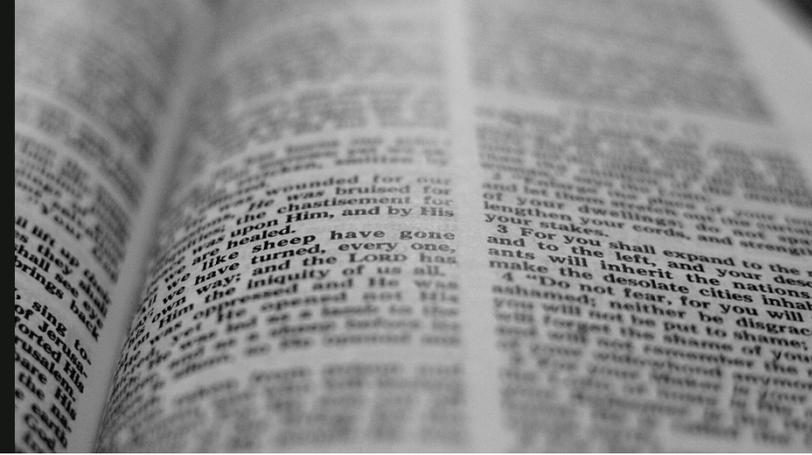
BIBLE STUDY

Weekly

Date: Wednesday, May 12, 2021

Lesson & Time: 6:30 pm

Facilitator: Pastor Rodney T. Morton



CHURCH ESSENTIALS: HOW ISOLATION IMPACTS FELLOWSHIP

Fellowship: Grounded In the Bible

- Christians are interdependent persons. When we look at ourselves honestly, we realize we need others in the body of Christ and others need us.
- Like members of a human body, we need to be in place to be effective and to function as God intends.
- Isolations hurt the body's ability to be impactful and transformational. Don't seek to isolate yourselves from other Christians. Find a local church where you can be significantly involved in sharing faith and life with others. Genesis 3, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12.

Why Is Isolation from the Church Dangerous?

- Isolation creates distance from the church body.
- Isolation kills community.
- Isolation makes a person or family vulnerable to Satan's attacks.
- Isolation can cause a person to make improper decisions based on fleshly motives.
- Isolation from the church opens up the mind for influence from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Fellowship: Relationship to Other Believers (Rom. 12:3-16).

We are members of the same body. 1 Cor. 12, Eph. 4:7-16.

The basic idea is that each believer is a living part of Christ's body, and each one has a spiritual function to perform. Each believer has a gift (or gifts) to be used for the building up of the body and the perfecting of the other members of the body.

In short, we belong to each other, we minister to each other, and we need each other. What are the essentials for spiritual ministry and growth in the body of Christ?

We Need An Honest Evaluation (v. 3). Each Christian must know what his/her spiritual gifts are and what ministry (or ministries) he is to have in the local church.

It is not wrong for a Christian to recognize gifts in his own life and in the lives of others. What is wrong is the tendency to have a false evaluation of ourselves. Nothing causes more damage in a local church than a believer who overrates himself and tries to perform a ministry that he cannot do. (Sometimes the opposite is true, and people undervalue themselves. Both attitudes are wrong.)

Faithful Cooperation (vv. 4-8). Each believer has a different gift, and God has bestowed these gifts so the local body can grow in a balanced way. But each Christian must exercise his or her gift by faith. We may not see the result of our ministry, but the Lord sees it and He blesses.

Note that “exhortation” (encouragement) is just as much a spiritual ministry as preaching or teaching. Giving and showing mercy are also important gifts. To some people, God has given the ability to rule, or to administer the various functions of the church. Whatever gift we have must be dedicated to God and used for the good of the whole church.

The gifts that we have came because of God’s grace. They must be accepted and exercised by faith. We were saved “by grace, through faith” (Eph. 2:8–9), and we must live and serve “by grace through faith.” Since our gifts are from God, we cannot take the credit for them. All we can do is accept them and use them to honor His name. (See 1 Cor. 15:10 for Paul’s personal testimony about gifts).

It is tragic when any one gift is emphasized in a local church beyond all the other gifts. “Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?” (1 Cor. 12:29–30) The answer to all these questions is no! And for a Christian to minimize the other gifts while he emphasizes his own gift is to deny the very purpose for which gifts are given: the benefit of the whole body of Christ. “Now to each man the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:7, NIV).

Spiritual gifts are tools to build with, not toys to play with or weapons to fight with. In the church at Corinth, the believers were tearing down the ministry because they were abusing spiritual gifts. They were using their gifts as ends in themselves and not as a means toward the end of building up the church. They so emphasized their spiritual gifts that they lost their spiritual graces! They had the gifts of the Spirit but were lacking in the fruit of the spirit—love, joy, peace, etc. (Gal. 5:22–23).

Loving participation (vv. 9-16). Here the emphasis is on the attitudes of those who exercise the spiritual gifts. It is possible to use a spiritual gift in an unspiritual way. Paul makes this same point in 1 Corinthians 13, the great “love chapter” of the New Testament. Love is the circulatory system of the spiritual body, which enables all the members to function in a healthy, harmonious way. This must be an honest love, not a hypocritical love (Rom. 12:9); and it must be humble, not proud (Rom. 12:10). “Preferring one another” means treating others as more important than ourselves (Phil. 2:1–4).