



Turning Point Bible Fellowship

Turning People Towards Christ

TURNINGPOINTBFC.ORG — 2 CHRONICLES 7:14

Bible Study on Fellowship

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Christians are neither higher nor lower than other people. Someone has said, “The ground is level at the foot of the cross.” And all Christians have the privilege of being intimate members of God’s family.

You are to learn from others and to encourage one another. There is a certain chemistry that takes place as Christians get together to build each other up. This cannot be accomplished if you are isolated from other Christians.

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God desires that every believer be a functioning member of a local church-- a local “body” or “family” of believers. Let’s look at several passages that show our relationship to one another.

MEMBERS OF ONE ANOTHER

“So we who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.”

Romans 12:5

The New testament states that Christians are “members of one another.” Paul used an illustration to get this point across--the human body. What is the similarity between the “human body” and “Christ’s body--the Church” according to 1 Corinthians 12:14-27?

Read Romans 12 and Ephesians 4 where Paul describes the functioning body of Christ:

1. Can an individual Christian function effectively by himself? Why or Why not?

If a speck of dust blows into your eye, you instinctively rub it with your finger, is a debate necessary to get your finger to help your eyes?_____ Should any member of Christ’s body say, “I don’t need you” to another member? Why or why not?

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2. Should any member of Christ’s body feel more important than another member of Christ’s body?_____ Does any Christian have exclusive rights to God’s grace?_____

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How should you think of yourself in light of:

Romans 12:3

Ephesians 4:2

Though one person may have a more responsible position, in God's sight even the person who may go unnoticed is just as important and necessary in the body of Christ.

3. Christians should work at keeping the unity of the Spirit in the body of Christ, *"The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts"* (1 Corinthians 12:12).

What does Paul communicate to us in 1 Corinthians 1:10? _____

Most biblical references to the functioning body of Christ focus on local churches. Why does God want us to be functioning members of a local church?

What does the comparison between the "human body" and "Christ's body --the Church" mean to you?

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DEVOTED TO ONE ANOTHER

“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.” Romans 12:10

This exhortation introduces another analogy to illustrate the functioning church. It is the family unit. The concept of the family adds a dimension of warmth, concern and loyalty. The term “*brotherly love*” refers to the love that should exist within family units. Applied to the church, it refers to the love God wants us Christians to have for each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. We are the family of God! The word “brothers” is distinctly a “family term.” When it refers to Christians, it means “fellow believers.” It means we have all been “born again” into God’s forever family.

To “be devoted” refers to the mutual love of parents and children and husband and wives. Christians are to be just as devoted to each other as are the individual members of a close-knit family unit. We are indeed “blood brothers”; for in Christ “*we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins*” (Ephesians 1:7). Christians begin as infants in Christ and go through stages of development. In our immaturity, we can fall into patterns of self-centered behavior; but as we mature spiritually in Christ, our lives will reflect His nature.

What are we exhorted to do? (Philippians 2:3-4).

God loves you right now as much as He ever will. Our thoughts and actions may grieve Him; but His love and goodness toward us never change. What would be His desire for you concerning the following attitudes and actions toward other members of your “Christian family” and why?

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- a. Do I spend most of my time thinking about myself rather than others?
- b. Do I spend time praying for myself or others?
- c. Am I forgiving toward others?
- d. Or am I basically angry and resentful?
- e. When I am hurt, do I withdraw or do I continue to be involved with other people?
- f. Do I fear rejection, or do I reach out to others?
- g. Do I humbly consider others better than myself?
- h. Do I look to the interests of others?

HONOR ONE ANOTHER

“Honor one another above yourselves.” Romans 12:10

The example is given of an excellent musician--an extraordinary pianist who desires to help other people “look and sound good”, especially when he accompanies them. He is admired, not so much for his musicianship, but for honoring others above himself. He always makes sure his volume does not compete with the vocalist. His music enhances the other’s presentation rather than detracts from it. He assists the singer by hitting difficult notes and even covers up a person's mistakes. He is excited and satisfied when a vocalist he has accompanied is honored by others for a job well done. He is an example to us. Every Christian should strive to make other believers “look and sound good”--rejoicing when others achieve, when others are honored, and when others are successful. When this happens, the body of Christ will function beautifully and mature and grow in Christ.

Christ set the example in honoring others above Himself. How did Jesus honor His disciples? (John 13:1-17)

How can you sincerely honor someone else this week?

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BE OF THE SAME MIND WITH ONE ANOTHER

“Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus.” Romans 15:5

Satan’s strategy involves destroying unity among Christians. He is the author of confusion, insensitivity and false doctrine. In the Bible, we discover the power whereby Satan’s strategy can be defeated. It’s the power of “one-mindedness” in the body of Christ. In Christ’s prayer to the Father in John 17, He made a request--that disciples might experience unity and oneness. What did Jesus pray? (John 17:11)

It is a visible unity--a oneness--that reveals the essence of the Gospel. And, that essence includes the fact “that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:19). Christ was indeed God in the flesh. He was (and is) one with the Father.

If unity is destroyed in Christ's body, then the most powerful means of communication to lost men that Christ was God is destroyed. When that message is obliterated or even blurred, man is doomed to eternal despair. Can man come to know God apart from coming to know Christ (John 20:30-31)? _____

Explain you answer:

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How does disunity among believers destroy the communication of the gospel message?

One of the ingredients in the church that convinces non-Christians that Jesus is God is unity--being of “the same mind with one another.” This represents a miracle because men everywhere tend toward disunity. When non-Christians see true unity and true oneness, their hearts cry out to be part of that kind love.

ACCEPT ONE ANOTHER

“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.” Romans 15:7

In at least three areas, Christians have historically violated the injunction “accept one another” by judging one another (legalism), in showing partiality (prejudice), and by not being reconciled to one another (bitterness).

1. Judging one another.

“Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters” (Romans 14:1). To sit in false judgment on other Christians is a violation of the exhortation to accept one another.

What are we reminded to do in Romans 14:3?

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Why are we not to judge each other in areas that are not specified as sin?

What does Paul write to the strong in faith? (Romans 14:20-21, 15:1).

If we are mature Christians, we will be sensitive toward our brothers and sisters in Christ who are not as strong as we are. We will be careful to do nothing that would cause them to stumble and fall into sin. If these two attitudes are working at same time in a local family of believers, unity will emerge.

2. Showing Partiality.

“Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud; but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not conceited” (Romans 12:16). James 2:9 states, “if you show favoritism , you sin.”

Prejudice, favoritism and discrimination in the body of Christ violate the law of God. Furthermore, they violate the nature of the functioning body of Christ. We are all one. Every member is important--rich or poor, young or old, weak or strong, and no matter of what race! If we show favoritism, we also destroy the unity , harmony, and oneness in the body of Christ which Christ and Paul both prayed for and commanded.

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3. Not being reconciled to one another

Read Ephesians 2:11-22, Cultural, racial, national, and religious barriers are broken down when people are brought near to God by the blood of Christ. There is peace between peoples that formerly were enemies when they are both members of the body of Christ. All believers have the same access to God the Father because the same Spirit dwells in them. Together we are being constructed into a spiritual temple of God.

Is there a relationship in your life which still needs the walls knocked down? _____

How can that be done?

Verse 19 "...you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household..." Does this truth affect the life of your church? How?

Does this truth affect your personal life? How?

As maturing disciples what should be our concern about the whole body around the world? (Ephesians 4:15,16)



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ADMONISH ONE ANOTHER

“And concerning you, my brethren, I myself am also convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able also to admonish one another.” Romans 15:14

To confront a Christian about their sin is difficult. However, it is a great sign of love to be willing to risk rejection. And admonishment if done in the right spirit, with the right motive, using an appropriate method, the person who is not living a life worthy of the Gospel of Christ usually senses the risk you are taking. Though that person may have difficulty acknowledging it at that moment, down deep they really know.

Romans 15:14 identifies the basis for being competent to instruct (or admonish) on another:

1. Be “full of _____.” (i.e., living a holy , Christlike life). Christians who are sensitive about their walk with God are capable--and responsible --to admonish other Christians. This is not “judging others.” But we need to “clean up our own act” before we try to help someone else “clean up” his/her act. (Luke 6:41-42)
2. Be “ filled with all _____.” In order to admonish another, we need an adequate knowledge of God’s Word. Admonishment must be based upon God’s specific will--not on what we think another Christian should or should not be doing.

There are helpful guidelines in Scripture treating the concept of admonishment.

Admonishment must be:

1. Done with concern and love (Acts 20:31). Speak the truth in love.
2. Personal. That does not mean there is never general admonishment. When a particular Christian has a particular problem, it is better to make exhortation a private matter.
3. Persistent if it is to be effective.
4. Done with pure motives. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn (admonish) you, as my bear children” (1 Corinthians 4:14).
5. A natural outgrowth of proper body function. There are two types of admonishment--preventive and corrective. We are to warn each other to stay away from sin (preventive counseling). Preventive counseling should be consistent in the church as the body of Christ functions as a group.

See Colossians 3:16 and Matthew 18:16-18. Do you need to admonish someone? _____

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Underline the guidelines you need to remember.

What is the reminder in Galatians 6:1? _____

SUBMIT TO ONE ANOTHER

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” Ephesians 5:21

The word “*submit*” is used in relationships of one Christian with another. We are to submit to one another in the fear of God. The concept of “*submission*” is used by biblical writers to describe a variety of Christian relationships. Young men are to submit to older men. All members of Christ’s body are to submit to the authority of their leaders. Servants are to submit to masters. Children are to submit to parents. Christians are to submit to leaders in government. Wives are to submit to husbands.

Christians who are in positions of authority must also function with a submissive attitude. Husbands are directed to love their wives as Christ loved the church. Fathers are to deal sensitively with their children. Elders are commissioned to be “*servants*.” Masters are to treat their servants fairly.

Read Ephesians 5:21-6:9. How might Paul’s instructions be misused apart from the context of these verses?

Mutual submission even by those who are in authority, is a distinctive concept made possible by Christ. Christ brought a whole new approach to functional relationships between people. In the world, there is no “*mutual submission*”. Man basically operates out of selfish motives. He has little or no interest in helping others--except when it might benefit himself.

How did Christ demonstrate submission? (Philippians 2:5-11)

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What was His attitude?

In Christ, believers have the potential to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” Even those who have positions of authority--elders, husbands, masters (in our days, employers)--are to relate to others with an attitude of submission. Explain the concept “mutual submission” in your own words. Give examples.

SERVE ONE ANOTHER

“For you were called to freedom , brethren only do not turn your freedom to an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Galatians 5:13

Being a servant implies practical involvement in doing good to all men (Mark 10:35-45), especially to fellow believers (Galatians 6:10). God is glorified as non-believers see our servanthood demonstrated in good works (Matthew 5:16) which help to meet people’s spiritual, physical, mental and social needs (Matthew 25:31-45).

In “serving one another in love”, we find true freedom in Christ; and our deepest needs are met in legitimate ways. We are not used by one another . We are not put on a performance standard. Our relationship with others can be truly satisfying. This is true freedom!

As unbelievers we are “*prisoners of* _____” (Galatians 3:22).

But in Christ we are set _____ (Galatians 5:1).

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“Freedom in Christ” does not mean:

1. Freedom to sin. To have this attitude is to misuse, abuse and misunderstand the grace of God. Read Titus 2:11-14.
2. Freedom from temptation to sin. Read James 1:13,14.
3. Freedom from servanthood. Rather than using others to indulge our sinful nature, we are to “serve one another in love.” The Christian who wants to experience true freedom in Christ must live in total commitment to Christ. Being a “servant to Christ” also involves serving other members of the body. Turning our lives over to Christ also means turning our lives over to each other. Our responsibility to one another is greater because we are members of the family of God.

How do you “serve one another in love?” This can be evaluated by how you are reflecting “the fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22) in your relationships:

- a. Do you express Christian love to others? _____
- b. Is there evidence of joy in your life? _____
- c. Is there peace and unity with others? _____
- d. Are you showing patience with others? _____
- e. Are you kind in your actions and attitudes? _____
- f. By your acts are you demonstrating goodness? _____
- g. Are you faithful to others? _____
- h. Do you demonstrate gentleness with others? _____
- i. Do you control yourself in conversations and general lifestyle? _____

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BEARING WITH ONE ANOTHER

“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.” Ephesians 4:2

The word ‘bear’ in Ephesians means to be tolerant toward Christians: to bear with them; to patiently endure their idiosyncrasies and weakness; to have a forgiving spirit toward others who may sin against us.

What are we to clothe ourselves with? (Colossians 3:12-13) _____

Why are we to forgive? _____

When we are tempted to be impatient with one another, we need to think about Christ and His attitude toward us. This was Paul’s secret. The Lord’s longsuffering and patience toward him marked his lids (1 Timothy 1:15-17) and gave him unusual tolerance toward others. Seeing himself as the worst of sinners and experiencing God’s love and patience in saving him caused Paul to respond to others with the love and patience of Christ.

As people of God whom He has called, what is His desire for us in Ephesians 4:1-3?

Bearing with one another and having a forgiving spirit are synonymous concepts. Some Christians carry grudges for years. This is out of character for a follower of Jesus Christ. How ungrateful for a Christian to hold a grudge against a fellow believer when Christ has canceled our own debt of sin.

Patience, forbearance and forgiveness are not automatic actions that follow conversion to Christ. These involve deliberate acts of the will. Every person who has an unforgiving spirit chooses to do so. If you choose to forgive, this is a process to follow:

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1. Ask God to reveal any sins in your life.
2. List your sins on a piece of paper. Be completely honest; this is just between you and God.

3. Remember that resentment, hatred, and bitterness are sins. Read Ephesians 4:32

You may have been hurt at some time in your life. Unforgiven hurt can set us up to become slaves of resentment, hatred, and bitterness. We tend to hold on to the wrongs done to us by others which will ultimately poison all of our relationships. The only way to be free of this bondage is to forgive (by act of the will' release the offending person). Since Christ was willing to forgive our offences, who are we to refuse to forgive those who have offended us? What is to be gained by clinging to our hurt and bitterness? Are you willing to obey?

4. List people who have offended you. If you have anyone to forgive, write (for each person):

Lord, I choose to forgive (Name of Person) for (what that person did to hurt me) even though it made me feel (painful memories or feelings).

5. After completing your list, write over it the promise of 1 John 1:9.
6. Thank God for the forgiveness He provided for you through what Christ did on the cross.
7. Tear up the list and throw it away.

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ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER

“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up.” 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Christians are to build up and edify one another. No Christian can build up all other believers in a local church. God’s design is that every Christian be a functioning part of the body of Christ; that every Christian contributes to the process.

Paul commended the Thessalonians Christians for their concern and love for one another. They had learned the importance of mutual encouragement, exhortation and comfort. He knew the primary means for mutual encouragement--God’s truth! *“We also thank God continually because, when you received the Word of God, which you hear from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the Word of God, which is at work in you who believe”* (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

Why is God’s Word the primary means Christians are to use to *“encourage one another”* and *“build one another up?”* (Matthew 24:35)

What are some Scriptures that have especially encouraged you recently?

Scripture is so important in building up others in the body of Christ. As we learn about God’s Word, then we will be ready to share the Word with others who are in special need of encouragement. How can we encourage one another with Scripture if we are not familiar with Scriptures? Our need is to study the Bible--not only for personal growth, but also to assist others in their growth.

How does the discipling of others encourage them? _____

In what wrong way could God’s word be used which would discourage another person?

Have you been encouraged by another Christian recently? How?

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Who could you encourage this week and how?

FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER

“Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” Ephesians 4:32

Forgiveness enables us to fellowship with God our heavenly Father as well as believers in Christ. Through forgiveness, we are able to draw closer to God and to other believers. Both relationships with our heavenly Father and believers in Christ are strengthened, deepened and enriched.

What is forgiveness and why is it important? How do we grant forgiveness as well as seek it?

Is forgiveness ...

- A feeling? _____
- A one-time event? _____
- A memory loss experience? _____
- A requirement? _____

Forgiveness is not a new concept. Fearful of Joseph’s revenge after the death of their father Jacob (also known as Israel), Joseph’s brothers sought his forgiveness when they sent word saying, *“Please forgive, I beg you, the offense of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong (Genesis 50:17).”* As shown in the family of Joseph, forgiveness is needed for a healthy relationship to continue, advance and be mutually beneficial--even if among family members.

Jesus linked the importance of forgiveness with God in Matthew 6:14-15 when he said *“if you forgive other people for their offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive other people, then your Father will not forgive your offenses.”*

Deuteronomy 15:12 paints a picture of forgiveness. *“And this is the regulation for the release of debts: every creditor is to forgive what he has loaned to his neighbor; he shall not require it of his neighbor and his brother, because the LORD’S release has been proclaimed.”* Forgiveness provides a release of a debt-even due to an offense. Hebrews 9:22 further highlights the idea of forgiveness being a “taking away”, “removal” or “cleaning” when it says, *“And almost all things are cleansed with blood, according to the Law, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”*

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In imitating God, granting forgiveness is choosing not to (1) dwell on an offense, (2) spread an offense, (3) use that offense against the offender and (4) allow that offense to hinder any God-initiated healing of the relationship.

Do you agree or disagree? _____ Why/Why not? _____

In forgiving like God, remember

- God chooses not to “remember sins” (Jeremiah 31:34).
- God removes our sins, not spreads them (Psalm 103:12).
- God heals of sin-damaged relationships (1 John 1:9).

What are other principles of forgiveness to remember?

Is forgiveness ...

- A feeling? _____
- A one-time event? _____
- A memory loss experience? _____
- A requirement? _____

How do we seek forgiveness?

- Admit your fault.
- Acknowledge the hurt.
- Ask for forgiveness.
- Accept potential consequences or mercy.
- Adjust beliefs or behavior to grow and mature.

Is an apology and asking forgiveness the same? _____

Forgiveness enables the fellowship with God and other believers to continue, advance, be mutually beneficial, and model God’s connection with his children to unbelievers.

Who do you need to grant forgiveness?

From whom do you need to seek forgiveness?

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SUMMARY

In the “body of Christ,” the church, every member contributes to its success (becoming all that God desires it to be).

God desires His church to be a group of people who are:

- Members of One Another
- Devoted to One Another
- Honor One Another
- Be of The Same Mind With One Another
- Accept One Another
- Admonish One Another
- Submit to One Another
- Serve One Another
- Bearing with One Another
- Encouraging One Another

Which of the “one anothers” is God impressing on you to make changes in your life or to take actions?

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Before His crucifixion, Jesus prayed for His disciples, then He prayed for all believers:

“ My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message, 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 and sent Me. I have given them the glory that You gave Me, that they may be one as We are one : I in then and You in Me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that You sent Me and have loved them as You have loved, Me” (John 17:20-23).

Why is Jesus praying for unity (oneness) in John 17? _____

In light of Jesus’ prayer, what is His purpose and desire for you as a member of a local family of believers?

Further reading: Building Up one Another, Gene Getz

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