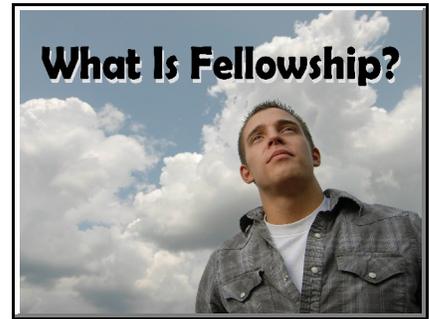


Church of God Sunday School

THE CHRISTIAN'S TOOLBOX — FELLOWSHIP



DAILY READINGS:

- ❑ **Monday:** God's people should assemble together in God's house (Psalm 122:1; Hebrews 10:25).
- ❑ **Tuesday:** Walking in God's light brings spiritual life (John 8:12; John 1:4; 1 John 5:12).
- ❑ **Wednesday:** Four essential things for spiritual life (Acts 2:41-47).
- ❑ **Thursday:** Different people from different places now have something in common (Acts 2:5-11, 44; Jude 3).
- ❑ **Friday:** Paul compared the body of Christ with a physical body (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).
- ❑ **Saturday:** God's people have a common goal—to share the Gospel (Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:8).

MEMORY VERSE: *"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."* —1 John 1:7

Is Attending Church Services Necessary?

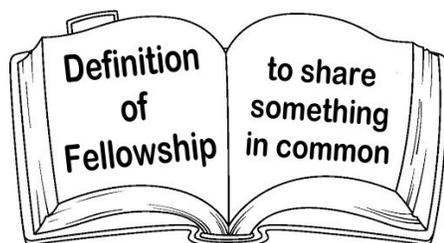
Have you ever wondered why it is important to attend church services often? Do many of your school classmates, friends, or co-workers go to church services often or even at all? According to a study by the Hartford Institute of Religion Resource, only about 20 percent of Americans actually attend church services each week. Yet, a 2014 study by the Pew Research Center showed that more than 70 percent of Americans say that they are a Christian. That means 50 percent of Americans who say they are Christians do not believe it is important to regularly go to church services.

What does the Bible say about meeting together with other Christians? Is it important? Hebrews 10:25 warns, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is . . ." In Psalm 122:1 David said, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD." Why is it that so many who claim to be God's people do not have this same attitude? Another recent study showed that one of the reasons people have stopped attending church services is because "they are not finding community" (*Barna Research*). In other words, they do not feel like they have anything in common with others who attend the services. (The word *community* means "a group sharing common interests or characteristics.") A Bible word that means "to share something in common" is *fellowship*.



The Bible Definition of Fellowship

You might have heard the word *fellowship* used to describe a location (a fellowship hall) or a church service (a fellowship meeting) or a group of congregations who believe the same doctrines. Some have even included the word *fellowship* in the name of their local church congregation. With so many different usages of this word, it might be confusing when trying to understand what exactly fellowship is. Because it is such an important tool in the Christian's toolbox, it is vital that we use the Bible to see what God says about fellowship.



The first time this word is used in the New Testament is in Acts, Chapter 2. God sent His Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, enabling God's people to have something never before experienced: God's Spirit living

within. In the Old Testament, people were unable to live a life free from sin because God's presence could not dwell within them until Jesus paid the price for full salvation. Because of this sacrifice, God's people can have "life eternal" (John 17:3). Sharing this life with God and Jesus is also described as "fellowship . . . with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3). As long as you are saved and doing all that God has showed you to do, you are alive spiritually. You are walking in the light; you have spiritual life. This life comes from God—you share it in common with God.

Is Fellowship With Others Important?

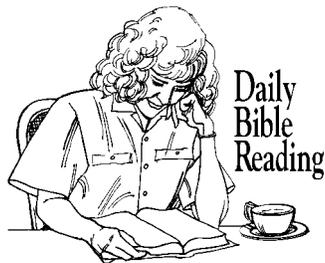
In Acts 2:42 you can read of four things new Christians believed were essential: "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." They did not believe these things were just a good idea, but they "devoted themselves, persevered and did not faint" (Strong's definition of "*stedfastly*"). In other words, these things were a priority in their lives. How did they have fellowship together? The Feast of Pentecost was one of the "solemn feasts" (Numbers 15:3) that all adult Jewish males were required to travel to Jerusalem to attend (Deuteronomy 16:16). Some people traveled long distances for this feast. Can you imagine the great number of people who were in Jerusalem at that time? Look at the many nations spoken of in Acts 2:9-11. All these people came from many different places, having many different cultures and traditions.

When Peter preached the Gospel, Acts 2:41 says that "three thousand souls" were saved. Then, those people with many different languages (verse 6) from "every nation" (verse 5) began to meet together, pray together, study the Bible together, and share with others. What made the difference? When they gave their hearts to God, they became a part of God's church (the Church of God), and they had a "common salvation" (Jude 3), a salvation shared in Christ. It did not matter who they were or where they came from, they now had something in common with other Christians. This is fellowship.

Maintaining Fellowship

Since fellowship is such an important tool for the Christian, is it possible to lose fellowship with God or to lose fellowship with other Christians? First John 1:6 talks about people who say they have fellowship with God, but they are not telling the truth.

Why? Because they are walking in spiritual darkness. God cannot have a relationship with anyone who loves "darkness rather than light, [why?] because their deeds [are] evil" (John 3:19). To prevent darkness from coming on you, you must "walk in the light" (1 John 1:7). To continue to walk in the light, you must do the same things to keep spiritual life that the Christians did in Acts, Chapter 2. You must make these things a priority in your life: Bible reading and study, prayer, and going to church services. If you keep your spiritual life healthy (fellowship with God), you will also have fellowship with God's people.



Paul compared God's people (the body of Christ) to a physical body in 1 Corinthians, Chapter 12. Just as a physical body needs certain things to be healthy (food and water), so does the spiritual body (Bible reading and prayer). Just as the physical body needs each member, so does the spiritual body (verses 21-22). Just as the physical body desires a companion, someone to share life with (Genesis 2:18), so does the spiritual body desire to share with other Christians what they have in common (fellowship). If you slam the door on your thumb, how do you react? Do you say, "Thumb, you shouldn't have been in the way"? No! Your other hand comes up to hold the injured thumb, and you might say "Ouch!" You show care and concern for that member. Likewise, in the spiritual body, "the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it" (verses 25-26).

Another important part of maintaining fellowship is having a burden for people who are lost. You will want others to have what you share in common with Christ (salvation). You and Christ are in a partnership. His goal (salvation for the lost) will become your goal. As you begin to understand the value of fellowship with God and with other Christians, you will want to tell others as well!



1. What is a reason given in the lesson for people not attending church services often? _____

2. What does the word "community" mean? _____

3. What did David say about going to "the house of the LORD"? _____

4. What is the definition of "fellowship"? _____

5. How does someone have fellowship with God? _____

6. What do you have if you are walking in the light? _____

7. What do you share in common with God? _____

8. What four things did Christians believe to be essential in Acts 2:42? _____

9. What is the definition of the word "steadfastly"? _____

10. Why might have the people gathered in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost had little in common? _____

11. How did the Christians show that they had fellowship (something in common) in Acts, Chapter 2? _____

12. Why did Paul use the physical body to describe how God's people work together? _____

Benefits of

Best Describe the Benefits of Fellowship

Spiritual life in Christ

"Exhorting" (encouragement)

Prayers of God's people

Spiritual teaching

Forgiveness

Service through love

Being welcomed and received

Working ("striving") together

Kindness and compassion

Unity ("all may be one")

Spiritual growth ("increase of the body")

Sharing the Gospel (witnessing)

James 5:16

Philippians 1:27

Galatians 5:13

Hebrews 10:25

1 Peter 3:8

Acts 1:8

Ephesians 4:16

John 17:21

Romans 15:7

Colossians 3:16

1 John 5:12

Colossians 3:13

Fellowship