

Fellowship and Dis-fellowship of the Christian

By Doug Hamilton

Dis-fellowshipping

In the last lesson we covered the topic of fellowship. The word is *koinonia* and means to have a partnership. We in the kingdom of God are in a partnership with Jesus and each other for the purpose in promoting His kingdom. Our partnership to each other is in direct relationship to our person relationship to God. If we are personally drawing closer to God each day, then we will be strengthened in our partnership to each other through our resources and time spent. The goal concerning the partnership is to function as a team under the CEO Jesus Christ.

But what happens when one of our partners in the firm called the *church* no longer is a willing participant? What happens when they lose the mutual vision of the partnership and are planning to leaver the firm? What must be done when one of the partners is working for another CEO called the devil? This is the second half of the lesson titled, “*Dis-fellowshipping*”. Though the term *dis-fellowship* does not occur in the English Bible, the concept is discussed in great detail by Jesus.

Matthew 18:15-18 “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. ¹⁶ “But if he does not listen *to you*, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. ¹⁷ “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸ “Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.

1) Personal Confrontation of Anti-partnership Behavior

Because the basis of fellowship (partnership) has terms and conditions (demonstration of love through resources and time), then perceived violations must be confirmed (established). Looking at the passage from a fellowship perspective let us analyze the words of Jesus.

Verse 15 “And if your *partner demonstrates anti-fellowship qualities against you*, go and reprove him in private; if *your erring partner* listens to you, you have won *back your partner in the fellowship*.”

We must remember that the integrity of the firm is of the upmost highest standards. Our CEO Jesus expects the highest values of his partnership, for He established his church through the shedding of His blood (Acts 20:28). 1 Corinthians 5:9-11 “*I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people...not even to eat with such a one.*” If there is not personal intervention on behalf of you to the sinner, then we “*give the devil an opportunity*” (Ephesians 4:27) to lure our partner away to the firm of the *dark side*.

Special Note: We must remember the purpose of church disciple is to win back your partner of the kingdom, not to drive them away. By treating the matter discretely in the beginning, you stand a much better chance of doing this. The avoidance of public shame is one of their rewards for coming clean early.

Fellowship and Dis-fellowship of the Christian

By Doug Hamilton

If the partner listens to you and corrects the poor behavior, then you have strengthened him and the overall partnership. Confession and change is the goal!

- 2 Samuel 12:13 Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD."
- Luke 15:21 "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'"
- I John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

It is wonderful when a member of our partnership comes back to firm! James 5:19-20, "*My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back,²⁰ let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins.*"

2) Small-group Establishment of Anti-partnership Behavior

It would be great if every partner was a humble listener seeking to represent well the partnership of Christ. In reality, many times there might be disagreement on whether an action is sinful or not. If that is the case, then establishment of anti-partnership behavior must be further addressed.

Matthew 18:16, "*But if he does not listen {to you,} take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.*" When it comes to sin, it is too simple to just say, "We will agree to disagree." Go and gather a couple of non-partisan members of the firm and make sure that it is actually sin which is on the table.

Ecclesiastes 4:12 says that "*A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.*" Hopefully the erring partner will be more apt to listen. Sit down together and once again have the discussion before the other two of three partners. If they conclude that the brother is not in error, then be willing to "agree to disagree". But if they conclude that there is behavior which is contrary to the partnership, then as a small group, lovingly correct the behavior. If the erring partner sees the error of his way and change the behavior, then you have restored his back to the partnership.

3) Congregational Recognition of Anti-Partnership Behavior

What needs to happen if the erring brother refuses to recognize the instruction of the other partners? Jesus said in verse 17a "*And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church...*" Obviously if the brother will not listen to his fellow-partners of the kingdom in the first two steps, then it is time to have a full meeting of the partnership. They are to take the time to make their best efforts to win the brother back. Hopefully there is someone the firm they might listen to. It would be great to win him back from his poor behavior, but what do you do if he will not listen to any of his fellow-partners of the kingdom?

4) Official Acknowledgment of Departing.

Jesus said, "*and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer.*" In the partnership of Jesus Christ the *gentile and a tax-gatherer* shall not be a part of. There is no other choice than to fully recognize the erring brother as leaving the partnership of his own freewill.

Fellowship and Dis-fellowship of the Christian

By Doug Hamilton

- Titus 3:10-11 “Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, ¹¹ knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.”
- 2 Corinthians 13:1-2, “This is the third time I am coming to you. Every fact is to be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”
- Romans 16:17, “Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.”
- 2 Peter 2:21, “For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them.”

What is the basis of this action? It was established when the straying brother refused to listen to the group of three. Jesus confirmed in Matthew 18:20, “*For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.*” The erring partner of the firm was not simply meeting with three other partners, but the CEO Jesus was in the meeting as well.

Always Remember the Partnership of Christ.

Church discipline or *dis-fellowshipping* is a bad situation and a sad situation, but not a hopeless situation. The aim of this process is to win the brother back to the partnership. By formally recognizing their departure, perhaps the sting of withdrawn fellowship will bring them back. It is known as *turning them over to Satan*.

- 1 Corinthians 5:5, “I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”
- 1 Timothy 1:20 Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have delivered over to Satan, so that they may be taught not to blaspheme.

We are to encourage them to repent and come back to the partnership of Christ. We find many examples in the scripture that show Jesus reaching out to the heathen and the tax collectors. He never condoned their behavior, but reached out to them with love and correction.

- 2 Corinthians 2:6-7, “Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority, ⁷ so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, lest somehow such a one be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.”

In the process of church discipline, we as a partnership are simply making the decision to follow what has already occurred in heaven. If the sinner truly repents, the Church must truly accept him back into the partnership.

Close: Story of Sister Vonna.