**Fellowship Among Christians**

1 Peter 4:11 tells us that “whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God.” Fellowship is one of those words used both in our culture and in the pages of the New Testament. In cases like this, there is a real danger of assuming that our modern concept of fellowship is the same as the Scriptural concept. The only way we can truly understand what God means by fellowship is to consider how the Holy Spirit used the word.

The New Testament was written in “common language” Greek and the word translated as fellowship was koinonia. The various forms of this Greek word are translated in the New American Standard Version as fellowship, contribution, sharing and participating. Let’s look at the passages that describe the kind of “sharing” that God emphasizes.

**Contributing for the poor among the saints.** Romans 12:13; 15:26, 2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:13

**Contributing to support the preaching of the gospel.** Philippians 1:5; 4:15, Galatians 6:6

**A Christian’s responsibility to be generous.** 1 Timothy 6:18, Hebrews 13:16

**Fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.** 1 Corinthians 1:9, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Philippians 2:1, 1 John 1:3;6

**Spiritual fellowship with other saints.** Acts 2:42, Romans 15:27, Galatians 2:9, Philemon 1:6, 1 John 1:7

**Sharing in partaking of the Lord’s Supper together.** 1 Corinthians 10:16

**Fellowship in the suffering of Christ.** Philippians 3:10, 1 Peter 4:13

**Christ’s sharing with us in living in a physical body.** Hebrews 2:14

**Warning about having fellowship with evil.** 2 Corinthians 6:14, 1 Timothy 5:22, 2 John 1:11

The common thread throughout all of these passages of Scripture is the emphasis on sharing in a spiritual sense, not in a social context. Verses like Romans 12:13, 1 Timothy 5:10 and Hebrews 13:2 encourage all Christians as individuals to practice hospitality and socializing with other Christians is a great thing, ***but there is no scriptural authority for the local church to be involved in providing entertainment.***

Church-sponsored ball teams, gymnasiums and chili suppers under the guise of “fellowship” amounts to an abuse of koinonia. The term “fellowship hall” is a misnomer when used to describe a kitchen and dining facilities. The only legitimate fellowship hall for the local church is a facility in which to worship God and build up the saints in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

The New Testament clearly authorizes the local church to spread the gospel (Philippians 1:5), edify the saints (Ephesians 4:12) and to help needy saints (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). Members of the local church have fellowship in their efforts to carry out the mission God has given it to accomplish. Ask for scriptural authority for church-sponsored fun, food and frolic and if fellowship is the best answer they can give you, they have failed. Scriptural fellowship (koinonia) is the relationship we have with the Lord by participating with other Christians in the things He has authorized. We must be committed to speaking as the utterances of God, and the proper use of koinonia is as important as any other.

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