

LESSON 9: OTHER CHRISTIANS

“What is my relationship to other Christians?”

KEY = FAMILY

When you were saved, you moved from the devil’s family to God’s family. Spiritually, you now have a new family with many brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. We all have practical experience with our earthly or physical families and now we want to study our new spiritual relationships and clearly understand how the body of Christ operates as a family unit.

I. How am I related to other Christians?

- A. They are our brothers (and sisters) in Jesus Christ. Be sure to understand that, only those in Jesus Christ (saved people) are your brothers, regardless of any other factors. Likewise, those NOT in Jesus Christ (unsaved people) are NOT your brothers, regardless of any other factors.



That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. Romans 9:8

See also:

Romans 8:29; 1 John 3:1-3; Hebrews 2:9-12

- B. They are your fellow laborers in service for Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 3:5-10

Verse 9 says, *For we are labourers together with God:...*

II. What are my responsibilities toward other Christians?

PRAY – We are to pray for each other. Almost every one of Paul’s letters opens with a prayer for those he is writing to.

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3; 2 Timothy 1:3

MINISTER – We are to minister to each other both physically and spiritually.

1. Physically, for those in your immediate family (your local church). Romans 12:13

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. Galatians 6:10

AND

Physically, to the entire body of Christ in other areas. Acts 11:27-30

Verse 29 says, Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:

2. Spiritually. Romans 15:1-2; Hebrews 13:3

BRETHREN, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. Galatians 6:1-2

ENCOURAGE – We are to encourage and edify one another.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:11

SERVE – We are to serve one another.

1. Look to serve others first.

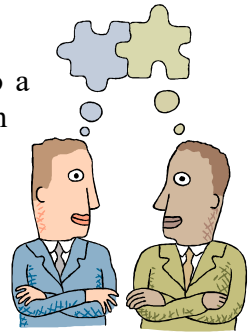
Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Philippians 2:3-4

2. Serve as Christ served. Matthew 20:25-28

Verse 28 says, Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

What should be my attitude toward other Christians?

Because we are brothers and sisters in Christ, we often hold each other to a greater level of expectancy than our own earthly family members. Although this is not always a bad thing, it can make us vulnerable to developing harmful judgmental attitudes. We can tend to disassociate ourselves with other Christians who do not believe or think exactly as we do, considering that there must be something wrong with their character. When our personal preferences become equal with Bible doctrine, we can think it right to separate ourselves from them. **BEWARE** OF THIS SINFUL ATTITUDE.



- A. My primary attitude should be to love them. 1 John 3:14-16

And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. 1 Peter 4:8

Charity (or love) does not hide sin; it just allows us to gracefully love others.

- B. Be patient with them.

Romans 15:5-7

- C. Be sensitive to their needs. James 2:15-16

But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.
1 John 3:17-18

- D. Be forgiving of each other. Colossians 3:13

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Ephesians 4:32

Note: Imagine how Jesus, who is perfect and holy in all of these areas, loves us unconditionally.

III. What if another Christian offends me?

Unfortunately, this will probably happen to you if you spend any time with your brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. There will be times of offense, hurt and disagreement within the body of Christ, just as in your physical family. If and when this happens, if it is serious enough, the Bible gives a definite progression of principles to deal with the matter. How should you respond in such a case?

Special Note: Always consider your part in the situation and “examine” yourself first.
Matthew 7:1-5

- A. Take the offense directly to the other party first, privately, and try to settle it between yourselves.

Matthew 18:15

- B. If the matter is not resolved privately, take it to a godly unbiased third party (IE. a leader in your church) to attempt to mediate the situation. Matthew 18:16

1 Corinthians 6:1-5 verse 5 says, *...Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren?*

- C. Do NOT go to the unsaved to settle a problem within the body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 6:6

- D. If this matter still cannot be resolved:

- 1. Personally accept the wrong.

I Corinthians 6:7-8

- 2. Commit the situation to the Lord Jesus Christ. He will handle it justly.

I Peter 2:19-23

- 3. Forgive your brother. Ephesians 4:31-32

Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

Colossians 3:13

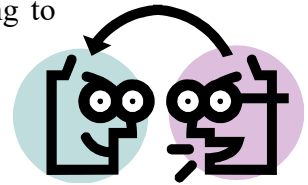
Be gracious. Remember, you want grace when you mess up; therefore, always be ready to give grace to others when they mess up.

- 4. Pray for your brother.

Matthew 5:43-48 Verse 44 says, *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;*

IV. How do I have true “Fellowship” with other believers and what is it exactly?

“Fellowship” is a term commonly used by Christians generally referring to getting together for activities or times of sharing common interests. However, this is only a small part of true fellowship. To fellowship is to share things, but true biblical fellowship goes FAR BEYOND just a meal or an activity. It is the sharing of life through the person of the Lord Jesus Christ with another believer.



A. The essential elements of true biblical fellowship are not physical matters such as social status, friendship, common interests, etc.; but are spiritually based or emulate personal character.

1. Humility (humbleness)—Philippians 2:3-8
2. Honesty (truthfulness)—Ephesians 4:25; 2 Corinthians 4:2
3. Love (as Christ loved you)—John 13:35; Galatians 5:13-15
4. Hospitality (generous to guests; with gladness)—Titus 1:8, Acts 2:42, 46-47

B. The components of true fellowship are, among others:

1. Prayer—2 Corinthians 1:11
2. Faith—Romans 1:12
3. Ministry—Galatians 2:9
...and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. 2 Cor. 8:4
4. Suffering—Philippians 3:10
But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. 1 Peter 4:13

You MUST LEARN to have close, personal and meaningful fellowship with Jesus Christ before your fellowship with other Christians will be proper. 1 John 1:3-7

Oftentimes you will NOT agree with other Christians about certain situations or how those situations are to be biblically handled. Although biblical truth is truth (no matter what) **the way that truth works out practically in each individual’s life can and does differ.** Perfect agreement is not possible in all cases. That is why this point is so absolutely crucial.