

habits of grace

Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines
October 15th-December 10th

Chapters 13-15

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Introduction & Opening

Question: Is the Christian life a solo journey?

- The Campfire Coals—gathered coals burn brightly and get hotter in the wind; separated coals quickly go out and turn to dust.

Three Means of Grace in the Body:

1. Fellowship (Ch. 13)
2. Worship (Corporate) (Ch. 14)
3. Preaching or Hearing the Word (Ch. 15)

I. The Fellowship That Saves (Chapter 13)

The New Testament Word: κοινωνία (koinōnia) — means fellowship, communion, sharing, participation, commonality, solidarity.

New Testament Church Fellowship

- Devotion to the word (apostles' teaching) and prayer. (Acts 2:42)
- Has fellowship in Jesus (1 Cor. 1:9) and in his Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14).
- Becomes fellow heirs of the divine inheritance in Christ (Rom. 8:17; Eph. 3:6).
- Shares all things in common (Acts 2:44; 4:32).
- Recognizes Jew and Gentile as fellow citizens (Eph. 2:19).
- Acts as a partnership in the gospel (Phil. 1:5).
- Works to advance the gospel (Phil. 1:12).
- Finds progress and joy in the faith (Phil. 1:25).
- Partakes of grace with others (Phil. 1:7).

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Mathis's definition: It is not casual; it is a **"life-or-death collective venture"** and a **"glorious backstop of grace."**

The Body "Catches" Us: When our spiritual energy is low, or we are facing trials, the church strengthens and lifts us.

The Twin Texts of Fellowship

Scripture Reference	Main Point	Application / Key Takeaway
Hebrews 10:24-25	A call to active and intentional engagement. We are to "stir up one another to love and good works" and "not neglect to meet together," especially as the Day draws near.	Action: Come with the mission to find one person to encourage.
Hebrews 3:12-13	A warning against an "evil, unbelieving heart" and the "deceitfulness of sin." The solution is to "exhort one another every day" to combat self-deception and spiritual hardening.	Shared Responsibility: The community is needed to see the state of our own hearts.

The Grace of Good Listening

Core Scripture: James 1:19-21 ("quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger...")

Six Lessons on Good Listening:

1. Requires Patience ([Listen to understand, not just to respond](#))
2. Is an Act of Love ([Phil. 2:3](#))
3. Asks Perceptive Questions ([Proverbs 20:5](#))
4. Is Ministry ([Service to love and care for the hurting](#))

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5. Prepares Us to Speak Well (Bonhoeffer: listen with the ears of God to speak the Word of God)
6. Reflects Our Relationship with God (He who cannot listen to his brother will soon no longer listen to God)

II. The Fire in the Sanctuary (Chapter 14)

Corporate Worship: The "weekly rendezvous" for the partnership to realign, refocus, and refuel.

Definition of True Worship: The joyful response of creatures to the glorious creator God who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ.

Corporate worship should be:

1. **God-focused** – Worship is to be focused on the Triune God of the Bible.
 - References: [Romans 11:36](#); [Hebrews 4:16](#); [Psalm 16:11](#)
2. **Christ-exalting** – Worship is to be specifically focused on exalting the person and work of Jesus Christ.
 - References: [Philippians 2:9-11](#); [Colossians 1:18](#); [Revelation 5:12](#)
3. **Spirit-empowered** – Worship is to be empowered by the Holy Spirit.
 - References: [Ephesians 5:18-20](#); [Philippians 3:3](#); [John 4:24](#)
4. **Bible-saturated** – Worship is to be informed by God's Word.
 - References: [Colossians 3:16](#); [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#); [Romans 10:17](#)
5. **Joyfully-reverent** – Worship is to be both joyful and reverent.
 - References: [Psalm 2:11](#); [Psalm 33:1](#); [Hebrews 12:28-29](#)
6. **Participatory/Congregational** – Worship is to be congregational in nature.
 - References: [1 Corinthians 14:26](#); [Hebrews 10:24-25](#); [Acts 2:42](#)

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Mathis's "Stunning Answer": Corporate worship is the **"single most important means of grace."**

○ **Why?** In corporate worship, all three principles of grace come together:

1. Hearing His Voice (Word read and preached)
2. Having His Ear (Corporate prayer)
3. Belonging to His Body (Fellowship)

The Secret of Joy: Self-Forgetfulness. Worship is not a *means* to an end; it *is* the end. We come to *give* attention to the Blessed One, not just to "get a blessing."

Graces and Blessings of Corporate Worship

Grace	Description	Reference
It's an Awakening	A fire is kindled in the heart when the multitude is gathered.	Psalm 73:16-17
It Assures Us	We are reminded that we are part of a vast community of believers and are not alone.	Romans 12:1, Psalm 106:12
It's an Advance in Holiness	Experiencing " sanctification on the spot "—being transformed into the image of Christ just by beholding Him.	2 Corinthians 3:18
Accepting Another's Leading	We practice the discipline of receiving or following on terms we did not set.	Proverbs 27:7 ("Iron sharpens iron")
It's an Accentuated Joy	"A shared joy is a double joy." Our joy is multiplied by the faith and worship of others.	Ephesians 5:18-20

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III. The Encounter in the Pulpit (Chapter 15)

The Sermon: The "climactic grace of that gathering."

Theological Significance: Preaching is a "picture of the gospel." It is a *proclamation* of rescue to the helpless, reminding us that we are *receivers*.

The Power of Preaching: A "preoccupation with Jesus." It is not just information or a "how-to" guide, but an **encounter with the living Christ** as His presence is mediated through His Word.

- **Challenge:** What is your posture? A food critic? Or a starving beggar, "listening for grace"?

Five Graces of Faithful Preaching

1. **We forget ourselves:** Faithful preaching exposes sin, challenges to repentance, and realigns us to Christ.
2. **Fill Our Faith:** Strengthens our souls and reminds us of the one whom our faith is placed in. **Scripture:** Romans 10:17
3. **Grow in Grace:** Our hearts are softened, and calluses to sin are removed.
4. **To Be Equipped:** We are equipped for ministry and the church is built up.
5. **To Encounter Jesus:** The most crucial benefit. "To preach the gospel is nothing else than Christ's coming to us." (Martin Luther)

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Conclusion: Belong to His Body

- **Can you love Jesus and not the church?** A resounding **no**. The Christian life is a symphony, not a solo performance.
- **You need the Body (Fellowship):** To be your "**backstop**" and keep you from sin's hardening grip.
- **You need the Body (Corporate Worship):** To be the "**sanctuary**" that kindles your cold heart.
- **You need the Body (Preaching):** To be the "**encounter**" where hope found in Jesus fills your faith.