

Christian Fellowship

There is nothing more uplifting than good Christian fellowship. Two or more people who are bound together spiritually, and who have the same goals in life, enjoy the strength and building up each gives to the other.

First, there is the common bond. Both are church members because of their spiritual covenant relationship. It is spiritual in contradistinction to the physical, and covenant because they have obeyed the conditions of God's covenant, or New Testament.

Second, that which is developed in Christian association is of the finest quality. When we associate with one another on a spiritual level, as well as on a social level, we learn to love one another, and to have consideration for one another, and to develop a care and concern for one another. It is interesting that Paul commands, when it becomes necessary to withdraw fellowship from someone, that we are not even to eat with him (that is, not even to have any social fellowship with that one). (I Cor. 5:11)

Therefore, keep close, work together, pray together, and the goal of fellowship and the Christian life will be achieved.

Consider what happens without love: Paul lists a great number of things about love in I Corinthians 13. He first shows how absolutely essential love is. He says a man may speak with the tongues of men and of angels, be able to foretell the future, have omniscience, have enough courage to give one's body in self sacrifice, but without love all of this profits nothing.

Paul then lists the characteristics of love (seven positive, eight negative):

THE POSITIVE	THE NEGATIVE
1. Longsuffering	1. Does not envy
2. Kind	2. Does not boast itself
3. Rejoices in truth	3. Is not puffed up
4. Bears all things	4. Does not behave itself unseemly
5. Believes all things	5. Seeks not its own
6. Hopes all things	6. Is not easily provoked
7. Endures all things	7. Does not think evil
	8. Does not rejoice in iniquity

In contrasting love with the miracles of the preceding chapter, as the better way, Paul emphasized that miracles will fail, cease, or vanish away. Love will not. In

fact, Paul concludes by suggesting that three characteristics now live: faith, hope and love – and the greatest of these is love.