

IS YOUR CHURCH FELLOWSHIP STRONG OR WEAK?

Romans 15:1-13

(Not entirely original with me)

Introduction: There are countless Churches in this country and scattered all around the world and no doubt each one is very different: in appearance, in membership size, in leadership, in music, in the members' culture, and in many, many other ways, however every Church should be similar in its fellowship. There are indications as to whether a Church has a strong or a weak fellowship among its members. Every Church member either contributes to or takes away from the Church's fellowship being what it should be.

I. THE STRONG MEMBERS SHOULD HELP THE WEAKER MEMBERS

1. Weak members are described in Romans 14:
 - They judge, grumble, complain, murmur, criticize.
 - They disobey God's Word and go against God's commands.
 - They rely upon their reputation more than their faith and loyalty to the Lord and the Church.
2. The stronger members should support the weaker members with love, tenderness and care.
 - Every member should try to please each other trying to avoid doing anything that might become a stumbling block to someone who might be weaker.
3. The example for every Christian/Church member to follow is the Lord Jesus.
 - Nowhere and any time did Jesus ever do anything to please Himself.
 - Near His death Jesus asked for the "cup" to be taken away, but added, "nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt..."
 - Philippians 2:5-8; 1 Peter 2:21; 3:18
 - What would a Church be like if every member lived as Jesus did?
 - Acts 20:35; Galatians 6:2; Hebrews 13:3; James 1:27
 - If every member tried to live as Jesus did then he/she would want to edify and build up the other members.
 - Mark 12:30-31; John 13:34-35; Romans 13:10; 14:19; 2 Corinthians 13:9; Galatians 5:17; Ephesians 4:29; James 2:8

II. EVERY MEMBER WOULD STUDY THE SCRIPTURES FAITHFULLY

1. It is in God's Word, the Scriptures that instruction, direction and guidance for living the Christian life is found and every member should have access to God's Word in some form or other.
 - John 20:31; Acts 17:11; Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16; 1 John 5:13
2. The scriptures will stir up patience, comfort and hope within the Church member/Christian as he/she studies them.
 - John 8:51; 14:15-16; 23; 33; Romans 15:4; 1:16; 1 Peter 1:20-23

III. EVERY SHOULD WORK TO BE OF ONE ACCORD, ONE MIND, HARMONY

1. Every person has his/her own way of thinking, therefore for there to be "one mind" within the Church there must be study of the scriptures which will give strength, endurance, comfort and consolation.
 - Living by the Scriptures, members care for one another, share and support each other and learn how to live and serve in harmony, being of one mind.
2. Once again Jesus Christ is the ONLY pattern for the Church to follow.
 - Jesus was faithful to God every moment doing exactly what God wanted Him to do.
 - Jesus kept an unbroken relationship with God and had God's presence all the time.

- Jesus never got angry or upset with God for He and God were of one mind and Jesus was always trying to bring others into the right relationship with God.
 - The pattern for Church members to follow is NOT their pastor, deacon, teacher or some senior member, but the Lord Jesus Christ ONLY.
3. When a Church membership is in harmony it is very obvious for the Church is of ONE mind and ONE mouth and ONE purpose.
- A divided Church cannot worship God for it must be of one mind and one mouth and one purpose.
 - 1 Corinthians 1:10; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Ephesians 4:3; Philippians 1:27; 1 Peter 3:8

IV. EVERY MEMBER SHOULD ACCEPT ALL THE OTHER MEMBERS

1. There is no room for discrimination of any sort in the Church.
 - Every member is to treat every other member as a friend, a close friend.
2. Once again Jesus Christ is the example.
 - Jesus has received YOU and every other person who has believed in Him.
 - Every believer is to receive other believers so that God may be glorified through their lives and the Church.
 - Jesus received the Jews and ministered to them, even though many didn't like Him.
 - Jesus received the Gentiles and ministered to them, even though they lived terrible lives.
3. God's Word, once again instructs the Church what to do:
 - Gentiles are to have the gospel preached to them. (Romans 15:9)
 - Gentiles rejoice WITH other of God's people. (Romans 15:10)
 - Gentiles also praise God and trust Jesus as their Savior. (Romans 15:11)
4. Christians (Church members) are to accept every other believer as Jesus has accepted them.
 - No person is too prejudiced, judgmental, sinful or biased to not be accepted.
 - No one is "too far gone" to be cast away.
 - As Jesus Christ received US (YOU), the Church is to receive others who believe.
 - Acts 8:14; 10:47; 11:18; 15:19; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:13-14
5. Christians are to receive other believers in order that God would be glorified.
 - Romans 15:6; 1 Corinthians 6:20; 2 Thessalonians 1:12

V. EVERY MEMBER SHOULD BE FILLED WITH HOPE

1. Knowing God and God's Word will fill one with hope for God is the "God of hope."
 - Author of one's hope.
 - Foundation of one's hope.
 - Builder of one's hope.
 - Finisher of one's hope.

Apart from God, one can never have hope for it comes from God.
2. Joy is an inner gladness, deep seated and full of assurance.
 - Joy is a cheerful heart that causes a cheerful behavior.
 - John 17:13; 1 Peter 1:8
3. Peace comes through believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and no one has peace apart from God.
 - John 14:27; 16:33; Philippians 4:6-7
4. Hope comes also from believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and one cannot have God's hope apart from God.
 - Romans 5:3-5; 8:24; Acts 24:15; Colossians 1:5; Titus 2:12-13; Hebrews 6:18-19; 1 John 3:1-3

CONCLUSION:

1. Every Church is different, every Church member is different, yet every Church should be strong in fellowship, service, devotion, care and love for one another.
2. Only through God's Word can each Church member learn what attitude he/she should have toward other Church members and how to obtain that right attitude.
3. Jesus Christ is the ONLY example each Church member should pattern his/her life after.
4. Why do Churches split? Because the members are not following Jesus' example and are not reading God's Word.
5. How is YOUR Church's fellowship? Is it in harmony? Is it following Jesus' example? Is there disharmony? Are there any hurt feelings? Is there any prejudice? Do members help one another? Is there anybody left out? Is there a ONENESS among the entire membership?
6. What does YOUR Church need to do to become the kind of Church God wants it to be?