

OTHER CHRISTIANS

You entered into God's family through a SPIRITUAL birth when you trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior. You now have a spiritual family with many brothers and sisters who are saved through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This lesson will guide you through the special relationship you have with your spiritual family.

The key word of this lesson is:

FELLOWSHIP

The key question this lesson answers:

What is my relationship to other Christians?

The key purpose of this lesson:

To give you a clear understanding of how the body of Christ operates as a family unit.

The key point of this lesson:

You must have a personal relationship with Jesus before it is possible to have proper fellowship with other believers.

Memory Verses:

*"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."
– John 13:35*

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." – 1 John 1:7

UNDERSTANDING YOUR RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN GOD'S SPIRITUAL FAMILY

- A. Your spiritual brothers and sisters are only those who have been born again through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” – Romans 8:29

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” – 1 John 3:1-2

- B. Those who have not been born again are not spiritually related to you, and are not God's children.**

“...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

*“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”
– 2 Corinthians 6:17-18*

UNDERSTANDING YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES WITHIN GOD'S SPIRITUAL FAMILY

- A. You have spiritual responsibilities toward your brothers and sisters in Christ.**

1. Pray for your family.

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

2. Labor together with your family to spread the gospel.

1 Corinthians 3:5-10

3. Share your family's burdens and problems.

1 Corinthians 12:24-26; Romans 12:13-16

B. You have physical responsibilities toward your brothers and sisters in Christ.

1. Be sensitive to your family's needs and help to fulfill them.

1 Minister to believers within your local church.

1 John 3:16-18; James 2:15-16

2 Minister to believers in other local churches.

Acts 11:27-30; Galatians 6:10

2. Serve your family in humility by placing their needs before your own.

Philippians 2:3-4

C. You have personal responsibilities toward your brothers and sisters in Christ.

1. Encourage and support your family.

Romans 15:1-2; Hebrews 13:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:11

2. Love your family biblically with pure motives.

John 13:34-35; 1 John 3:14-16

3. Be patient with your family.

Romans 15:5-7

4. Be honest with your family by speaking the truth in love.

Ephesians 4:15, 25, 29

5. Forgive your family in the same way God forgives you.

Ephesians 4:32

Discussion:

What are some of your specific prayers for the members of your church family?

Do you know of a brother or sister in Christ who needs ministered to in a physical way?
How can you minister to them?

How have you been ministered to by the members of your church family?

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF FELLOWSHIP WITHIN GOD'S SPIRITUAL FAMILY

THE KEY POINT OF THIS LESSON!

True biblical fellowship is found in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. As believers grow in their individual relationships with God, they are united together in fellowship with each other. You must have a personal relationship with Jesus before it is possible to have biblical fellowship with other believers.

1 John 1:1-7; 1 Corinthians 1:9-10

A. Biblical fellowship is the common bond that unites all believers in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You share a common life and mission with every person who is saved through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is important for you to gather with other believers in activities, conversations, and friendships because they provide opportunities for biblical fellowship to take place in your life. Believers are united in fellowship, not when they gather, but when spiritual life is shared.

Philippians 1:3-6; 2:1-2

B. Believers are united in Biblical fellowship when spiritual life is shared.

1. Fellowship unites believers in prayer.

1 Corinthians 1:11

2. Fellowship unites believers in faith.

Romans 1:12; Philippians 1:27

3. Fellowship unites believers in ministry and service.

2 Corinthians 8:4; Galatians 2:9

4. Fellowship unites believers in suffering.

Philippians 3:10; 1 Peter 4:13; 5:1; Hebrews 13:3

5. Fellowship unites believers in doctrine.

Acts 2:42; Romans 16:17; John 17:8, 20-21

UNDERSTANDING HOW TO HANDLE CONFLICT WITHIN GOD'S SPIRITUAL FAMILY

IMPORTANT NOTE:

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

Unfortunately, there may be times within your local church when Christians get offended by their brothers and sisters in Christ. These offenses are often difficult to deal with because of the close relationships we have within our spiritual family. It takes courage, character, and maturity to resolve conflict in a family. The love, patience, forgiveness, and care we are to show one another will cover most “minor” offenses. However, when an offense is serious enough, the Bible gives us definite principles to resolve conflict between brothers and sisters in Christ.

A. What should you do if you have offended someone?

1. You must be approachable when a brother or sister is seeking reconciliation.

- a. It is important for you to be spiritually mature and not to be easily offended when others speak with you.

James 3:13-18; Psalm 119:165

- b. You will prevent God from working to resolve the conflict if you allow yourself to be ruled by pride and emotions.

Proverbs 25:28; 16:32; 1 Samuel 25:17

2. Examine yourself to make sure you are not living in the flesh.

At times, you may be unaware that your attitudes or actions have offended someone. Once you are made aware of an offence, you must examine yourself to make sure you are not living in the flesh, and your life reflects God's word.

Matthew 7:1-5; Romans 14:1; 15:1

3. Seek to immediately reconcile with the offended brother or sister.

Take responsibility and seek to immediately reconcile your relationship with the other person. Your brothers and sisters in Christ are worth being right with.

Matthew 5:23-26; Ephesians 4:26-27

B. What should you do if someone has sinned against you?

1. Approach the person who sinned against you privately and discuss it in person.

Do not gossip and talk about it with others who are not involved in the situation. Most conflicts between believers can be resolved when they both approach the situation with biblical maturity and love. In most cases, the conflict will give you a greater love for one another, and your relationship will be stronger.

Matthew 18:15

2. If the conflict cannot be resolved privately, ask a mature believer to help mediate the conversation.

This person should be a church leader with the ability to evaluate objectively and present a balanced biblical response.

Matthew 18:16

3. If there is still no resolution, take the conflict to your pastoral leadership and submit to the structure of the local church.

Matthew 18:17

- a. Your pastoral leadership will handle it justly as the Holy Spirit leads through the structure God has established.

Hebrews 13:7, 17

- b. If it is necessary, your pastoral leadership will bring the situation before the church in the form of church discipline.

Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:9-11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14

4. If the person who has offended you has repented and seeks to be reconciled, then you are to forgive the offence.

Matthew 18:21-22

A NOTE ABOUT FORGIVENESS...

True forgiveness follows true repentance. If another believer has sinned against you, then you must give them the opportunity to repent and make things right with you. Your forgiveness must come from a heart that is ready to forgive in the same way that God forgives you. Forgiveness should always lead you to be reconciled and have restored fellowship with your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

Luke 17:3-4; Ephesians 4:32; Galatians 6:1-2

C. You must remain blameless throughout any conflict with another believer.

There are some important actions to avoid to ensure that you are not hindering any reconciliation with a brother or sister in Christ.

- 1. Do not go to the lost world to solve a spiritual problem within the body of Christ.**
If an offence has been committed, apply the principles of this lesson to biblically resolve the matter. Only involve the proper authorities when a crime has been committed, or for the sake and safety of the body of Christ and his church.

1 Corinthians 6:1-6; Romans 13:1-5

- 2. Do not give Satan an opportunity to use conflict to destroy you or your church.**
God's mission and your walk with him are far more important than a personal grievance, no matter how serious it is. Even if you have suffered a wrong, give the matter to God and leave it in his hands.

1 Corinthians 6:7; 2 Corinthians 2:10-11

- 3. Do not stop praying for your brother or sister in Christ.**
Be diligent to ensure that you are praying with pure motives.

Matthew 5:43-48; Romans 12:14

- 4. Do not try to seek out opportunities to get revenge.**
Trust God to resolve the situation, even if it doesn't get resolved until eternity.

Romans 12:17-21; Proverbs 20:22

- 5. Do not allow yourself to harbor bitterness in your heart.**
Bitterness affects everyone in your life.

Hebrews 12:14-15; Ephesians 4:31

DISCUSSION:

Have you ever offended another believer? How did that person respond?

Has another believer ever sinned against you? How did that change your relationship?

Do you have an issue with another believer that needs to be dealt with biblically?

REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

1. Define what your relationship is with other believers.

2. List four of the responsibilities toward other Christians, and give a scripture reference for each.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

3. What does the term “fellowship” mean?

4. List five examples of how believers are united in fellowship.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

5. You should seek to be reconciled with another Christian who has sinned against you. List the steps you should take when seeking reconciliation.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

6. What is the key purpose of the lesson, and what has it taught you?

PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY

Some believers find it easier than others to build relationships within their local church. Read *Acts 2:46-47* and *1 Peter 4:8-9* and then write down some examples of ways that you can use hospitality to encourage more fellowship in your life.

Read the following passages and write down six different terms that the New Testament uses to define our fellowship with other believers.

1 Thessalonians 3:2

Philippians 2:25

Philemon 1:2

Colossians 4:7

3 John 1:8

Colossians 4:11

Read *Philippians 4:1-3*. In Paul's letter to the Philippian church, he encourages Euodias and Syntyche to work out their differences because they were affecting everyone around them. Is there a situation with another believer in your life that requires reconciliation? What steps have you taken to see this relationship restored? What steps do you still need to take so that the ministry is not hindered?
