

Overcoming the Present Apostasy (5)
How do we view God's Instruction on Fellowship?

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Introduction: What does your relationship with God mean to you?

- A. If someone wants to be right with God he must put Him first. **(Matt 10:37-39)**
- B. When compromise is made in your loyalty to God, He calls it adultery.
 - 1. How would you like to “share” your mate with another?
 - 2. This is how God views our loyalty to Him. **(2 Cor 11:2-4)**
 - 3. The nation of Israel heard their adultery described. **(Jer 3:6-10)**

I. Two Kinds of Fellowship

- A. There is fellowship with God. **(1 John 1:1-3)**
 - 1. What is fellowship? Koinonia - Communion, fellowship, sharing in common...
 - 2. Fellowship always has an object! In this case it is fellowship with God!
 - 3. God dwells in us as Christians. We share in eternal life which is from God.
(Acts 2:38; 1 Cor 6:19-20)
- B. There is our fellowship with other Christians. **(2 Cor 6:14; Gal 2:9; 1 Cor 12:23-27)**
 - 1. This relationship has its foundation in an underlying fellowship with God.
 - 2. Here we share with one another spiritual encouragement, we recognize one another as Christians, and we do the things Christians are to do together.
 - 3. Consider the spiritual “fellowship” we have as Christians. **(Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 10:16-17, 21-22)**

II. The Biblical Bounds of Fellowship

- A. Before we extend fellowship to others as Christians, we must make a judgment as to whether they are faithful to God. **(1 John 1:5-7)**
 - 1. We need to ask: “Is this one a Christian?” **(Acts 9:26)**
 - 2. We also need to ask: “Is this one a faithful Christian?” **(1 John 3:4-10; Eph 5:11)**
 - 3. There are limits to this kind of judgment. We are not trying to take God's place! **(1 Cor 4:2-4)**
 - 4. Why does this church exist? What is the primary reason for our relationship with one another? It is not the “restoration heritage” but the cross of Christ! **(Gal 6:14)**
 - 5. What is our attitude toward other brothers and sisters in Christ? Do we view them as “one for whom Christ died?” **(Rom 14:15, 20)**
- B. We can be wrong in our judgment.
 - 1. The Christians at Jerusalem were wrong at first about Paul. **(Acts 9:26)**
 - a. They did discover their error and correct it! **(Acts 9:27-28)**
 - b. We must never let the fear of: “We could be wrong”, keep us from doing what the Lord demands!
 - 2. The church at Corinth refused, at first, to withdraw from one practicing sin. **(1 Cor 5:1-3)**
- C. There is a standard upon which fellowship is based.

1. The New Testament is our standard. (**2 Thess 3:6, 14; Rom 16:17; 1 Jn 4:6**)
 2. Some have asked: "What is the doctrine of Christ?" (**2 John 9**)
 3. The doctrine of Christ is what Christ taught. (**John 12:48; Rev 2:14**)
- D. How do we extend fellowship?
1. By recognizing and greeting one as a faithful brother. (**2 John 9-11**)
 2. By supporting one in their teaching. (**3 John 5-8**)
 3. By associating with one because they are right with God. (**1 Cor 5:9-11; 2 Thess 3:14-15**)

III. Views of Fellowship --- Then and Now

- A. In the 50's and 60's there was gradual acceptance of allowing men to come for meetings who had departed from basic Bible teachings.
1. Often these men were attached to large sponsoring churches or "church colleges". To many his gave them instant credibility.
 2. In the place these men worked they did not teach the things they believed publicly, but often spread these things in private. (**Jude 3-4**)
 3. In time these institutions were allowing these men to go unchecked.
- B. Today the Institutional churches have come to reap a harvest.
1. Most of the large institutions have now completely fallen under the control of the "change agents."
 2. Where the influence of these institutions was welded in the 50's and 60's to protect their support from church treasuries, this same power is being used today to push out "the Patternist."
- C. Here is the current views of fellowship
1. We can fellowship churches that use instruments of music.

"When I asked Buddy how he viewed the Christian Church, he floored me by boldly saying that he was in "FULL FELLOWSHIP WITH THEM." Since I couldn't believe what I had just heard, I asked him the second time, "You are in full fellowship with them?" Buddy said, "I feel that way."

Buddy Bell Returns To Montgomery, Alabama! - Ray Dutton, Seek the Old Paths

2. We can fellowship all believers in Christ, which includes the "mainline" denominations."
 - a. Sometimes there is "open fellowship" in the exchanging of pulpits. (Ex. Max Lucado at a Baptist church: "When I see a believer, I see a brother.")
 - b. Sometimes this "open fellowship" is done in "special meetings".

A DISTURBING CONVERSATION

Todd Clippard

I hesitate to write this, but conscience, and more importantly scripture, necessitate it.

As many of you are aware, the **University Church of Christ in Tuscaloosa, Alabama** has invited **Baptist preacher Tony Campolo** to speak at this year's **Youth in Action (YIA)** in Birmingham, Alabama. The date is the

weekend of December 27. Many false teachers and other apostates have been invited in years' past, including this year's lineup with **Jeff Walling, Buddy Bell** and **Acappella**, just to name a few.

I called the University church on three occasions in an attempt to speak with someone about the lineup, and about Mr. Campolo in particular. What follows are some of the responses I received during my inquiry.

I talked with two different ministers of the University church (one on Friday and one today) and each was asked this question: Are you aware that Tony Campolo is not a Christian?

Reply from the first: "He's not affiliated with the churches of Christ. I think he's a Baptist, but more non-denominational than Baptist. I don't know what he teaches in regard to the plan of salvation."

This was as far as I got with the first minister. He requested that I call the youth minister on Monday (today 8-25-98) and speak with him. So I did exactly that.

The second minister was the organizer of YIA. When I asked him if he was aware that Tony Campolo was not a Christian, I received the following reply: "You mean he's not a member of the church of Christ." To which I replied, "What's the difference?" His response, "I believe God is a lot bigger than the Church of Christ. A person doesn't have to be a member of the Church of Christ to be a Christian." (I realize God is much bigger than the church, but this is not what he meant. He meant the church was a lot bigger than the church of Christ.)

I asked him if Mr. Campolo was going to extend the invitation, and if so, what would he say? Reply: "He is only going to tell people that if they want someone to pray with them, they can go to designated prayer rooms outside the auditorium." (The event is being held at the civic center in Birmingham)

After a lengthy discussion regarding the essentiality of baptism, I asked him if he would defend this statement, *All accountable individuals must be baptized in order to be saved.* He refused, and tried to use the thief on the cross as an example to prove his point! He then told me that a young girl (about 14 he said) came to him earlier this week and desired to become a Christian, but since her parents could not come that night, would it be OK to wait until Sunday. He then asked me, "Are you telling me that if that girl dies before Sunday, that she will be lost?" My reply: "I don't have to tell you that. Mark 16:16 already tells you that. Just because I want something to be true does not change the word of God." To which he replied, "I am not willing to go that far. Anyway, I have heard someone explain from the Greek that Mark 16:16 can be translated "because you're already saved."" I pulled every modern translation I could get my hands on and told him I could not find a single one that so translated the text. He was not satisfied. (I suspect, in his confusion, he was referring to Acts 2:38 and the Baptist explanation of the phrase "for remission of sins"). He then said, "I just have a lot more faith in Jesus than in baptism." I replied, "How can you separate Jesus from what He taught. Jesus commanded baptism." At that point he said he was very busy and thanked me for calling. He offered to meet me in Hamilton to discuss this further. I told him there was no need, since I was going to stand by Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38 and 22:16, and Galatians 3:27 no matter if he is in Hamilton or Tuscaloosa, and that he could not disprove what they teach no matter how hard he tried.

We then concluded our conversation. I was satisfied I fully understood what he believes and he had no doubts about what I believe. I don't intend to pursue this any further, since I don't think anyone at University, at least in the leadership, cares about what God's Word has to say.

The only reason I presented this information to you is to **warn you about the University church in Tuscaloosa and any congregation that supports YIA.**

-- Seek the Old Paths – October, 1998

3. Many are swapping pulpits with denominations and giving up baptism as essential for salvation!

IV. Arguments for a Broader Fellowship.

A. We cannot know if one is right or wrong on....

1. Some have asked me this: "Do you have all knowledge?" If I say No, then they follow: "How then can you be sure you are right about this?" My answer is: "I may not know ALL THINGS, but I do know SOME THINGS!"
2. Why do some people "not know?" (**Luke 10:29; Jn 3:19-21**)

B. Churches are stagnating, we will become extinct!

1. If this is so, let us then seek God's solutions.
2. Why do we exist? (**Gal 2:20**)

C. Because of bad personal experiences.

1. The most common cause of these departures is what I call “Reactionary Apostasy.” What is wrong with this thinking? **(Rom 3:4)**
 2. Is it right to “get mad at the dog, and kick the cat?”
- D. Because of a subjective view of how to know God’s will.
1. Some have viewed themselves so close to God as to be above being challenged. These feel that they just know what God wants without looking at the scriptures. This is pride! **(1 Cor 8:1-2)**
 2. Others have let their desire to be with others cause them to “re-think fellowship.”
- E. Because we should be “tolerant!”

“But here it's important to remember what is meant by Tolerance" in a relativist society. It doesn't mean what used to mean: permitting each person the right to believe (or disbelieve) according to his own conscience. That would be a respect for religious freedom far too noble for a secular society bent on the eradication of religious faith. In sharp contrast, today's "tolerance" means having to accept all values, truths, and beliefs (no matter how morally bankrupt) as equally valid.” The Cultural Church, p. 78-79

V. Consequences of a Broader Fellowship

- A. Fellowship in time will determine practice. **(1 Cor 5:5-6)**
1. This is not a new path! Consider again the experience of the “Disciples of Christ Denomination.”
 2. Even if you “hold steadfast your views” what will become of your children?
 3. Even now many country churches that have not had the slightest idea about what was occurring are now being influenced by the children and newcomers who attended the “Christian colleges” and large city churches. Many have found themselves in a minority on a very fast train.
- B. The “openness” of today will become withdrawn in the future.
1. J. W. McGarvey learned a lesson the hard way in his “middle of the road” position on fellowship.
 2. If you want to influence someone with God’s wisdom, take a stand!
(2 Cor 6:14-17)
- C. God will view me as practicing the things that I encourage others in.
1. I will be held accountable! **(1 Tim 5:22; 2 John 9-11)**
 2. What is my goal? Do I want others to change?

Conclusion: Who do I really want to have fellowship with?

- A. While some say they want to be right with God, they in fact want to please men.
(Gal 1:10)
- B. What will heaven be like?
1. It will be filled with men of faith who at times had to stand alone.
(Heb 11:32-38)
 2. Have you heard of these men?
 - a. Sethur? Gaddiel? Palti? Shaphat? Nahbi?
 - b. How about these men? Caleb? Joshua?