

Christian Fellowship

From the moment of birth a baby needs to breathe, and it needs its mother's milk.

Another thing a baby needs is warmth, **not** just the warmth of a blanket but the warmth and the security of being held close to its mother.

A baby needs to be loved, accepted and feel cared for by its parents and older brothers and sisters.

Hebrews 10:24-25 [Living Bible] *“In response to all He [Jesus Christ] has done for us, let us outdo each other in being helpful and kind to each other and in doing good, let us not neglect our church meetings, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of His [Jesus Christ's] coming back is drawing near.”*

As a new Christian our needs are the same as a new human baby.

We need to begin breathing spiritually and we need the milk of God's Word, the Christian Bible, our Handbook For Life.

But the other important need **we have is to feel accepted, loved and cared for** in the family of God.

We need to experience the warmth of Christian love and fellowship surrounding us right from the beginning of a life as a child of God.

In this spiritually cold world, we will **not** last long without the warmth and support of other Christians.

Remember we are part of God's family

When we are born again spiritually we are born into God's created family.

We now have many other spiritual brothers and sisters, millions all around the world.

As Christians we need each other, God planned it that way.

We all need God as our Heavenly Father, but we also need to be part of a warm and accepting group of fellow believers.

We are God's “called out ones”

The church is **not** the building where Christians meet, but the people who meet together in a certain building.

Romans 16:5 [NIV] *“Greet also the church that meets at their house. Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia.”*

The early Christians met in people's houses, not a specially constructed building.

The word “church” means “called out ones”.

God's true church is made up of people who have been “called out” of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light.

1 Peter 2:9-10 [NIV] *“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him **who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light**. Once you were not a people, but **now you are the people of God**; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”*

We now belong to a different group of people.

We have been “called out” of the darkness of ignorance of who we are and the plans that God has for all humanity.

1 Thessalonians 5:4-11 [NIV] *“But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. **You are all sons of the light** and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. **Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.**”*

Because of our accepting what Jesus Christ has done for us. We are now children of God who walk in the light of understanding why we are given life as human beings and what God has planned for us His “born again” children.

Colossians 1:12-13 [NIV] *“giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in **the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light**. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,”*

We should constantly give thanks for this transformation that has happened in our lives, as “called out” created children of God.

No matter where Christians meet, that is where the church of God resides

The church is composed of all who have answered God’s call to become born-again believers, who know and accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

Romans 8:9 [NIV] *“You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And **if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.**”*

The church is also those who have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them and directing their lives.

Why do we need to belong?

Isn’t my personal relationship with Christ enough to make me a strong Christian?

Isn’t my daily Bible reading and prayer all that I need?

The answer is No!

Like a new born baby, without the warmth of love and fellowship we really suffer as a Christian and may not survive.

We need nurture and care

We all need more mature Christians to mentor and disciple us.

We need to be taught by example how to walk more closely with Jesus Christ.

We need to develop relationships with other Christians who are on the same journey we are making in life to be encouraged and helped along the way.

Hebrews 10:23-24 [NIV] *“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds.”*

There is only one way this can be done effectively.

Hebrews 10:25 [NIV] *“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”*

We are never meant to walk this Christian journey all by ourselves.

We need encouragement and support

Ephesians 4:11-13 [NIV] *“It was he [Jesus Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ.”*

God has provided His church with people who have different gifts to help all in each church fellowship to grow towards spiritual maturity.

Ephesians 4:14-16 [NIV] *“Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”*

God has provided pastors and teachers in His church to give stability and to enable members to avoid being led away from the One who is Head of the church, Jesus Christ.

God’s people are then led and feed in the right way.

Without these ministries we would lack the direction and the needed spiritual nourishment in order to grow into a strong disciple of Jesus Christ.

We have a part to play

In the church family we receive and we give.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13 [NIV] *“The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free, and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.”*

The New Testament speaks of the church as the “body of Christ”.

Just as the human body has many parts that are different, yet each is essential to enable the body as a whole to work effectively, so it is in the body of Christ, the church.

Ephesians 5:23 [NIV] *“For the husband is the head of the wife as **Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour.**”*

Jesus Christ is the Head of the Body which is His church.

1 Corinthians 12:1 [NIV] *“Now about **spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant.**”*

Each member of the body, the church, has received spiritual gifts.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6 [NIV] *“There are **different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.**”*

These personal gifts may differ from one another.

Yet all are needed to combine together in order for the work Christ is doing through His people may be accomplished in the world.

1 Corinthians 12:7 [NIV] *“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is **given for the common good.**”*

Each of us has been given a spiritual gift and an important part to play within the church for the good of the church as a whole.

Our task is to recognise that gift and use it to the full.

1 Corinthians 12:8-11 [NIV] *“To one there is given through the Spirit the **message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.**”*

God has the overall plan for each congregation in the worldwide church.

This plan is like a large jigsaw puzzle, if just one part is missing the picture is not complete.

1 Corinthians 12:14-19 [NIV] *“Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. **If they were all one part, where would the body be?”***

Don't envy others who have different parts to play, but seek to use our gift to the full.

John 13:35 [NIV] *“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you **love one another.**”*

One essential gift we all need to ask God for is love of our brethren in our fellowship.

We all need to ask God to help us find a fellowship we can join that is:-

Spiritually alive where Jesus Christ is central;

Where the Bible is clearly preached and obeyed;

Where members love each other and it shows in the way they treat one another.

Sadly, **not** all churches are like this!

But remember, there are no perfect churches for all are made up of imperfect people who are, little by little, being changed to become like Jesus Christ.

All of us are as Christians, as created children of God are gradually being moulded into His “*likeness*”.

This moulding takes place within the body of Christ, the Christian church.

Memory verse:

Hebrews 10:25 [NIV] *“Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”*

In the next study we will consider the triune nature of our conversion, and what is meant by conversion.