

Four Biblical Obligations To Others

1Thessalonians 5:14 - “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.”

Conclusion

Understanding Our Fellowship

“Ed Harrell reasoned that the bounds of fellowship were limited by a number of factors, including factiousness, clear and open immorality, a good conscience, and judgments about the clarity of New Testament instruction. Fellowship decisions were sometimes informed by my estimation of the honesty and sincerity of a brother.” *(Ed Harrell, The Churches of Christ in the 20th Century, pages 361-363)*

Understanding Our Fellowship

“Fellowship decisions will be made by the individual Christian and by local congregations based on the clear distinction in the scriptures between matters of doctrine and matters of liberty, based on the individual or local congregation’s understanding of the scriptures and ability to teach others, and based on their individual judgments about a brother or local church’s evident love for truth, honesty, sincerity, ability and willingness to learn, and eagerness to repent. The facts are: teachers have different levels of knowledge and ability to teach, and hearers have different rates of absorption of the word and grow at different paces.” *(PRB - Fellowship: A New Testament Study)*

Uphold The Weak

- Every church has spiritually weak members.
 - When first converted, one will be weak while growing.
 - There are others who have been members for many years, but who never have grown spiritually.
 - Heb. 5:12-14 - “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

Uphold The Weak

- What does it mean to “support or uphold?”
 - Does not mean to uphold them when they are wrong, or to make excuses for them.
- Christians who are weak, but have had plenty of time to grow and become strong, need to be worked.
 - First, they need to be taught again the first principles.
 - Second, they need to be warned to practice what they’ve learned.
 - Third, they need to be put to work.

Uphold The Weak

- Matt. 28:18-20 - “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”
- Rom. 15:1 - “We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves.”
- Phil. 2:4 - “Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”

Be Patient With All

- Patience - "...Forbearance, long-suffering; the quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish; it is the opposite of anger and is associated with mercy and used of God."
(*Shepherd*)
 - "Patience is a bitter plant, but it bears sweet fruits."
(*Spurgeon*)
 - Like the anvil, patience breaks many hammers simply by bearing blows.
 - "A man is a hero not because he is braver than anyone else, but because he is braver for ten minutes longer." (*Emerson*)

Be Patient With All

- Heb. 10:36, 38 - “For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise... 38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.”
- Heb. 12:1 - “Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.”

Be Patient With All

- Patient in warning the unruly; we may not get a person to repent of disorderliness at first, but we must continue to work and pray.
- Patient in comforting the discouraged; people do not always immediately respond to encouragement; it is not always just a matter of saying, “snap out of it,” and the problem is solved.
- Patient in helping the weak; people do not immediately go from weakness to strength.
- 2Cor. 12:12 - “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.”

1 Thessalonians 5:14

- You have a commandment to keep that is no less binding than baptism, communing at the Lord's Table, etc.
- What have you done recently to:
 - Warn the unruly,
 - Comfort the feeble,
 - Support the weak,
 - Exercise patience toward all?
- “I'm too busy,” or “That's the preacher and elders' job.”
 - If you are failing to keep this commandment, your future holds either repentance or perdition.