

Fundamentals for Facilitating Fellowship

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. Psalm 133:1 - (A Song of Ascents, of David) "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing- Life forevermore."
 - 1. "What greater thing is there for two human souls, than to feel that they are joined for life--to strengthen each other in all labor, to rest on each other in all sorrow, to minister to each other in all pain, to be one with each other in silent unspeakable memories at the moment of the last parting?" (George Eliot)
 - 2. "Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other? They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually bow. So one hundred worshipers met together, each one looking away to Christ, are in heart nearer to each other than they could possibly be, were they to become 'unity' conscious and turn their eyes away from God to strive for closer fellowship." (A.W. Tozer, The Pursuit of God)
 - 3. "Fellowship is a place of grace, where mistakes aren't rubbed in but rubbed out. Fellowship happens when mercy wins over justice." (Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Life)
- B. Phil. 2:1-11
 - 1. Philippians is a book about the servant's heart. Chapter two is about serving one another as we serve before the Lord.
 - 2. When we consider that Jesus gave up all to serve us and our brethren, how can we not do the same for each other in return?
- C. Consider our relationships here:
 - 1. There are not many people, even among innocent children, that haven't had a disagreement with someone at some time.
 - 2. It is how we handle a disagreement that sets us apart as God's children in fellowship with each other.
 - 3. It is not about how we respond to our friends that makes us Christians; it is how we respond to those with whom we strongly disagree.
- D. Consider our disagreements here:
 - 1. There are times when we must disagree with each other, especially when truth is at stake.
 - 2. The following principles apply to this, but the primary emphasis of this lesson is to consider disagreements over something other than the truth

I. PURSUE PEACE

- 1. Rom. 12:18 - Christians need to be bridge builders, not bridge burners.

II. LET LOVE LIVE

- A. Rom. 13:8 - If we see everyone around us as persons loved by both God and us, we will be less inclined to disagree disagreeably with them and be more inclined to give their perspective a respectful hearing.

III. JUDGE WITH RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT

- A. John 7:24 - There is a difference between what we think is right and what is truly right.
- B. Rom. 14:1-5, 10-12 - If we make our conscience the standard by which others must live, we will be lost.
 - 1. Do not misapply this point; sin is not a matter of conscience

IV. PERCEIVE PEOPLE

- A. 1Cor. 12:6 - People are like snowflakes; there are no two who will ever be completely alike in all things.
 - 1. We need to make sure that our disagreements aren't simply two people wanting to accomplish the same goal in a different way.

V. LISTEN LIBERALLY

- A. James 1:19 - It is hard to listen patiently to someone who disagrees with us.
 - 1. Often problems can be prevented or solved simply by listening long enough to let the other person fully express themselves.
 - 2. People don't necessarily want you to solve their problems; they just want to be validated by knowing that someone else heard their problem and understands that it is real

VI. WATCH YOUR WORDS

- A. James 3:8 - No body part can get into trouble faster than the tongue.
 - 1. It is the one aspect of our being over which we should practice control above any other

VII. ABOLISH ANGER

- A. Eph. 4:31 - It is easy to get angry during personal disagreements. Anger will only make a bad situation worse.

VIII. COMMEND THE CORRECT

- A. Rom. 1:8 - Paul never shunned to address problems in the churches, but he always began and ended with what was right with the brethren.
 - 1. Acknowledge that your opponent is a good person trying to do the right thing and end with expressing your conviction that they will do the right thing. If you can't do that, keep your mouth shut until you can.
 - 2. We may disagree, but we can always commend someone on what they are doing right.

IX. REBUKE THE WRONG

A. Luke 17:3 - When someone has sinned, it is a command of God that fellow Christians rebuke him.

1. It is not judging him, and if you believe that someone who has rebuked you for your sin is judging you, you are not only a sinner, you are a mistaken sinner
2. Fellowship is based on both love and truth; remove love or ignore truth and fellowship does not exist
3. If the erring brother really wants fellowship, then when he is rebuked, he will repent, not retaliate.

X. REPENT OF WRONG

A. 2Cor. 7:10 - We must be humble enough to realize that this is what God requires of us.

1. When our brethren ask us to repent, they are asking us to do our part to restore fellowship between us and God and His children

XI. FORGIVE THE PENITENT

A. Luke 17:4 - If God forgives and forgets, why don't His children do the same?

1. Isa. 38:17 - This does not mean that we turn a blind eye to the temptation a brother finds himself frequently falling to.
2. Gal. 6:2 - This is part of helping him bear his burdens.

XII. TELL THE TRUTH

A. Eph. 4:25 - In times of confrontation, it is difficult to be honest, because we are afraid it will make things worse

1. Nothing truly gets solved until the whole truth is expressed.

XIII. SEEK TO SERVE

A. 1Peter 5:5 - Pride often causes conflict, is the primary fuel to keep it going, and is one of the greatest barriers to resolving it

XIV. BE CONSISTENT IN CONDUCT

A. Rom. 12:9 - Hypocrisy allows those who disagree with us to also justly accuse us.

1. Hypocrisy takes attention from the truth our brother needs to see, and puts the focus on our own sins. Both of us lose.

XV. BE WILLING TO SUFFER LOSS

A. 1Cor. 6:7-8 - Often, things don't work out our way. We should be willing to accept loss for the sake of peace and unity

XVI. LOOK TO THE LORD

A. 1Peter 2:21 - What did Jesus do when He disagreed with others?

Conclusion: James 3:13-18