



**A Story and A Study About**

**Fellowship**  
**and**  
**Separation of**  
**Fellowship**

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# Foreword

A while back, I tried an experiment. I wrote a book on “Faith” using a method I have never attempted before. I’m sure there is another one out there somewhere, but I have never actually seen one done that way – well, not exactly that way. What I did was write a short novel (not as long as a novel should be but longer than a “short story”) depicting the content I wished to discuss, then I interspersed the story with study material depicted in that particular chapter. So every other chapter was part of the novel and every other chapter was study material. Well, it turned out that the book was used more than most of what I have written. So I decided to try it again.

This one is about fellowship. Actually, I first wrote a paper on the separation of fellowship because many believers were asking about it and nobody seems to be writing about it these days. But then I realized I was dealing with separation of fellowship without ever researching fellowship itself. So I went back and started over with a study on biblical fellowship and learned a lot of things I didn’t know. Then I went back to separation and put the two together. While doing all that, I began to write a story, mostly because I like to write stories. My stories are always a romance mixed with an adventure and theological/moral discussions. This one is no exception. Then I did what I did with the faith book and put the two together. So all the odd numbered chapters are the novel, and all the even numbered chapters are study material. The novel and the study match up – sort of. The flow of the story does not always allow for the exact content of the study chapter, but hopefully it introduces it.

Some will want to read through the story first. That’s fine. Some will want to ignore the story and use the study content for personal or group study. That’s fine, too. But if you read it straight through, you will get the impact I have in mind.

I hope you enjoy it as much as I did, and learn as much as I did.

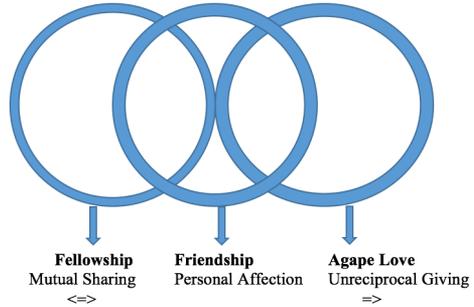
*David A. DeWitt*

# Introduction

## The Anatomy of a Relationship

In the Bible, a relationship has three basic elements: fellowship, friendship, and love.

**Fellowship** is mutual sharing. It's all about reciprocity. Either it is giving, expecting a response, or responding to something given. The opposite of fellowship is stinginess, the unwillingness to share mutually.



**Love** (*agape* love) is very different. In one sense, it's the opposite of, without being contradictory to, fellowship. Love is giving without an expectation of reciprocation. It has no expectation of a return for a gift. Although it may hope for good things to happen later, it is giving without any thought of return for the giving itself. Fellowship is two-way. Love is one-way. Both may or may not exist at the same time, but they are not the same thing. Fellowship and love are mutually exclusive (non-overlapping) aspects of a biblical relationship.

**Friendship**, on the other hand, can go two-way, one-way, or no-way at all. Friendship is an affection which may either expect a return, or not expect a return, or have a subjective return. In other words, a person can have an affection others aren't even aware of. And that's the major difference between biblical friendship and secular friendship. The secular definition of friendship is always two-way, "a relationship of mutual affection between two or more people" (Wikipedia). That "mutual" concept of friendship is also in the Bible. But the Bible recognizes a friendship that the world does not, or at least the world would use a different word for it. Biblical friendship can be

with those who do not, or things that cannot, reciprocate, such as the world itself (James 4:4).

As depicted in the circles diagram:

- **There is considerable overlap between fellowship and friendship**, since either of them may reciprocate. Friendship might be reciprocated and fellowship always is.
- And **friendship overlaps with love** because both of them might give without expectation of return. Friendship might give without expecting reciprocity, love always does.
- But **there is no overlap whatsoever between fellowship and love**. Fellowship always expects a return, love never does.

This book will focus on the first aspect of a relationship.

## **Fellowship**

After thinking through a biblical definition of Christian fellowship (Chapter 2), we shall consider seven Characteristics of Christian Fellowship:

### **Characteristic #1**

Fellowship Is Between a Plurality of People (Chapter 4)

### **Characteristic #2**

Fellowship Reciprocates (Chapter 6)

### **Characteristic #3**

Fellowship Sacrifices Something Valuable (Chapter 8)

### **Characteristic #4**

Fellowship Is Participation in Something Beyond Ourselves (Chapter 10)

### **Characteristic #5**

Fellowship Is Not about a Place or an Activity (Chapter 12)

### **Characteristic #6**

Fellowship Requires Fellowship with God (Chapter 14)

### **Characteristic #7**

Fellowship Defines the Relationships Between Believers in the Church Age (Chapter 16)

## **Separation of Fellowship**

After thinking through the biblical concept of fellowship in seven characteristics, we shall consider another seven characteristics about the Separation of Fellowship:

### **Characteristic #1**

Separation of Fellowship Is from Unrepentant Believers (Chapter 18)

### **Characteristic #2**

Separation of Fellowship Is a Believer's Responsibility (Chapter 20)

### **Characteristic #3**

Separation of Fellowship Is Not Private (Chapter 22)

### **Characteristic #4**

Separation of Fellowship Is Not Corporate (Chapter 24)

### **Characteristic #5**

Separation of Fellowship Is Determined Personally (Chapter 26)

### **Characteristic #6**

Separation of Fellowship Is about Morality and Theology (Chapter 28)

### **Characteristic #7**

Separation of Fellowship Is Applied Individually (Chapter 30)

# Chapter 1

## Out of the Sky

“This is my favorite part. Really cool!” Benjamin Jenkins, the 10-year-old son of Matthew Jenkins, was sitting on a stack of cushions in the copilot’s seat of his father’s Cessna CJ3 Citation twin-engine business jet. “Bam, take that, Mr. Cloud. Oh yeah! Hey, Dad, can I fly it in?” The engines on the sleek aircraft went from a roar to a low-pitched whine when Ben’s father pulled back on the throttles. This allowed them to descend below the cloud layer as the aircraft crossed the shoreline of Lake Michigan, pointed west toward Green Bay, Wisconsin.

“Okay, Ben, we are cleared for the visual on runway 36. Your airplane.”

“My airplane.” Ben leaned forward on his cushions and took the yoke in his hands as he had done many times before. His father did the radio communication and, because Ben could not reach them, operated the rudder pedals. But it was Ben who controlled the pitch and roll, lowered the flaps, and regulated the throttles. Coming in south of the airport on a westerly heading, Ben began a shallow right turn to line them up with runway 36.

“Cessna four-five-seven-bravo-mike cleared to land three-six,” said the voice of the controller in their headsets.

Matt repeated the landing clearance.

Ben said: “20 degrees of flaps, gear down and locked, three green lights.”

“There’s quite a crosswind. You want me to take it?”

“No, I got it, Dad.”

“Line us up right down the white stripes, you’re a bit off to the right.”

“I got it. I got it.”

“Okay, now flatten it out, now 30 degrees’ flaps, now trim the nose back, flatten it out, flatten it out.”

“Yeah, yeah, I got it.”

“Okay, now raise the nose slowly, watch that left crosswind, that’s it, now ease it on.” The engines quieted to a high-

pitched hum as the aircraft lowered to the runway. The tires screeched slightly, and Matt said, “Nice landing, Ben. Good job.”

“Thanks, I wish I could reach the pedals and do the radio.”

“Real soon, my man. Your legs are almost there. But we may have to wait a bit on the radio. It might be a bit disconcerting for the controllers to hear a 10-year-old voice in their headsets.”

As they taxied to the hangar, Ben asked, “Are we going over to grandma and grandpa’s for dinner?”

“That’s what we usually do on Sunday afternoon. That all right with you?”

“Sure. Will Billy Michaels be there?”

“I suppose. It should be all the usual people. The Michaels usually come, along with most of the supervisors and foreman from the company, plus my rather odd sister, Dora.”

“Will Aunt Dora bring her boyfriend?”

“I don’t know. Why do you ask?”

“No reason, it’s just that ... why don’t you ever bring a girlfriend?”

“I don’t have a girlfriend.”

“Yeah, I know. But why not?”

“I guess I still think of myself as belonging to your mother.”

“She died almost seven years ago, Dad. And it’s not like I miss my mom, I barely remember her. But it would sure would be nice if I had, y’know, somebody like a mom. I mean it’s great the two of us and all, but most of my friends have moms. They take care of their stuff and make the house more, I don’t know, more homey. Even some of my friends who don’t have dads, have moms. Even the ones that don’t like their moms have moms to not like. And like Billy, he’s got a dad but he’s also got a mom. Sometimes he gripes about her cuz she’s on him about playing video games all the time, but I know he really likes having her there, around. It’d just be nice if our house had a mom.”

They shut down the Citation, took out their bags and put them in Matt's F150 Ford pickup. They watched as Bob, a 19-year-old who worked for the FBO, pushed the Citation into the hangar with the airport tug. Before they left, Matt locked the hangar and engaged the extra security system the company had recently installed. Then they climbed in the truck and began the short drive to Matt's parent's house.

"Billy is like your best friend, right?" Ben's father asked.

"I guess. I like doing stuff with him. 'Cept he likes basketball and I like flying. We have a good time, though, 'cept when his stupid little sister Sally tags along and wrecks it."

"She's cute. She's only a year younger than you guys. Can't she do what you're doing?"

"No, she can't. But if Suzanne Carlson comes, it's okay, because they go do some dumb girl stuff and leave us alone."

"You and Billy usually go outside after dinner and play basketball, don't you?"

"Yeah. He always beats me."

"I'll bet he can't land a twin-engine jet airplane, like you just did."

"No, for sure. He doesn't care much about airplanes. And I don't mind shooting hoops. It's just that he always wins. Anyway, it's sure better than what you guys do."

"How's that?"

"I don't get how the adults can just sit around after dinner and talk. That'd drive me bonkers."

"Sometimes we watch a football game."

"Well, that makes more sense."

"Don't you and Billy talk?"

"Yeah—but it's about real stuff, like fishing or camping, or a new video game, or he talks about basketball and I talk about airplanes. We talk about what's really there. You guys just sit and talk about nothing."

"It's called fellowship."

"You talk about fellowship?"

"No. The talking we do is called fellowship. And since everybody that comes is a believer in Jesus, it's Christian fel-

lowship. It's the same thing you and Billy do, it's just that the subjects are different."

"Talking is fellowship?"

"Not necessarily."

"So when does talking become fellowship?"

"Well, it's when somebody says something that helps me in some way, then I say something that helps them in some way. Sometimes we just joke around, but we also exchange ideas that are valuable, or potentially valuable. Then we agree or disagree and fine-tune our discussion into something actually valuable."

"Can you have fellowship without talking?"

"Sure you can. Fellowship happens whenever you exchange something valuable with each other."

"Like Christmas presents."

Chuckling, Matt answered, "Well I suppose exchanging gifts could be a form of fellowship, if it's mutually valuable."

"Valuable, huh?"

"Uh huh."

"So if you guys sit around and talk about valuable stuff, that's fellowship?"

"Right."

"How about fellowshiping a way to find you a girlfriend—that'd be valuable."

# Fellowship

## Chapter 2 Defining Fellowship

The Christian life has many values, even here on earth, this side of heaven (Mark 10:29-30). As believers in Jesus Christ, we have the eternal Word of God recorded in the Bible to give us truth in the midst of a world of lies and confusion. We have the indwelling Holy Spirit to convict us of sin and guide us to an application of God's Word. We have a peace that passes understanding, an assurance of eternal hope, and a promise of salvation. As believers, we also find one another and establish a network of Christian fellowship, which allows us to support each other, encourage each other, give to each other, laugh together, and weep together. From the very start of the church, *they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer* (Acts 2:42). Fellowship is essential for a healthy spiritual life. Everyone needs others. That's the way God made us.

### **Fellowship in the English Dictionary**

The New Oxford American Dictionary defines fellowship as a "friendly association, especially with people who share one's interests." That makes fellowship a word that is pretty broad but not very deep. With this, let's call it a secular definition, fellowship happens when we are:

- (1) Friendly
- (2) Associate with others
- (3) Plus it helps if we have shared interests

The word does not assume that our fellowship contributes or receives anything of value from one another. Nor does it mean we are partnered together in any way or that our association has any moral parameters. We just need to be friendly and associate, which we are more apt to do if we have shared values.

## **Fellowship in the New Testament**

In the Bible, fellowship is much more involved. It is not as broad a word, and it is much deeper. The fellowship taught by the apostles was more a product of lives being tangled together. Let's call it **entanglement**. I'm going to give you a bit of a strange illustration, so bear with me a minute. There is an odd phenomenon that Quantum Physicists call Quantum Entanglement.

Entanglement occurs when two particles are so deeply linked that they share the same existence... Entangled particles can become widely separated in space. But even so, the mathematics implies that a measurement on one immediately influences the other, regardless of the distance between them (MIT Technological Review, March 8, 2012).

Einstein called this entanglement of sub-atomic particles "spooky action at a distance." No one knows how or why that happens, but, as a matter of fact, it's a lot like fellowship among humans. Fellowship is when our lives are tangled together in such a way that what happens to one of us "influences the other, regardless of the distance between them." Actually, it's kind of a "spooky action at a distance."

The nouns and the verbs for fellowship together occur 31 times in the New Testament. The basic noun for *fellowship* is *κοινωνία* (*koinonia*), and it occurs 19 times. It is translated *fellowship* 12 times, *contribution* 2 times, *participation* 2 times, and *sharing* 3 times. The Louw and Nida Lexicon defines the noun as "an association involving close mutual relations and involvement... that which is readily shared...[a] willing gift, [or a] ready contribution."

The verb form is the word *κοινωνέω* (*koinoneo*), and it occurs 8 times. It is translated *share* 4 times, and *shared* 2 times, *contributing* 1 time, and *participates* 1 time. Louw and Nida define it as "to share one's possessions, with the implication of some kind of joint participation and mutual interest."

There is also a noun form of κοινωνία (*koinonia*) which is combined with the prefix συγ (*sug*) meaning *together*, which in Greek is the word συγκοινωνός (*sugkoinonos*). This word occurs 4 times in the New Testament, translated *fellowship together* or *participate*. So as a general definition, I suggest that, biblically speaking,

### **Fellowship Is an Entanglement of Human Lives, Resulting in a Decision to Share Something Beneficial**

Or simply, **Fellowship Is Beneficial Sharing**

Before we analyze the passages, two preliminary questions should be considered. “Do non-Christians have fellowship?” and “Can a Christian fellowship with a non-Christian?” Clearly, the word κοινωνία (*koinonia*) was used in the Greek culture before there were any Christians. The apostles didn’t invent the word, but they did give it a uniquely Christian meaning, as they did with words like ἀγάπη (*agape*) for *love* and ἐκκλησία (*ecclesia*) for *church*. So, yes, there is such a thing as unbeliever fellowship, and, yes, believers might join them in that.

But it is not what the apostles meant by κοινωνία (*koinonia*). There is no example of believers having κοινωνία (*koinonia*) with unbelievers in the New Testament. The apostles simply never used the word that way. So, neither will I. For the purpose of this study, we will use κοινωνία (*koinonia*) as fellowship that happens between those who claim to be believers in Jesus Christ.

### **Seven Basic Characteristics of Fellowship**

In the upcoming chapters, we will analyze the word for fellowship in the New Testament and gather our observations into **seven characteristics of Christian fellowship**.

# Chapter 3

## Sunday Dinner

The Sunday feast at Matt's parents' home was usually a chaotic event. This was no quiet family gathering around the dining room table. Everybody brought something to contribute and put it in the kitchen where the women gathered and arranged it all in a cafeteria style. Other than a quiet few moments for prayer at the beginning of the meal, the whole affair looked like organized pandemonium.

Although guests were occasionally invited, the regular attendance was quite consistent. Matt's parents, Stewart and Gracie, hosted it. His sister Dora was usually there, plus her boyfriend Donnie Michalis came sometimes. Mildred Hogan, Matt's 53-year-old secretary was always there. She had worked most of her career for Matt's father. But now that Stewart was in the process of retiring, she was working mostly for Matt. Then there were the families of the three supervisors of the Jenkins Equipment Company: Ralph and Mary Michaels came with their four children, Bill and Ruth Carlson came with their three, and Joseph and Margaret Daniels came with their three children and Margaret's aging mother. Jerry Metcalf was single but often brought a lady friend. So, it was both family and company personnel, but on Sunday, the company was rarely mentioned. Except for a stray discussion about a work-related issue, the company was not on anyone's mind. They had all long since become involved with each as a fellowship.

The large island counter in the middle of the kitchen was filled with a multitude of dishes, bowls, and platters of various meats, vegetables, fruits, salads, and breads, with various dips and sauces. The emphasis this evening was on venison. Being in the middle of bow-hunting season, Jerry Metcalf and Bill Carlson had each killed a deer. So, there was an ample supply of grilled venison steaks, venison hamburgers, and a thick venison stew. Matt's mother Gracie also made a small ham, in case someone didn't like venison. But everybody did. There was also a separate table covered with desserts: apple

and cherry pies, German chocolate cake, chocolate chip and oatmeal cookies, plus a large pan of brownies.

After a prayer offered by Matt's father, everyone got their food and sat around the living room, the den, and outside on the patio, eating and talking. Matt watched Ben heap his plate full of homemade French fries and a huge venison burger, then head out to the porch where most of the kids were eating. Matt filled his own plate with fruits and vegetables, shoving them into enough of a pile to make room for a generous sized venison steak. Then he found a seat in the living room.

Just as he got situated on the sofa, his mother sat down next to him. "Another great feast, Mom."

"It's my favorite time of the week. I just love putting all this together. But as you know, most of the actual cooking is done by the other wives. I'm just the coordinator. But it's great fun to see everybody together."

"Mom?"

"What?"

"What do you want?"

"Want? Why do you think I want something?"

"Because you made a point of following me over here and edging yourself in next to me."

"Nothing, Matt. Well, nothing new, anyway. I was just wondering if you were thinking about moving on, from Jeanne, I mean. She's been gone almost seven years now, and it's time to move on."

"I have moved on. I'm fine."

"Moving on is not about being fine, moving on is about actually moving...on."

"Mom!"

"There are a lot of nice girls out there, Matthew. You are still in your 30s and handsome, and Ben needs a mother. I have introduced you to several single ladies at church and at least four single missionaries, and you haven't done anything."

"I took a few of them out to lunch, three of them, I think."

"Once. You take them out once, then you never call them again."

“How do you know that?”

“I’m...connected.”

“Mom, they are nice ladies, but I’m just not attracted to them. I can’t just decide I’m going to fall in love with somebody because you and the women at your Lutheran church think I should.”

“Then find someone else, dear. You’re not looking. I think you see it as cheating on Jeanne, or something.”

“That’s not it. You really need to drop this, Mom. If I find someone that, well, if I find someone, I’ll know it. But for now, I have enough to do looking after Ben and working into filling Dad’s shoes at the company.”

“But you never...”

“Stop, Mom. Just stop. Leave it alone. Now tell me about this venison steak I’m eating. You cooked this, didn’t you? It’s fantastic. Just how did you do that?”

Matt’s mother acquiesced into a discussion about the preparation of the venison, which included a conversation about who killed it, who cleaned it, and who brought it, which got them to the end of the meal.

As the dinner began to wind down, everybody brought their dishes to the kitchen. Someone turned on the 60-inch TV in the Jenkins’ spacious den and found the Green Bay Packers/Denver Broncos football game, drawing most of the men in there. The women congregated in the kitchen, and all the children went outside, except the Carlson’s three-month old baby girl.

Matt stuck his head out the door long enough to see Ben joining in a basketball game on the court Matt’s father had put in next to the garage. Then Matt got a cup of coffee and moved toward the den to watch the game.

“Can I grab you for a minute?” The voice came from behind him, which Matt recognized as belonging to Jerry Metcalf, one of the company’s supervisors. “I hate to make you talk shop today, I know it’s not a time for business, but I really need to corner you for a sec. It’s about a meeting I set up for you tomorrow.”

“No problem, Jerry. What do you need?” Matt gestured for Jerry to sit on a stuffed chair in the now emptied-out living room. Matt sat on the near end of a sofa, which was separated from the chair by an end table supporting an ornate lamp.

“It’s about the pilot candidates to fly the CJ3. I’ve narrowed it down to three, and I need to talk to you about one of them.”

“There’s no hurry on that, Jerry. I can keep on doing all the flying for a while.”

“Well, no, actually, you can’t. As you know, your father is in the process of retiring and turning the company over to you, and that means you have to be here more.”

“Who says that has to be now?”

“Your father does.”

“He told you that?”

“He did. He wants me to come up with a replacement pilot, like right now. Look, you proved your point. Nobody thought a six-million-dollar airplane would be worth it except you. And you proved everybody wrong. The fact that you can bring in customers, give them a tour of the plant, then fly them home the same day, has doubled our orders for heavy equipment. Your dad is even convinced. But you can’t do the flying and be CEO at the same time. You can still fly some of the time, but you have to break in a new pilot, somebody whose only job is to fly the CJ3.”

“So, what’s this meeting tomorrow?”

“Okay, this is a bit embarrassing, and I admit I’m being, well, chicken. But one of the three final candidates just wouldn’t be right for the job and needs to be eliminated, and I just don’t have the, um, well, guts to do it.”

“For heaven’s sake. Why not? You narrowed it down to three, why not to two or one?”

“Because this one candidate is so, I don’t know, pathetic.”

“If he’s so pathetic, how’d he make the final three?”

“Great test scores on all ratings. Great performance on simulators. Not much flight time in actual CJ3s, but an appeal

for the job like I've never heard. I just didn't have the heart to cut someone who wants the job that much."

"So you want me to do it."

"I admitted I was just being chicken, didn't I?"

"So when do I meet him."

"You're full of meetings tomorrow morning, so I scheduled an appointment for two o'clock tomorrow afternoon."

"All right."

"But there is something else you need to know."

"All right."

"This candidate is an Indian, like, Indian from India. Came to America for college, went on to get all the ratings and doesn't want to go back."

"There is no reason we shouldn't hire a foreigner if they qualify."

"Yeah... well...there is something else you need to know. The candidate is not a he. It's a, she's... a she. A 24-year-old Indian girl."

# Chapter 4

## Characteristic #1

### Fellowship Is Between a Plurality of People

**People Who Are Believers (Plural) Fellowship.** This seems obvious, but actually, it is frequently overlooked. Fellowship begins with an entanglement of **human** lives when, according to the apostles uses of the word, they are believers in Jesus Christ. When Christians decide to mutually share something they perceive as beneficial, they have fellowship with one another. Fellowship is intentional and is based on some understanding that the other person claims to be a believer.

**Angels Fellowship (Probably).** We are not told about fellowship among angels, but something like fellowship can be observed from the association between some of the angels we hear about. The angel who gave the revelation to Daniel, recorded in Daniel 10, seems to have a beneficial relationship with the angel Michael (Daniel 10:21). Angels *ministered* to Jesus after His temptation (Matthew 4:11). We can also assume something like fellowship among the angels was involved in praising God and delivering the judgments of God during the upcoming Great Tribulation.

**God Fellowships.** Certainly, there is a fellowship of God among the members of the Trinity (John 14:10-11). Jesus had continual fellowship with God the Father, which is probably why He treasured His time alone in prayer (Luke 6:12). There is fellowship between God and humans. The Apostle John said, *indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ* (1 John 1:3). Paul tells us, *you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord* (1 Corinthians 1:9).

There's a question that should be considered at this point. If fellowship is beneficial sharing, and we have fellowship with

God, then how do we beneficially share anything with God? It is clear that God gives benefits to us, but how do we share anything beneficial with Him? Certainly, we cannot benefit God in the sense of meeting any needs or improving His lot in some way. God has no needs, so He doesn't need improving.

But sharing something beneficial does not require the receiver to have a need. We can share with God in the sense of worshipping Him, pleasing Him, praising Him, thanking Him, keeping His commandments, and not grieving Him. If we assume that our worship pleases God, then our worship is a form of benefit. And it results in God's *good pleasure* (Philippians 2:13; Psalm 147:10-11; Proverbs 16:10). I fly a small Piper Cub airplane. A friend of mine once allowed me to fly his Cessna CJ3 Citation, the very expensive business jet depicted in our story. Flying it met no needs of mine, but it was very beneficial in that it added to my good pleasure.

**Animals Don't Fellowship.** There are mutually beneficial exchanges among animals, but it should not be confused with fellowship because they do not intend it. They do not make a decision to mutually benefit one another. Animals have a certain free will that they can use to interact with one another, but one animal does not determine to benefit another one. They only act in their own self-interest. Any benefit they provide for one another is merely a matter of instinct, or the programming of the natural order created in them by God, not a determination made from their interaction.

**People Can't Fellowship with Themselves.** Isolation does not allow our personal human development to intermingle and benefit one another. Hermits, recluses, and ascetics do not fellowship. It is not available to an individual living as a solitary person or a loner detached from others. Fellowship is not just talking to yourself. Fellowship requires entanglement with others.

**People Don't Fellowship with Literature.** I can read Oswald Chambers book "My Utmost for His Highest" and get a lot out of it. I have benefited from his wisdom and insights. But it is not fellowship with Oswald Chambers because he is dead. I can't fellowship with a dead man. We cannot choose to mutually share anything. I can benefit from him but he cannot benefit from me.

**Organizations Don't Fellowship with One Another.** Organizations, institutions, official groups, from local clubs to nations, do not fellowship with one another. Organizations are agreements we conjure up in our minds. They are based on charters, laws, rules, constitutions and other collectively decided statements, none of which have a personality or moral notions. In the gospels, Pharisee-ism did not agree with Sadducee-ism, but neither organization could fellowship with the other. The unresolvable issues remained unresolvable.

**People Don't Fellowship with Organizations, and Organizations Don't Fellowship with People.** Fellowship is not membership. People who are representing organizations (such as an insurance company, a law firm, hospital, or government) are not having fellowship with people attempting to relate to those organizations. You cannot have fellowship with someone representing an organization unless you have a personal discussion with the organization's representative apart from the organization they represent. As long as they represent the organization's regulations, there is no fellowship, but if they say something like, "Well, if I were you, here's what I would do," then you are having fellowship.

One guy who broke out of the organization of the Pharisees was Nicodemus. The Pharisees saw Jesus as a problem because He healed on the Sabbath, forgave sin, and ate with tax gatherers and sinners. But Nicodemus, who was a member of the Pharisees, apparently, along with some others like Joseph of Arimathea, said, "Wait a minute, there is something different

about this guy.” Here’s what Nicodemus actually said, with a bit of the context.

*Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him” (John 3:1-2).*

Fellowship can happen within a group of people who are part of an organization, but not with an organization that represents those people. You can give things to an organization and an organization can give to you, but it’s not fellowship. It’s the same thing you can do with your computer. There is no human deciding to reciprocate. “Our church only fellowships with like-minded churches” is not possible using the New Testament word for fellowship. Fellowship is for the church, mutual sharing among individual believers, not church organizations. Notice the individual assumption in Paul’s comment to Philemon.

*I pray that the **fellowship** [κοινωνία (koinonia)] of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ’s sake (Philemon 6).*

# Chapter 5

## The Applicant

During the scheduled Monday morning meetings, Matt thought little about his two o'clock appointment, where he would have to reject a female Indian pilot applicant for the position of Jenkins Equipment Company corporate pilot. But when one o'clock rolled around and his morning meetings had ended, he sat alone at his desk thinking about what he would say. And he found it troubling. The reality is, whether she was qualified or not and even if she had not been Indian, the corporate executives they brought in to see the operation would not be comfortable with the idea of flying with a twenty-something-year-old young lady. The fact that she was Indian just made it that much worse. So he would have to reject her. The only actual legitimate basis for it was her lack of air hours in a CJ3. But that was true of any new pilot applicant. Given her test scores and simulator time, that reason was about as thin as a hospital gown.

At seven minutes before two, Mildred buzzed his intercom. "Your two o'clock appointment is here."

"Thank you, Mildred. Send her in." There was a knock at his door, and before he could stand, Mildred opened it and said, "Ms. Eesha Ghattamaneni to see you." Then she simply smiled, gestured for the applicant to walk in, and closed the door.

Oh boy! Matt stood up so fast that he almost knocked his chair over. He found himself staring without saying a word. He hadn't really thought much about what he actually expected her to look like. His mind had just pictured someone in a traditional Indian sari with a red dot on her forehead. But standing in front of him was the most beautiful creature he'd ever seen. Long dark hair framed a fine-featured face with large brown eyes, a thin nose, and narrow chin, all perfectly accented by smooth brown skin, and no red dot on her forehead. She was thin. Matt estimated her at 5'7" and not much over 110 pounds. She wore very little make up and a tan pants suit with a white

blouse buttoned all the way to the top. He finally gained enough composure to say, “Sit down, I, I, I mean would you like to sit down? I mean please have a seat.”

Before sitting, she walked to the desk, extended her hand and said, “As your associate said, my name is Eesha Ghattamaneni. My family name is hard for Americans to pronounce, so please call me Eesha, like a long ‘e’ followed by a short sneeze.”

“Please have a seat, Eesha. And thank you for coming. About this job as corporate pilot...”

“Excuse me, Mr. Jenkins, could I say something first?”

“Yes, of course, please.”

“I know you asked me here to tell me you are not considering me for this position.”

“Well, I...”

“And I know the reason. You are concerned that male customers will not feel comfortable with a young female Indian pilot. I don’t blame you. I have been rejected by eight companies in the last month, all for the same reason, only most of them didn’t admit it. After graduating from the University of Wisconsin I went to a reputable flight school and obtained my private, commercial, instrument, and flight instructor ratings. All of these are for both single and multiple engine aircraft. I have a complex endorsement, a high-performance endorsement, and a high altitude endorsement. I also have my Airline Transport Rating. Then I went on to get a single pilot rating for the C13. In spite of all that, no one will give me a flying job. Of course, I don’t have much experience in terms of actual, non-simulator flight hours. But neither does anyone who is applying for their first job.”

“Well, of course...”

“The reason I get passed over is because I am a woman.”

“No, that’s not...”

“And I’m not crying ‘feminism.’ I understand the problem. Men, maybe even women, maybe especially women, are uncomfortable with a young female pilot. And being a foreigner doesn’t help. But I’m begging you, Mr. Jenkins. Please give me a chance. I am out of money, and if I don’t get a job in the

next 30 days, my visa will expire, and I will have to go back to India. If that happens, I will be pressured to marry the man my father has chosen for me, and I will never fly again.”

“In my experience, most Indian people who travel to America are Brahmins or some other high caste that allows them to have enough money to travel. So, I assume you would be taken care of if you move back to India.”

“In general, what you say is true, but it’s not in my case. I was born to a very low caste. My uncle established a roofing business in Calcutta. He wasn’t wealthy by western standards, but he made considerable money putting roofs on buildings of western companies throughout the city. I was his favorite niece. He is the only one that really loved me. I know that sounds harsh, but my parents always wanted something from me. They still do. They raised me, but they expected me to return their efforts by being a traditional Hindu.

“But my uncle, well, he just loved me. He gave and gave and gave and never asked anything from me. Before he died five years ago, he set up a fund to put me through college in America. Again, giving expecting nothing from me. My uncle’s love was nothing like my parents. They always wanted something in return for everything they did. Every denial of what I wanted to do began with, ‘After all we’ve done for you...’ At any rate, my uncle’s money is all used up. I am thankful that I graduated without a college debt to pay off. But, if I don’t get a job in 30 days, I’ll be forced to go back to India.”

“I see, and I suppose that means you would not get a job in aviation.”

“If I return to India, I will never fly again.”

“I understand. I’m so sorry. Let me ask you something. I will admit, the biggest problem with your employment as a corporate pilot is the thought, or maybe the fear, that you might scare away customers just by being who you are. So how would you overcome that?”

“By talking to my passengers, by being friendly, by getting to know them and letting them know me. By showing that I am interested in them, learning something about their company, and not coming off like a feminist know-it-all. I would pre-

sent myself as simply a high-tech bus driver that cares about them and can get them to The Jenkins Equipment Company and back safely.”

“Interesting answer. And what about...” Matt was then interrupted when his desk intercom buzzed. He pushed a button on it and said, “What is it, Mildred?”

“Sorry, Matt, but Ralph is out here and claims there is a problem in the shop that needs your immediate attention. Says they have to stop operation with the overhead crane until you have a look at it.”

“Okay, Mildred. Tell him I’ll be right there.” Then he looked back into the big desperate eyes of the brown-skinned beauty sitting in front of him. “You’ll have to excuse me a few minutes, Eesha. There are some pictures of our operation on the wall behind you that will give you some idea of the machines we make. I’m sure Mildred offered you coffee when you arrived, but if you are still interested, there’s a Keurig pot over there in the corner. Feel free to get yourself a coffee or a hot chocolate or something. Look around. Make yourself at home. I will be back shortly.” With that, he went out, closing the door behind him, leaving her alone in his office.

Eesha shoved some hair behind her ear and leaned back in the leather-covered armchair. Up to now, she hadn’t been aware of the fact that she was sitting on the edge of it. She looked at the ceiling, let out a long breath and shook her head. “Why,” she actually said it aloud in English, although in a whisper, “did he have to be so darn gorgeous.” She had pictured Matthew Jenkins as a half-witted playboy who wanted to show off by rejecting her employment, or maybe an egotistical power hungry son trying to take over his father’s business.

But Matthew Jenkins was none of that. He was gentle, with a quiet voice and understanding manner. He was tall, maybe six feet, mid-30s, she guessed. He had thick brown hair long enough to curl a bit over his shirt collar. And it looked like it hadn’t been combed since early this morning, and then only with his fingers. His shoulders were wide, and he looked like he spent significant time working out somewhere. His eyes were light blue and they squinted slightly, giving them a gentle

understanding appearance. His face was angular and his mouth was, well, she decided not to think about that.

The wall behind her was indeed lined with pictures of various large machines, but her interest was in the pictures in front of her. She walked around the desk and examined photos of a boy at various young ages. And a wedding picture. Married! She was unable to avoid a feeling of disappointment. Of course, he was married. How stupid to think someone his age with his looks would be single. His wife was a tall thin blond, very pretty. The boy must be their son. Oh, well. He...

Her thoughts were interrupted by Matt's reentry into the room. Before he said anything, she blurted out, "Oh. Um. You said to make myself at home, so I thought I would look at your family pictures. Is this your son?"

"Yes, that's Ben. A bit of a handful, but a great kid, loves airplanes, he can even land the Citation, well, if I do the rudders."

"Amazing, and you have a beautiful wife."

"That's our wedding picture. But I don't have her anymore. She died six and a half years ago."

"Oh. Really? I'm sorry. It must be hard. I, I, can't imagine. And you never remarried...or...anything?"

"No, It's just me and Ben. Between him and this job, I never seem to find time for female companionship."

"Yes, I can imagine. I don't mean to keep you. Do they need you in your shop?"

"I'm afraid they do, sorry about that. We have a broken cable on our main overhead crane, and the guys don't want to proceed with the fix without me there – not that I know anything about it that they don't. It's just that they don't want to take responsibility for the cost involved if it lets go."

"Oh, that's okay, I understand. I can come back later."

"No, I'd like you to stay. Actually, I have a proposal for you."

"A proposal?"

"I'd like to take you out to dinner tonight."

"Dinner?"

"In Chicago."

“Chicago?”

“It’s not like, I mean, it’s not like I’m asking you out on a date. I’d like you to fly us there in the Citation. It’s clouding up, and they predict rain starting around 4 o’clock. That means everything will be on instruments. I want you to file an IFR flight plan to Midway Airport, leaving Green Bay at 5:00. That will put us into one of the world’s busiest air space systems, at one of the busiest airports, at the busiest time of the day, in the rain. I want you to get our clearance, go to the airport, fuel up, and preflight the airplane. I’ll be there shortly after 4:30. If you get us to Chicago without a hitch, we’ll talk about your employment over dinner.”

# Chapter 6

## Characteristic #2

### Unlike Love, Fellowship Reciprocates

The foundational principle for how Christians are to relate to one another is **not fellowship**.

It's **love**. And not just affection but *αγάπη* (*agape*) love. *Κοινωνία* (*koinonia*) *fellowship* is not like *αγάπη* (*agape*) love. Love is giving to someone without the expectation of reciprocity. Fellowship is all about reciprocity. Here is how love is described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. As you read through these 15 aspects of love, notice that none of them require, depend on, or expect any reciprocity. They are all done, or not done, by the lover.

1. *Love is patient*
2. *Love is kind*
3. *And is not jealous*
4. *Love does not brag*
5. *And is not arrogant*
6. *Does not act unbecomingly*
7. *It does not seek its own*
8. *Is not provoked*
9. *Does not take into account a wrong suffered*
10. *Does not rejoice in unrighteousness*
11. *But rejoices with the truth*
12. *Bears all things*
13. *Believes all things*
14. *Hopes all things*
15. *Endures all things*

None of these require any positive response from the person loved. Love gives without expecting anything in return. That's the basic way all believers in Jesus Christ are to relate to one another. And I would suggest that no other religious or social philosophies in the world relate that way.

Fellowship is not like that. Fellowship expects reciprocity. Actually, it may be an act of reciprocity.

**Enemies** require love, not fellowship. Jesus said, *ἀγαπή (agape) love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great* (Luke 6:35). This is one of the most concise definitions of love. Notice, Jesus describes *love* with the statement *do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return*. We don't have to be friends with our enemies or have fellowship with our enemies. But we do have to *ἀγαπή (agape)* love them. If we had to fellowship with our enemies, we would be extremely frustrated because it is unlikely they would return acts of kindness. With our enemies, we are to do loving things, *expecting nothing in return*.

**Altruism**, by the way, is neither love nor fellowship. Altruism does not actually exist. Altruism is the idea of giving without self-interest. That's impossible for autonomous beings, such as humans. It's wrong to be **selfish**. **Selfishness** is getting by taking from others. If I am hungry and eat some bread, you have no problem with that. But if you and I are both hungry and I eat all the bread, you'd have a problem with that. We are not to be selfish, but we are to be self-oriented, and we are to have self-interest. Our interest in others is based on it (Matthew 7:12; Ephesians 5:29), and that's what gives us hope—future-desired expectation.

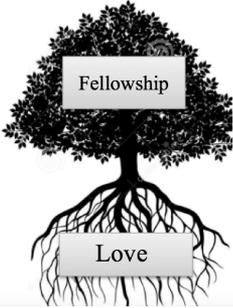
**Marriage** gives us another example of the difference between love and fellowship. Marriages based on fellowship are destined for trouble. If you relate to your husband or wife based on mutual sharing, you will likely be in constant conflict. Paul said, *Husbands love your wives* (Ephesians 5:25; Colossians 3:19), and for wives *to love their husbands* (Titus 2:4). He did not say “Husbands have fellowship with your wives” or “wives have fellowship with your husbands.” If you expect your spouse to reciprocate your acts of kindness, you will be disappointed, then frustrated, then irritated when he or she doesn't do so. But being *patient, kind, not jealous...* [to be one who]

*bears all things, hopes all things, [and] endures all things*, does not require the one loved to do anything. It's wonderful to have fellowship in your marriage, but if you base your marriage on fellowship, you're headed for disaster. Love, not fellowship is the basis for marriage.

**Casual Christian relationships** can be based on fellowship. But if they are, they usually don't last. I remember a fellowship relationship I had with a pastor some years ago. We enjoyed sharing ideas, but neither of us thought in terms of giving without sharing. We never gave to one another expecting nothing in return. We met weekly for a while, then less often, then not at all. We stopped meeting together, not because we had anything against each other, there just wasn't anything to hold us together, so we just drifted apart. And neither of us seemed to mind, or notice.

**Romance** sits in that space where friendship and fellowship overlap. Romance is both a form of friendship [personal affection] and a form of fellowship [beneficial sharing], neither of which are based on *αγάπη* (*agape*) love [un-reciprocal giving]. Romance is swapping. It's a mutual sharing of what we perceive as beneficial. But it is rarely based on anything but itself. Because it is not based in *αγάπη* (*agape*) love, romance always fades with time. In order for the relationship to last, someone has to develop *αγάπη* (*agape*) love. One of the "lovers" has to start giving expecting nothing in return. Only when that happens can a more superior fellowship emerge. Biblically, romance is designed to get us married (Jacob and Rachel, Ruth and Boaz, and Solomon with his Shulamite bride). But romance, even if it continues, will peak (usually around the time of marriage), and begin to decline. A marriage based in romance is doomed, because it is only a matter of time before you can be more romantic with someone else. But when one of the partners begins to exercise *αγάπη* (*agape*) love, which ideally begins before marriage, then a new kind of fellowship can emerge when the other partner unexpectedly does the same.

That makes marriage into a biblical fellowship, a strong partnership based on *αγαπη* (*agape*) love.



**Biblical Christian Fellowship** is a benefit which grows out of *αγαπη* (*agape*) love. Love is the root. Fellowship is the fruit. It can be disastrous if we get that tree turned upside down.



And it's what we often do. We tend to think if we focus on sharing things, love will come out of it. But that's not what Christ and the apostles taught. It's quite the other way around. Out of love, when it's *αγαπη* (*agape*) love, when it's giving expecting nothing in return, comes biblical fellowship.

But there is no guarantee that love will always generate fellowship. If there was such a guarantee, it would not be *αγαπη* (*agape*) love. **However, as we love by giving something of value to one another expecting nothing in return, someone unexpectedly and unnecessarily, in ways unanticipated and unpredicted, surprises us by reciprocating and giving something valuable in return. Love has then motivated mutual sharing. That's fellowship.**

Fellowship giving may be sacrificial, but it is in response to, or in expectation of, something of value from the other person or persons. Paul wrote the following about the monetary gift giving from the saints in Greece to *the saints in Jerusalem*.

*For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a **contribution** [a κοινωνία (*koinonia*) **fellowship**] for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things (Romans 15:26-27).*

Notice this is an act of fellowship because the predominately Gentile believers in Macedonia and Achaia were sharing (reciprocating) *material things* with the predominately Jewish believers in Jerusalem. Many Greek and Roman new believers were in Jerusalem after the church began. Many of them were proselytes to Judaism who came for the Passover and Pentecost (Acts 2:8-11). They wanted to stick around for a while and hear the apostles teach about Jesus. To make it possible for these Gentiles to receive *spiritual things* from the apostles, the Jewish believers sold various possessions and gave the money to the apostles to distribute to these new believers, so they would have food and lodging while they were in Jerusalem. Because of this gift, given expecting nothing in return, these Gentile believers went back to their cities and formed small churches across the Roman Empire. Apparently, it was money well spent.

The Jewish believers also gave them missionaries who brought the gospel. They did so at great risk, expecting nothing in return. It was an act of love. But now there was a famine in Jerusalem and the Jewish believers there needed help. So, because they had *shared spiritual things* with these Greek believers, the Greek believers took up a collection to send to Jerusalem to help the Jewish believers. And Paul calls that reciprocal sharing, *κοινωνία (koinonia) fellowship*.

# Chapter 7

## Rain

Eesha had her flight bag in her car. She brought it in case she was asked to plot an imaginary flight to somewhere. But now she needed it for real. It would be a short ride from Green Bay to Chicago's Midway International Airport in the CJ3. But with rain coming in, it would also be a complicated one to fly. Before she left Matt's office, she made several calls. She filed an IFR flight plan with an arrival procedure into Midway. She called the numbers Matt left her to arrange for a fuel truck and to have the Citation pulled out of the hangar. Then she called an FBO at Midway to arrange for a hangar and a courtesy car. She looked over the charts to familiarize herself with the waypoints she would likely be given and studied the various approaches into Midway on the instrument approach plates she downloaded on her iPad. She also looked closely at the taxiway chart. Other than on a simulator, she had only flown into Midway once before, and she could remember that the most confusing part was figuring out all the taxiways after she landed. Then she left for the airport.

Eesha had everything ready and was sitting in the cockpit of the CJ3 at 4:00 P.M. For the next half-hour she pored over the charts, memorizing the waypoints and approaches. She even dialed the O'Hare ATIS (Automatic Terminal Information Service) to learn the current winds and active runways being used. She knew they would assign her one of the ILS approaches, and with the ATIS information, she could review them as well.

It was just starting to rain when Matt drove up to the hangar at 4:45. He parked his truck in front, then walked through the hangar and out to the tarmac where he climbed up the steps into the airplane. He dropped a small bag he was carrying on a seat and strapped it in. Then he took out a thermos and walked to the cockpit. "Ready to go?" he asked as he slid into the co-pilot seat and buckled himself up.

"Yes, sir."

“Sir? What’s with the ‘sir’? I’m not a ‘sir.’”

“Sorry, I guess that’s an Indian thing. The British taught us to address them as ‘sir,’ so it’s just become sort of a custom. Anyway, we are ready, Mr. Jenkins.”

“That won’t due, either. Please, call me Matt.”

“Okay, wow, that’s going to seem weird, but okay, um, Matt.”

“That’s better. Go ahead and call ATC and pick up our clearance.”

After that, Matt said very little and did not help Eesha with anything. She got the clearance, started the engines, did all the preflight checks, taxied to the end of the runway, and took off. Immediately, the ground disappeared as they were enveloped in the dark rainy overcast. They were initially cleared to 10,000 feet and with the tremendous climb rate on the Citation, they soon poked through the overcast into a clear sunny sky at 8500 feet. They were finally cleared up to 16,000, but as they moved south, the clouds became darker and thicker. When they began their descent, they sank into the grey rainy darkness at 12,000 feet. From then on, it was all instruments. Eesha was busy keeping up with the ATC communications while dialing in the information that maneuvered the aircraft into position for the ILS (Instrument Landing System) approach to runway 31C.

Midway has three parallel northwest runways: 31L, 31C, and 31R. As they descended through the rainy darkness they could occasionally see the strobes and landing lights of an aircraft to their right who was on the ILS 31R approach. But not until they were 200 feet from the ground did they see anything else outside the airplane. Then suddenly, the REIL (Runway End Identifier Lights) appeared in the front window and Eesha settled the Citation gently down onto the rain covered runway. With no help from Matt, she taxied to the General Aviation area, and a flagman with red beam flashlights directed them to a parking place, where Eesha shut down the engines. Matt told Eesha to stay seated, then he went back to the cabin, opened the side door and greeted the flagman standing outside the door, who was wearing a heavy looking yellow rain suit.

“WE HAVE ROOM IN THE HANGAR,” the flagman yelled through the rain. “YOU WANT I SHOULD HOOK HER TO THE TUG AND PUSH YOU IN?”

“THAT’D BE GREAT, THANKS.” Matt yelled back, giving the man a friendly thumbs-up. Once in the hangar, they exited the CJ3 onto a dry spotless shiny gray floor. But they could hardly hear each other over the heavy rain pelting the metal roof of the hangar. “We’ll be about two hours,” Matt said, putting his head close to the attendant’s ear. “Okay to leave her here?”

“No problem. There is a courtesy car just out front, you can pick up the keys at the counter just down the hall through that door.” He pointed to his right.

Matt thanked him before they went in the direction the flagman had pointed. They picked up the keys. Matt told Eesha to wait until he brought the car to the door. After he drove up on the sidewalk, she ran to the car, spending only seconds in the rain. As they began to drive, Matt said, “Nice job. That was a busy approach, and you handled it like a real pro.”

“Thanks. So do I get the job?”

Matt started to laugh. “There are a few things we need to talk about, but I like your spirit,” *and the rest of you*, he thought to himself as he glanced over at her. Then he silently reprimanded himself and mentally told himself to stay on task. As they drove, they talked about the flight in and the complex taxiways at Midway. Eesha told him that she did some homework and memorized the taxiways before they left. When they arrived at the restaurant, a valet parked their car, and they ducked through the rain to the awning-covered entrance.

“This is a pretty fancy restaurant,” Eesha observed. “Are you sure we can get a table this time of day?”

“I’m sure,” Matt said, then gave his name to the attendant. “I did some homework of my own. We have a reservation for seven o’clock.” Then he looked at his watch. “Pretty close.” They were seated by a window where the relentless rain was streaming down the glass. They ordered coffee, and Matt ordered a sampler appetizer platter. “This place is known for its

steak, but they have good fish and chicken plates if you don't eat beef."

"I eat beef. I'd like a ribeye medium rare."

"Great. I thought maybe you were a Hindu, and don't they think cows are sacred?"

"Most of them do. But I'm not Hindu. I'm a Christian. A born again, Bible-believing Christian."

"Really!?"

"Yes, sir. I mean, yes, Mr. Jen...um, Matt. I was raised in the Carey Baptist Church in Calcutta. My parents are Hindu, but my uncle, the one whose money financed my education, led me to Christ when I was eight years old and took me with him to church. He was a deacon there."

"He sounds like a very generous man, your uncle."

"Yes, but he taught me something interesting about giving. As you probably know, Calcutta is full of poverty. People are living on the street, in the medians, and in the sewers everywhere. But my uncle said the focus of the Bible was never on the poor, but on the one giving to the poor. Of course, Jesus was the greatest giver in the Bible. But do you know who the next greatest giver was? If we don't count Jesus, who gave the biggest gift in the whole Bible?"

"I'm sure you are going to tell me."

"The poor widow who gave her last two copper coins. Jesus said she gave more than anyone. But her gift did nothing to cure poverty. So, the virtue of giving, say, to the poor, is not just about the poor. It's about the heart of the one who does the giving. Jesus' Good Samaritan story is about the Samaritan, not the one he helped. My uncle was a generous man, but he understood it was all about serving Jesus, not curing poverty."

"It sounds like you were very attached to your uncle."

"He led me to the Savior and the Word of God. I loved him more than I can say."

"Didn't that upset your parents?"

"Big time. He was my father's brother, and my father hated him. And that will be a problem if I return to India. My uncle had enough influence, and money, to keep me out of Hinduism. But if I return, my parents will pressure me to be a

Hindu and excommunicate me if I don't. Which, of course, I won't, so they will."

"We are Christians, too," Matt offered. "That is, the leadership people in our company are Christians. Our supervisors, my father, and I are Bible-believing Christians."

"I know."

"You do?"

"Yes, sir, I mean, yes. I did my homework on that, too. I found out that you were Christians by Googling Jenkins Equipment Company. Actually, some comments are pretty critical of you. Some say you only hire Christians and fire everybody else. That's why I applied to be a pilot for your company first. It's just that six other companies responded with an interview before yours."

"Sorry about that. But we aren't an exclusively Christian company. We hire people without regard for their beliefs, and we've never fired anybody because of their faith. It's just that for those of us managing the company, my father wanted believers."

After they ordered their meals, Eesha said, "So, do I get the job?"

"There are some problems."

"Problems? I can fix problems. If I have a problem, I will correct it. I'm good at self-correction. What's my problem?"

Matt chuckled again. "I just love your enthusiasm and eagerness. Eesha, if you want the job, it's yours."

"Yes! Yes!" She put her hands in the air as if signaling a football touchdown. She grabbed both of his hands and said, "Thank you, thank you, oh, Matt, thank you so much."

"But first you have to hear about the problem."

"Yes, I know. But I can fix it. I can change. I'm good at making changes."

"Eesha, it's not you. You are not the problem. I am." At that, Eesha just sat and looked intently at him, silently begging him to continue. "You remember I told you that my wife died six and a half years ago."

"Yes."

“Well, that’s not the whole story. She was shot, two times in the chest, and one bullet went through her heart. She died within minutes. It was a drug trade gone bad. The dealers began shooting at each other just as we walked out of a restaurant. My wife unknowingly walked right into the line of fire and was killed.”

“Oh, my. I’m so sorry.”

“There’s more. I carry a gun. When I saw the gunman, I pulled out my gun, shot, and killed him. I also shot his accomplice, but I only wounded him. The police followed the pretty clear blood trail and caught him about 30 minutes later. Turns out he was the brother of the guy I killed. The guy I wounded could only be connected to the drugs and not the shooting. He got 10 years and was released last month on parole. Two days after his release, I started getting life-threatening notes. I get two or three a week.”

“What do the notes say?”

“Things like: ‘I’ll get you,’ ‘Your life is over,’ ‘You’ll die for what you did,’ ‘Your son will soon disappear forever.’”

“Oh, dear. Can’t the police locate him?”

“Oh, they know where he is. As I said, he’s on parole. They keep close tabs on him. But they can’t prove he is connected to the threats. The notes are in letters cut from magazines, wiped clean of fingerprints or any DNA evidence. So, you see, here’s the problem. If you fly our Citation, you will be working closely with me. If my life is in danger, yours may be, too.”

“I see.”

“My wife traveled with me much of the time, just like you and I will do a lot, especially at the start. She had no aeronautical ratings, but she knew the CJ3 pretty well. She could file our flight plans and function efficiently as a co-pilot. But now the company needs a licensed pilot. The problem is, anyone I hire will also share my situation.”

“Surely you have taken safety precautions.”

“Oh, yes. We have obtained the services of a security company to place some really high-tech equipment in my home, the plant, and the hangar at the airport. We’ve also hired a se-

curity guard to accompany my son, basically anytime he is not with me, or one of the family members. We've taken precautions, but that's all they are. There's no guarantee we can keep you safe."

"I want the job, Matt. If I go back to India, my life is basically over anyway. And maybe I can help. I'm pretty observant."

"No, no. I don't want you involved in any of this. I want you as far removed from this investigation as possible. I just need you to fly. Unfortunately, much of the time, you have to do it with me."

Eesha reached across the table and took his hand before she said, "I want to fly your airplane, Matt. And, I'd love to fly it with you."

By the time Eesha and Matt had finished their dinner, the rain had quieted to a drizzle, and by the time they took off in the Citation, it was more of a mist. Nonetheless, the cloud cover was thick and now the sun had set, so their flight back was mostly zero visibility, and in the dark. They broke through into the moonlight for only a short time before they had to descend again into the murky blackness. As they began their approach to Green Bay, Matt put his hand on top of Eesha's, which was on top of the throttles. When she gave him a surprised look, he said, "I want to show you how I adjust the throttles as we enter an approach." After a few small adjustments, he removed his hand.

"Um...maybe you should leave your hand there." Eesha said it without looking at him, although she knew he was now looking intently at her. "I mean, maybe there are other adjustments you could show me during the whole approach. That way I would, well, um, be more familiar with your... adjustments." So he did. There were very few "adjustments," but by the time they reached the outer marker, their fingers had become laced together. When she could wait no longer, she moved her hand out from under his. "Sorry, I need to lower the gear and the flaps."

"Oh. Yes. Yes, of course."

The rest of the approach, the landing, and taxi to their hangar was done in a silence neither of them knew how to break. He thought he should say he was sorry for basically holding her hand during much of the flight, except he wasn't. She wanted to find a way to tell him how much she enjoyed his "adjustments," but everything she rehearsed in her head sounded silly. So they said nothing.

After the plane was secured and they were at the hangar door that led to the parking lot, Eesha said, "So when do I start my new job?"

"Immediately. I have to pick up some prospective clients in Colorado Springs tomorrow. If you are up to it, you fly and I'll ride co-pilot over and sit in back with the clients on the return trip."

"Yes! Great! When do we leave?"

"Seven o'clock in the morning. Have the plane fueled up and ready to leave at seven. That means you'll have to be here by six. Can you do that?"

"Of course. I'll see you at seven, then."

Matt watched her drive off before he turned to get in his truck to leave. As he approached it, he saw a note on the windshield. He removed it and read,

I SEE YOU HAVE A NEW GIRLFRIEND.  
PLAN ON HER BEING KILLED RIGHT AFTER I  
KILL YOUR SON."

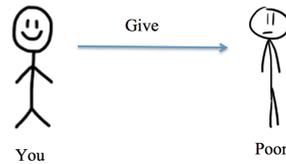
# Chapter 8

## Characteristic #3

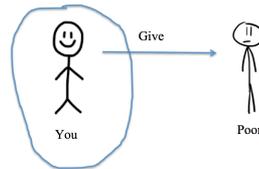
### Fellowship Sacrifices Something Valuable

In the Bible, when any gift is given by someone to someone else, whether it's a gift of love, which assumes no reciprocity, or a gift of fellowship, which is or assumes a reciprocated response, the focus is on the giver, not the receiver. The moral spiritual value is always what the giver gives, not what the receiver receives. It's never about meeting the needs of the needy but about the sacrifice of the one meeting the needs. The needs of the needy only provide an opportunity for the sacrifice of the one meeting the needs.

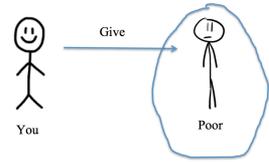
In giving, there is a subject who supplies a gift and an object who receives it. Let's say you, the subject of the giving, are in some way made aware of an object of need, someone, or some group of hurting people. They are poor or sick or in some way suffering. For example, according to the UN, one in eight people in the world don't get enough food. Or maybe it's an individual need. Like, say, when the "Good Samaritan" saw the beaten man on the road (Luke 10:33).



In the Bible, all the focus is on the giver. The moral value is on the sacrifice of the giver, not the needs of the receiver. Jesus said the widow who gave two small coins sacrificially *put in more* because she gave *out of her poverty* (Luke 12:41-44). The loans of the Mosaic Law were evaluated by the morality of the lender, not by meeting the needs of the borrower (Exodus 22:25). The focus of the Good Samaritan story is not on the man with the need but on the Samaritan who met his need.



The moral perversion of the satanic world system changes the focus from the giver to the receiver. The world defines morality with the idea that it's all about the ends, not the means. The change of focus from the subject to the object results in things like socialism. "What difference does it make" if we lie, deceive, or politicize the facts, just so the poor get a check. When the government redistributes wealth, then biblical morality is destroyed, because the virtue of the giver is eliminated. It's all about the poor.



Throughout the New Testament, *fellowship* [κοινωνία (*koinonia*)] is often connected to *sacrifice* [θυσία (*thusia*)] "an act of giving up something valued for the sake of something else regarded as more important or worthy" (New Oxford American Dictionary). The Greek word for *sacrifice* is primarily the idea of killing a valued animal, which you give up for the more worthy act of obeying God. This is the example of Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross. He gave up something of extreme value, His own life, for the sake of the greater value of obeying God.

**Ephesians 5:2** *and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice [θυσία (*thusia*)] to God as a fragrant aroma.*

Christian fellowship contains the idea that those involved in it mutually sacrifice something of value. The virtue of the fellowship is on the part of the subject, the person sacrificing.

**Hebrews 13:16** *And do not neglect doing good and sharing [κοινωνία (*koinonia*) fellowship], for with such sacrifices [θυσία (*thusia*)] God is pleased.*

Notice, the κοινωνία (*koinonia*) fellowship is connected with doing good in a sacrificial way. The good deed the author of Hebrews exhorts us to share [κοινωνία (*koinonia*) fellowship]

is something we consider of enough value that we have to sacrifice to share it.

Paul begins the application section of the book of Romans by exhorting believers

*...to present your bodies a living **sacrifice** [θυσία (*thusia*)] holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service (Romans 12:1 – KJV).*

A few verses later, he wrote,

*Be devoted to one another in brotherly love, give preference to one another in honor... **contributing** [κοινωνέω (*koinoneo*) fellowship] to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality (Romans 12:10, 13).*

Here, fellowship was an example of sacrifice. The NASB translates it *contributing* because fellowship involves the believer in giving something of value for meeting *the needs of the saints*. But his focus is on the one initiating the gift, not *the needs of the saints*. The needs of the saints provide an opportunity for fellowship.

Several times in his epistles, the Apostle Paul talked about giving (usually translated *sharing* or *contributing*), using the word κοινωνέω (*koinoneo*) *fellowship*.

- **Galatians 6:6** *The one who is taught the word is to share [κοινωνέω (*koinoneo*) fellowship] all good things with the one who teaches him.*
- **2 Corinthians 9:13** *Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution [κοινωνία (*koinonia*) fellowship] to them.*

In these examples, the focus of the contributing was on the contributors. The needs of the poor in Jerusalem were an opportunity for the Greeks to give back to them sacrificially with

*the liberality of your contribution [κοινωνία (koinonia) fellowship].*

This idea of fellowship through sacrifice is emphasized by Paul in his letter to the Philippians.

**Philippians 4:15** ... *no church **shared** [κοινωνέω (koinoneo) fellowshiped] with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone.*

This statement of gratitude is for a (probably monetary) gift of value. This gift was valuable enough to help Paul set aside his tent making and focus on his apostolic ministry. It was also a reciprocated gift, given because of what Paul had given them. And it was a sacrifice of something of value to them. So he calls it fellowship. But also notice that the reason Paul sought the gift was not because he needed the money. The value was in what it accomplished for the Philippians who gave it. The moral and spiritual value of the gift was in the giving not the receiving – the subject not the object.

**Philippians 4:17-18** *Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account. But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable **sacrifice**, well-pleasing to God.*

# Chapter 9

## The Fish Fry

Normally, Matt would only fly clients to the company about once a week or even less. But with Eesha on board, they could schedule more visits. Many companies were delighted to have their executives enjoy a free flight in a private jet and be given a tour of the Jenkins plant. With the competition for specialized heavy equipment being intense, these trips gave the Jenkins Equipment Company an edge. The flights were expensive, but the new orders far outweighed the cost of the flights. So over the next month, Matt and Eesha made two or three trips a week, flying clients back and forth from various cities around the USA to the Jenkins Equipment Company in Green Bay, Wisconsin. The plan was to transfer everything about the CJ3 over to Eesha by the end of the month. She also was given the job of keeping up with all the FAA inspections, which were an ongoing process with this airplane.

Most trips were over and back in the same day, but some trips took two days, with the clients staying overnight in Green Bay. Then, on any weekday Matt was in town, he would pick up Ben from school. But on trips where the clients returned the same day, Eesha and Matt would often return to Green Bay quite late. On those days, Ben would be picked up by, and spend the night with, his grandparents.

The first time that happened, Matt asked Eesha if she would like to go out for a late dinner, since they had not eaten much all day. He made sure to clarify that this was “not a date” but just an opportunity to get a hot meal. Matt liked a restaurant a few blocks from the airport, and being as how it was a nice evening, they walked.

At dinner, they talked about the day, the trips scheduled for the next few weeks and inspections due on the CJ3. They also got into more personal things. Eesha told him more about her childhood in India, and he about his in Green Bay. They also compared what it was like to become a Christian at about the same age and the difference between what that looked like

in Calcutta vs. Green Bay. Matt talked about having parents who are believers. Eesha shared the difficulties of continually fighting the Hinduism of her family, her only Christian fellowship being with her one Christian uncle and the friends she made at the Baptist Church in Calcutta.

During their walk back to the airport, their hands brushed together until their fingers found each other, resulting in actual, undeniable, hand-holding. After that, the hand-holding became more frequent, blatant, and intentional.

As the transitional month came to an end, it was clear that Eesha was ready to take on full responsibility for the CJ3. That meant flying in the clients without Matt. During the month, Eesha began thinking a lot more about her situation. She found herself not only eager to fly the Citation, but also interested in developing her relationship with Matt. At first, she loved the flying, then she came to resent the fact that the flying and the business were all they talked about. The flying she loved was getting in the way of the relationship she wanted.

She suddenly realized something that for some reason had never occurred to her before. The fact that she was contributing something of value to the company put her somehow in harness with Matt, as if they were horses pulling together on the same chariot. And without this mutually beneficial involvement, they would have had no relationship at all. Actually, the fact that they were doing something together, instead of focusing on each other, is why they were getting closer. They were developing a sort of fellowship based on mutual participation.

Her involvement was also becoming essential. Matt was being increasingly pressured to take full control of the company by a father who acted like he was already retired, putting more time into several other projects he already had in motion.

So the day came when, as they were putting their things in the aircraft for another flight, Matt told Eesha, "This may be our last trip together."

"Really?" Eesha was, of course, excited about the opportunity to fly clients on her own. She also knew that meant

she would not see Matt on a daily basis. But somehow the reality of that all of a sudden hit her like a slap in the face.

“Really. You are more than capable of taking on this responsibility by yourself. Not only can you fly the airplane efficiently, but the clients love you. You have an unusual knack of putting them at ease and giving them confidence in you as a pilot. By the end of a trip, they look at you as a friend, and that’s good for business. I’m convinced you don’t just bring customers in, you actually help make the sale.”

“Wow. Thank you. I certainly hope so. But that also means I won’t see you, as much any more, right?”

“At any rate, not all day in the air, but we will run into each other at the office from time-to-time.”

“From time-to-time,” Eesha repeated the words slowly. She just got the job she was waiting for, yet she was feeling like she lost what she was longing for.

“Yes, but...”

“But?”

“Well, I was wondering about something. I would like you to get to know my son, Ben. You met him once in the office briefly. I noticed that you ordered lake trout at two different restaurants, and Ben loves lake trout. I was thinking we could have a fish fry at my house next Saturday evening. That way you and Ben could spend some time together doing something you both enjoy.”

“That sounds delightful, but...”

“What? It’s not like a date or anything, I just want you to meet Ben.”

“No, that’s not it. It’s just that I’m not so sure, well, I mean, what if he doesn’t like me?”

“Of course, he’ll like you. Why wouldn’t he like you?”

“I’m afraid he’ll see me as taking you away from him, and he doesn’t know anyone like me. Does he really want you to be spending time with, you know, a girl who is...brown, and...from India?”

“Are you kidding me? Kids are color blind. You’re beautiful and charming. I’ve seen you charm the socks off stiff, starched, uppity executives and had them eager to fly with a

woman pilot, and yes, one from India. Anyway, that's not the problem when it comes to Ben."

"Oh, but, so there is a problem?"

"Yeah. You want something to worry about? Here's a problem for you to worry about. He wants a mom so bad he can taste it. He will probably ask you to marry me. He and my mother are in cahoots to find me a wife ASAP."

"Oh, my. Well, I, I mean, if you think he'll like me, I'd really love to come. I'll just be, I mean, I might be, kind of nervous. Can I bring anything?"

"Nope. We'll get everything. You just have to show up, help make it, and eat."

\*\*\*\*\*

Eesha changed clothes three times before leaving for the fish fry. Finally, she deciding on just blue jeans and a tan blouse with a light navy jacket. She wore her hair in a long ponytail with only her usual touch of makeup. Then she grabbed her smaller purse and left her apartment. But as she approached her car, she saw a piece of folded paper on the windshield. She looked around, and seeing no one, she cautiously opened the paper and read,

**YOU SHOULD NOT HAVE TAKEN THE JOB  
NOW YOU WILL DIE WITH THE REST OF THEM**

She wrinkled the paper into a ball and stuffed it in her pocket, then got in the car and sat for a few minutes to calm down. She believed in the God of the Bible and that He was sovereign over everything. It wasn't like things were out of His control. But she also wanted to *do* something, something to help Matt. She also knew their relationship would be on hold as long as this remained unresolved. So she closed her eyes and prayed, asking God for some way to resolve these threats. After that, she felt more peaceful and determined to have a good evening.

Eesha put Matt's address in her phone's GPS and followed it to a rural area 10 miles west of Green Bay, and finally to a farmhouse she considered far too old, small, and unimpressive for a man about to become the president of a company as large as Jenkins Equipment. She approached the door with more fear than she felt from the note on her car. But with one ring of the doorbell, everything changed.

Ben opened the door with. "Wow! You look beautiful, we're about to start cooking. HEY, DAD, EESHA'S HERE. Dad's in the kitchen. It's right through here. Come on, I'll show you."

Eesha was pulled by the hand through the living room and an open door into the kitchen. Matt, standing by the sink with his back to her, looked over his shoulder and said, "You got salad duty. Ben's right, you really look nice. The veggies are on the counter there, knives in the drawer there. Get to cutting and mixing. Ben, that stove is hot enough, get those fish in the pan, and don't leave them in too long this time. Eesha, the salad bowls are in the cupboard above my head here, use the wooden ones. Ben, don't splash that hot oil when you put the fish in."

Eesha was then told to set the table, take the bread out of the oven, and help Ben with the fish. She was involved in the process so fast that she forgot all about being nervous. When they finally sat down to eat, the three of them held hands, Matt offered a prayer of thanksgiving for the food and for Eesha being in their lives. Matt barely got an "Amen" out of his mouth before Ben started asking questions.

"Do they play basketball in India?"

"Yes, some, but not as much as here."

"Have you ever played basketball?"

"No. Women's sports are pretty slow getting started in India."

"What sports do you have there?"

"Well, we have football, but it's what you call soccer."

"You call soccer, football? Weird."

"And we have cricket."

"You have crickets? We have crickets."

“No, well, yes, we have crickets, but I mean it’s a game called cricket. It’s kind of like baseball except it’s played with a flat bat called a wicket.”

“Super weird.”

“Do you play basketball, Ben?”

“Yeah, but I’m no good at it.”

“So, Ben, what do you like to do better than anything else?”

“Fly my Dad’s airplane.”

“Me, too.” This was followed with a series of flying stories and statistics about the CJ3, all told by Ben and Eesha. Matt was basically left out of the conversation. Two times he tried interjecting a story of his own and was ignored by both of them as they continued responding to each other’s stories and comments. At one point, Ben disagreed with Eesha about the speed of the CJ3 at its altitude limits, forcing a bet of one dollar between them. This took Ben to Safari on his cell phone with proof that he was right. Eesha, faking a pout, dug a dollar out of her purse and handed it to Ben.

“You know what I get to do?” Eesha said, holding on tightly to the dollar bill until Ben was forced to pull it out from her fingers. “I get to fly it all by myself starting next week.”

“Can I go?”

“Go? You mean with me? Flying? Well, I mean, I guess that’s up to your father.” Two sets of eyes were now glaring at Matt.

“I...aaah...you mean like on a trip?”

“I have a one-day trip Monday, a short hop to Indianapolis and back. What do you think?” Both still staring at Matt.

“Well, I ... he has school on Monday.”

“A day off won’t hurt anything, Dad. I get all A’s, well, okay, I got a B in history. Okay, and one in math, but that’s just temporary and it’s because Mrs. Bixby hates me. I’ll get an A next time. Come on, Dad, please! I haven’t flown the Citation in over a month. I’m feeling grounded. I’m becoming a nerd. I need to get in the air. She’s a great pilot, right?”

“Yes, of course, but.” Matt looked at Eesha, then at Ben, then back at Eesha, four eyes pleading with him. “Oh, all right. You can...”

“Yaaaaaaaaah!”

“...go. But Ben you can’t land the airplane with clients on board. Eesha DO NOT let him land the airplane, he’ll drive you nuts about it.”

After dinner, they all participated in the cleanup. Then they made some microwave popcorn and went into the den, where they watched a James Bond movie Matt had rented. Ben was focused on the first half of the story, but he fell asleep on the couch before the end. Matt excused himself and carried him up to bed. When he returned, Eesha had put on her jacket and was standing by the door.

“You don’t need to go, we can have a coffee and finish the movie. 007 might not survive this time. He was in a lot of trouble, you know.”

“I think I’ll have to risk it. It’s late and I should get going. But thanks for a wonderful evening. I don’t think I have ever had such a good time.” He walked her to her car and opened the door for her. She glanced quickly at her windshield to see if there was another note. There wasn’t. Then she turned to thank Matt one more time but when her eyes met his, the words wouldn’t come out. They looked into each other’s eyes for a moment, then Matt slipped his arm around her waist and pulled her closer. As their noses touched, her eyes widened, and Matt was afraid she would panic. So he backed up quickly.

“Thank you for coming,” he was finally able to say. “I’ll see you, ‘um, Monday, I guess.”

“Yes. Monday. Yes. Good night, Matt. Thank you for tonight. I, I guess I said that. I’ll see you Monday. I guess I said that, too.”

“Yes, Monday,” he repeated. With that, she got in her car and drove slowly away. She drove for five minutes, then pulled the car over and stared out the window. Then she began pounding on the steering wheel with her fists.

“Idiot. You IDIOT.” She spoke out loud to herself in Hindi. “You were supposed to get a flying job. You were sup-

posed to fly an airplane. You were even supposed to put up with things like the threatening notes. You were NOT supposed to fall in love with your boss.”

# Chapter 10

## Characteristic #4

### Fellowship Is Participation

### In Something Beyond Ourselves

Fellowship is participation with others. It's involvement in each other's lives. But it's also about something outside of either of us. It's not just like sitting at a table facing each other. It's more like walking arm-in-arm, going in the same direction. It's being harnessed together, pulling the same plow, pushing the same cart, sailing the same ship. It's when we take part in something together. Amos rhetorically asked, *Do two men walk together unless they have made an appointment?* (Amos 3:3). His point is, men don't just walk together for the heck of it. There is some reason, something they have made an appointment to do together. It could be something as simple as participating in a hunting trip or a trip to the mall. It could also be something more complex, like campaigning for or against abortion, gun control, or the victory of some political party. Whatever the object, project, or cause that has our attention, fellowship mutually shares participation in that effort.

Christian fellowship is a partnership for the glory of God. A partner is "a person who takes part in an undertaking with another or others...with shared risks and profits" (New Oxford American Dictionary). Christian fellowship is participating in something together, which involves some objective beyond the believers, often including shared risks and profits.

#### **1. Fellowship includes our participation with Jesus Christ.**

In the following examples, the apostles used the word *κοινωνία* (*koinonia*) which we translate *fellowship* in some (at least for me) unexpected ways. The word includes a description of our involvement, in the sense of taking part together, i.e.,

participating, with Christ in two areas, the bread and cup of Communion and His suffering.

1) **We fellowship with Christ in His death by remembering it with Communion.**

**1 Corinthians 10:16** *Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a **sharing** [κοινωνία (koinonia) fellowship] in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a **sharing** [κοινωνία (koinonia) fellowship] in the body of Christ?*

Of course, we are not fellowshiping with Christ in the sense that He needs something. But we can give Him our gratitude and our worship, and by taking the bread and the cup, we can *proclaim the Lord's death until He comes* (1 Corinthians 11:26).

2) **We fellowship with Christ in His suffering.**

- **Philippians 3:10** *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the **fellowship** [κοινωνία (koinonia)] of His sufferings*
- **1 Peter 4:13** *but to the degree that you **share** [κοινωνέω (koinoneo) fellowship] the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.*
- **Revelation 1:9** *I, John, your brother and **fellow partaker** [συγκοινωνός (sugkoinonos) one who fellowships together] in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus*

We can join with Jesus in suffering because keeping His commandments, denying ourselves, and following Him will thrust us into suffering for the same thing He did, representing light in the midst of a world of darkness.

**2. Fellowship includes participation in the gospel.**

Fellowship is used for two aspects of participating in the gospel:

**1) We fellowship in the gospel when we financially support those who minister.**

- **Philippians 1:3-7** *I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your **participation** [κοινωνία (koinonia) fellowship] in the gospel from the first day until now... I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are **partakers** [συγκοινωνός (sugkoinonos) fellowship-ers together] of grace with me.*
- **2 Corinthians 8:3-4** *For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of **participation** [κοινωνία (koinonia) fellowship] in the support of the saints.*

**2) We fellowship in the gospel in the sense of participating in the eternal Kingdom of God.**

- **Romans 11:17** *But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became **partaker** [συγκοινωνός (sugkoinonos) to fellowship together] with them...*
- **1 Corinthians 9:23** *I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a **fellow partaker** [συγκοινωνός (sugkoinonos) one who fellowships together with others].*

**3. Fellowship is a partnership with other believers, but not unbelievers or false believers.**

In Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas were partners with James, Peter, and John, having the idea that just as they went to the Jews

first with the gospel, and now Paul and Barnabas would go to the Gentiles. And Paul calls this partnership *fellowship* [κοινωνία (*koinonia*)].

**Galatians 2:9** ...recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of *fellowship* [κοινωνία (*koinonia*)], so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

This word is also equated with *partnership* (NASB) in a negative sense of not partnering with unbelievers.

**2 Corinthians 6:14** Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what *fellowship* [κοινωνία (*koinonia*)] has light with darkness?

Paul uses this same word for fellowship when he tells Timothy not to approve someone as a leader too quickly because if the new leader sins, it would amount to a partnership with a sinner.

**1 Timothy 5:22** Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby *share* [κοινωνέω (*koinoneo*) fellowship] (responsibility) for the sins of others.

The Apostle John gave a similar warning about participating with false teachers.

**2 John 10-11** If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting *participates* [κοινωνία (*koinonia*) fellowship] in his evil deeds

We can, therefore, conclude *fellowship* [κοινωνία (*koinonia*)] also includes being arm-in-arm with fellow believers in a way that we should not be with unbelievers. Such participation with other brothers and sisters in Christ includes risks we take personally, and rewards we receive personally, which are accomplished by partnering together.

# Chapter 11

## The Delivery

Monday's flight, when Ben accompanied Eesha to Indianapolis, was delightful for both of them. It was a near perfect day, and the two had a great time. Although the cockpit of a business jet might be an odd place to have fellowship, they used it for bonding an acquaintance into a friendship. Ben, from his position on top of three cushions, did beg and plead for Eesha to let him land the Citation. But she stuck to her promise to Matt and only allowed him to follow her on the controls, the ones he could reach. This, however, was followed by multiple points of advice as to how she could improve her approach and landing technique by slowing up the airplane and using more flaps. Although when she returned him to his father at the shop, Ben was full of nothing but praises for Eesha's flying.

On Tuesday, Eesha had another short flight, this time to Flint, Michigan. It was a one-day turn-around where she brought four industrial planners from the city of Flint to the plant in Green Bay, with a return scheduled for 4:00 P.M. the same afternoon. After they arrived at 10:30 in the morning, Eesha had a few hours with nothing to do, so she drove to the nearest Starbucks for a latte and a blueberry scone. As she settled into a small table, a good-looking man in his mid-30's sat down in the chair across from her. He smiled and said, "Good morning."

"I'm sorry, I'm not looking for company. I just want to drink my coffee and do some reading," Eesha said, holding up her iPad.

"I'm not trying to pick you up, Ms. Ghattamaneni. I have a business proposition for you."

"What? Why would you... Who are you and how do you know my name?" Very few people in Green Bay knew her name, and even fewer could pronounce it correctly.

"Oh, I know lots of things, Eesha. One of the things I know is you are hurting financially. You have a good job flying a Cessna Citation for the Jenkins Equipment Company, but it's

a new job, and apart from that, you're flat broke. You are driving a 17-year-old car with over 243,000 miles on it, and you couldn't pay the rent on your apartment until you got your first paycheck. But I have a solution for you. This afternoon, you will be returning some passengers to Flint, Michigan. I have a package I would like you to deliver. It's a small carryon bag, the size you might take into the cabin on an airline flight. You simply transport it to Flint and hand it to a man there, and he will hand you an envelope with \$2,000 cash in it."

"Use Fed Ex. It's cheaper."

The man began to laugh quietly. "This delivery needs to be there today, and its nature is...sensitive."

Eesha began to panic. Then she thought for a minute. She looked at the man for another minute. Then she said, "Two thousand dollars. That's it? Nothing else? No strings attached?"

"Two thousand dollars. No strings attached."

"Have the package at the airport at 3:30. I assume you know which hangar."

"Yes, but I don't have a card to get through the security gate."

"Okay, I'll meet you just outside the general aviation security gate. You can give me the package then."

"See you then, Ms. Ghattamaneni. Oh, and you understand that you should tell no one about this delivery. No one. Not the police, not your boss, not a friend, no one. Is that clear?"

"Yeah, I got it. I'm to tell no one." With that, the man got up and walked out the door.

Eesha knew they would follow her. Her plan was not to lose them but to give them no reason to doubt her. So she finished her scone, sipped her latte, and read a novel on her iPad for another half hour. Then she drove slowly back to the Jenkins Equipment Company, parked her Ford Festiva, which was 17-years-old with, she looked down to check, 243,275 miles on it, and entered the small office she had been given at the plant. She got out a piece of paper, wrote a note on it, and buzzed Mildred, asking her if she would please come over, immediately. When Mildred arrived, Eesha greeted her and commented

on how nice she looked today while she handed her a folded piece of paper. On the outside of the paper were the words,

Don't say anything about this note. Please just give it to Matt immediately. It's urgent.

Mildred looked confused. Eesha nodded with a pleading look and asked a vague question about some paper work from the FAA. Then Mildred also nodded, gave an equally vague answer, and left the room. She then went out to the floor of the plant, something Mildred rarely did. Seeing Matt talking with the guests from Flint, she walked over to him and handed him the note. She only said, "Excuse me, Matt, but something urgent has come up," Matt thanked her, and she walked away. Then he unfolded the note and read,

Meet me in the women's restroom immediately,  
do not let anyone see you enter, it's crucial,  
E.

Looking up from the note, Matt said, "Sorry, gentlemen, something has come up that requires my attention. It should only take a few minutes. I will return shortly. Jerry will guide you through the main construction area. I will rejoin you at the other end." With that, he walked to an area where the group touring the plant could not see him. From there, he moved as inconspicuously as possible to the women's restroom. Until Eesha came on board, Mildred was the only woman who worked full time, and there was another restroom in the office area, so the woman's restroom in the plant was only used when female guests toured the plant. Nonetheless, Matt knocked before pushing the door open. Immediately, his hand was grabbed, and he was pulled into the room. Eesha then pushed the door closed and locked it.

"Eesha, I have a group of important customers in the plant, and this is hardly the place for... anything. So if this can wait..."

“This can’t wait, and this is the only place I could think of. I have, a situation. I went to Starbucks this morning, and a man approached me about carrying a package for him to Flint. He said he’d give me \$2000 cash just for delivering it.”

“Eesha, that could be drugs.”

“Well, of course it’s drugs, you dunce! That’s why I agreed to do it.”

“YOU WHAT!?! Eesha, that’s crazy, you’ll put yourself in danger.”

“We are already in danger. You, me, and especially Ben. Neither you, nor I, nor the police have a clue on what to do about the threatening notes we are receiving.”

“We?”

“Yes, I got one, too.”

“Oh, no. I never should have...”

“And this is an invitation to get our foot in the door.”

“How do you know this has anything to do with that?”

“I don’t, but it’s clearly drugs, and the people who killed your wife were drug people. There may be a direct connection, and even if there isn’t, somebody will know something we don’t, or how to make the right connections. Here’s what I want you to do. Call your contact with the police and tell them what I’m doing so I don’t get arrested for drug smuggling. When I get back, I’ll give them the money and report on what happened.”

“This is transporting drugs across state lines, so it will probably involve the Feds.”

“Good. Call the FBI or the CIA or whoever. Tell them I can be their plant.”

“No, Eesha, you are a pilot, not a narcotics agent. Let them handle it.”

“They have no way in, I was just handed a way in. Matt, we have no way out of this constant threatening situation. It could go on forever, or worse, someone could kill you or kidnap Ben, or me. Neither you nor the police can do anything but get more security, which will not stop these people. If your security cannot stop the notes, then it can’t stop them. They have the edge.

But if I become a carrier, we have a foot in the door. Okay, so maybe it's a long shot, but it's our only shot."

"I never should have hired you and put you in this mess."

"Now you look here, buster," she said grabbing him by his shirt and pulled his face down close to hers, "You told me what I was getting into, and I wanted the job anyway. And now it's more. I care about you and Ben, so knock off the sympathy crap. I decided to be in. And I'm in. Now you need to support me in this and stop moaning about my situation."

Matt looked at her for a minute. She looked both beautiful and business-like with her pants suit, her hair gathered into a bun behind her head, and big brown eyes staring into his with determination. Unable to fault her logic, and without saying anything more to her, he took out his phone and dialed his contact at the local police station. After a brief explanation, he pressed the off button but held the phone in his hand.

"What?"

"We wait."

"For what?"

"A call from the FBI."

"You're mad at me, aren't you?"

"No."

"Yes, you are."

"It's not about being mad at you."

"But your mad anyway."

"Eesha, we should discuss this some place where we can look at all the possibilities before you jump into a dangerous situation."

"I guess the women's restroom isn't the best place to discuss this."

"The place doesn't matter."

"You just said it did."

"No, I meant..."

"I couldn't think of any other place, and you had to know right away."

"Eesha, I told you, the place doesn't matter, we could discuss it any place. I just don't want you in harm's way. I'm

trying to keep you safe and out of the line of fire, then you go and jump right into the middle of it.”

His phone rang with the call from the FBI. After he answered by identifying himself, Matt just listened, then he explained the situation again, then he listened some more, then he said “Uh-huh” several times, then “Yeah, I got it,” clicked off, and put the phone back in his pocket.

“What’d they say?”

“Well, I don’t like it, but, you’re right. They not only agreed, they are excited to have someone on the inside. They said you should make the drop. They will have someone watching the CJ3 as it lands in Flint, then follow you until you are contacted and make the exchange. Hopefully, it’s to make sure you are not shot or kidnapped or something. When you return, you are to go to the Logan’s Restaurant downtown here in Green Bay and sit at the bar. A female FBI agent will be posing as a bar tender. You will give the money to her, and she will give you further instructions.”

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At 3:30 that afternoon, Eesha drove up to the general aviation airport entrance gate. She waited only two minutes before the man she had met at Starbucks drove up behind her. He handed her a black carryon-sized bag and said, “There is nothing in this bag. It’s just to make sure no police show up. If they do, we will know you talked to them. We will just wait here a few minutes to be sure. Then I will drive away and see if I am stopped on the way out. You will go through the gate with this empty bag. Then, if no one shows up, you will return here and put this bag in that dumpster over there and take out an identical bag with the package in it to be delivered to Flint this afternoon. When you arrive, you will go to the main terminal and take a seat in the restaurant. Someone will meet you there, take the package, and give you an envelope with \$2000 in hundred dollar bills.”

Eesha did as instructed, exchanged bags, and took the real one to Flint, along with her returning passengers. After

saying goodbye to the guests and thanking them for coming, Eesha took the black carryon bag and walked toward the terminal. She made her way to the airport's only sit-down restaurant and found an empty table. Almost immediately, a young man carrying a similar black bag sat down next to her. He looked to be under 20, thin, with curly brown hair, wearing casual, but expensive, looking clothes. "I have ordered something to go," he said. "When they bring it, I will take your bag and leave the one I brought in. But you must sit here for about 20 minutes and eat something before you leave."

When a waitress brought his to-go order, the young man laid an envelope on Eesha's lap under the table, took his order and left with the bag she had carried in. Eesha ordered a chicken croissant and a coke, then nibbled on it, hoping to stretch it into a 20-minute process. As it turned out, that was easier and more annoying than she thought. As soon as she started nibbling, a middle-aged salesman sat down next to her and began an all too friendly, way too boring, conversation which she was forced to endure until she figured she had put in enough of her 20 minutes.

Then she followed through with the plan. She flew the empty CJ3 back to Green Bay, secured the airplane in the hangar and drove downtown to the Logan's Roadhouse restaurant where she perched herself on a barstool making sure she was not sitting next to anyone. The staff all seemed busy, and she sat uncomfortably for nearly five minutes before a female bartender came to wait on her. Setting a coke in front of her, a small lady with short brown hair said, "So how did it go, Ms. Ghattamaneni? Were you able to make the drop?"

"Yes, it went fine, I guess. I had to put up with an annoying salesman while waiting to leave, but other than that it went fine."

"That salesman was our agent."

"Oh. Wow. I didn't see that coming. I didn't notice him in the terminal."

"He watched you from the moment you left the aircraft until you returned to it."

“Amazing. I had no idea. I have the money right here in an envelope.”

“Don’t hand it to me. I will bring you a bag that will look like a takeout order. Look through it and complain that we gave you the wrong salad. While your hand is in the bag, place the envelope in it. I will take the bag and leave as if exchanging the salad. When I return with the bag, you are free to leave. We expect they will use you to make other drops for them quite soon. They are transporting hard drugs across the Canadian border, mostly from Iraq. They are depositing heroin here in Green Bay, then using people like you to distribute it across the country. We want to watch them long enough to get the distributor, if not the whole family behind it.”

“There were a few times I got nervous. As a rule, they don’t check the corporate pilots coming in to the general aviation lounge, but if they did, I would be arrested for carrying drugs. I need a way to prove I’m with you guys.”

“I have a phone number that will clear you immediately. If you are arrested or detained by any authorities, do not resist. Let them take you to their headquarters and calmly explain what you are doing. Then call, or have them call, this number. I will write the number on a piece of paper, but you must memorize it right now. Understood?”

Eesha nodded, memorized the number, then made a phony complaint about a phony salad, waited for her phony bartender to return, then left with her phony takeout order.

# **Chapter 12**

## **Characteristic #5**

### **Christian Fellowship Is Not About a Place or an Activity**

Christian fellowship, as described by the apostles in the New Testament, is not about going to church, attending a Bible study, meeting with friends, or being involved in Christian activities. Christian fellowship may or may not take place at any of those places. Christian fellowship is not about any certain type of meeting, event, or activity. And it's not about having coffee and snacks between meetings. Christian fellowship could take place at a ballgame, on a hunting or fishing trip, while dining at a restaurant, shopping at the mall, having a barbecue, or just hanging out. It could be when guys are joking around with each other or women are talking about their children or grandchildren. Fellowship may or may not happen at any of those places or events, but it is not determined by the place or the event.

Jesus Christ's relationship with His disciples was not primarily one of fellowship. It was more of a one-way giving than a two-way sharing. He was teaching, being an example, carrying out the work of His Father, and they were following and learning. But it was also a preparation for their future ministry in the upcoming church age, which would be one of fellowship. So how and where He taught them was an example for them. When the disciples and their converts began to spread the gospel and fellowship with one another, they used the same places for ministry that Jesus did – wherever they happened to be. Let's look at some specific places Jesus carried out His ministry.

#### **On the Road**

One of the examples Christ gave the apostles, as a place to have fellowship, was on the road, as they walked (Matthew 20:30; 21:19; Luke 9:57; 24:32, 35).

**Mark 10:32** *They were on the **road** going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was **walking** on ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful. And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him.*

## **On a Mountain**

Sometimes Jesus called His disciples away to a mountain. It was on a mountain that He named them as apostles, taught them “The Sermon on the Mount,” “The Olivet Discourse,” and gave them examples of serving and teaching others (Matthew 15:29; 17:1; 28:16; Mark 3:13).

- **Matthew 5:1** *When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the **mountain**; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him.*
- **Matthew 24:3** *As He was sitting on the **Mount of Olives**, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”*

## **In a Boat**

There are far too many of these examples to list them here, but suffice it to say that Jesus ministered to His disciples regularly in a boat.

**Luke 8:22** *Now on one of those days Jesus and His disciples got into a **boat**, and He said to them, “Let us go over to the other side of the lake.”*

## **While They Were Fishing**

Four of the disciples made their living by fishing, so naturally they were often doing that when they encountered Jesus. One notable time was after Jesus’ death and resurrection.

**John 21:3** *Simon Peter said to them, “I am going **fishing**.” They said to him, “We will also come with you.”*

This is when Jesus appeared on the beach just north of the Sea of Galilee and told them to cast their nets on the other side of

the boat, with the result that they had a great catch of fish. Next, Jesus cooked breakfast for them on the beach. After that, He taught them about prioritizing Him and becoming fishers of men.

It's clear that Jesus gave the apostles ministry examples, demonstrating that fellowship could take place anywhere and everywhere they happened to be. The place (the road, the mountain, the lake), and the other events they were involved in at the time (walking, talking, fishing) did not dictate, direct, or destroy an opportunity for fellowship.

### **Does Acts 2:42 Define a Place for Fellowship?**

Many churches use Acts 2:42 as substantiation for focusing, and often by implication restricting, fellowship to church gatherings. Let's have a look at it in its context. Here is Acts 2:41-46 with verse 42 in bold.

*So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. **They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship [κοινωνία (koinonia)], to the breaking of bread and to prayer.** Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart...*

Notice the context for verse 42. *About three thousand souls* were added to the church after Peter preached in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. That took place on **the streets of Jerusalem** where the *Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem* could hear Peter (verse 14). This was not a church meeting. Then those 3,000 were baptized. Where that took place is un-

known, but no prescribed gathering is mentioned. The most likely assumption would be **wherever there was water**, possibly at the Pool of Bethesda, the Pool of Siloam, or the Gihon Springs.

After verse 42, we have a mention of the *wonders and signs* [which] *were taking place through the apostles*. Clearly, that was **throughout the city**. Then they began selling their property to supply the needs of those who stayed to hear the apostles teach. That occurred **where they had property to sell**. Verse 46 tells us of the only two places where they gathered. One was in the **Temple in Jerusalem** and the other was **from house to house**, for the purpose of *taking their meals together*. Of the four activities mentioned in verse 42: (1) the *apostles' teaching* (2) *fellowship* [κοινωνία (*koinonia*)], (3) *breaking of bread* and (4) *prayer*, only # (3) *breaking bread* was **from house to house**. It is actually the only activity mentioned as taking place in homes, obviously many homes, since it accommodated thousands of people. The point is, the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer were not confined to any specific location.

This is not to say fellowship did not occur when the church assembled. Surely, it did. The point is that there is no designation of that assembly as a unique, specific, or special place for fellowship. It's just a place and an activity, like any place or activity that might be, or might not be, accompanied by fellowship.

By way of application, we should recognize that fellowship **does not** happen by sitting in an auditorium listening to a speaker, or in a classroom listening to a teacher. These meetings are always focused on a speaker, a presentation, or study material, none of which include fellowship (unless you start whispering to one another during the meeting). The people in the audience are participating in something together, but there is no mutual sharing of anything beneficially reciprocated between each other. If you attend a mega-church or take a class in

college or attend a Christian conference or seminar, you may not even know the person sitting next to you. If that's what you are doing for fellowship, you probably aren't having any.

# Chapter 13

## The Confession

With Eesha flying in more customers, The Jenkins Equipment Company had more orders for specialized heavy equipment. But this week, Eesha had only one trip scheduled on Monday, and the rest of the week was dedicated to getting the Citation through its annual inspection, plus the inspections necessary to recertify the on-board avionics.

They each received another threatening note. On Monday, Matt found one written on a two-foot square piece of cardboard in the parking lot next to his car. On Tuesday, Eesha found a similar one propped up outside the door of her apartment. They mentioned the notes to each other but had very little time to talk about them.

On Wednesday, Ben had a field trip at school which kept him out until 9 P.M., so Matt asked Eesha out for dinner at the Waterfront Restaurant, once again assuring her it was “not a date, just food.” They talked shop. Matt told her about an unusual machine they were building that placed pilings in a ravine for a railroad bridge in Colorado. Between mouthfuls of prime rib, he said, “We will build each part in the plant then put it together in our assembly yard, making sure everything works properly. Next, we will take it all apart again, load the parts on semi-truck flatbed trailers equipped to carry over-sized loads. Then we will drive them to Colorado and reassemble them at the job site.”

“That sounds like an expensive process.”

“It is, but it’s worth the effort. We need to be absolutely sure it will all operate as promised when we assemble it on the job site.”

“What do they do with a machine like that when the bridge is complete?”

“They sell it to somebody else building something similar. Actually, we sometimes buy it back from them and resell it, modifying it to fit the new customer. It makes it easier for them to unload a huge clumsy apparatus they no longer need, and it

helps us control the market. And your role is crucial in all of that because you can fly potential new customers from all over the country to a city near the job. From there we can just drive them out to the site and show them first-hand how we would modify the machine to meet their needs. Then you can fly them home, giving them all they need to make a decision in one day. No other company building this kind of equipment can do that.”

“I can’t tell you how thrilled I am to be part of all this.”

“A crucial part. And you don’t just transport people, you make them your friends. It’s a plus we never counted on. They love having you fly them in. I’ve received several emails from customers saying how much they enjoyed flying with you.”

“Wow, that’s really encouraging. I enjoy getting to know them. But I’ve really noticed that it’s not the same as Christian fellowship. All my friends at the University of Wisconsin were unbelievers. I’ve really not had Christian fellowship since I left the friends I had at the Baptist Church in Calcutta. But now I have you and the Christian guys in the plant. It’s like, totally different. Maybe it’s the indwelling of the Holy Spirit or something, I don’t know. When the other people I am with are in fellowship with God, it makes all the difference.”

As they left the restaurant, Matt changed the subject. “I know you get mad at me when I bring it up, Eesha, but there is a specific, personal reason why I feel bad about dragging you into our problem.”

“Matt, stop with that. I told you, I decided to do it with my eyes wide open. I knew full well what I was getting into.”

“Yes, I know you did, but just let me finish. This is hard for me to say. It’s kind of a confession. I have been wanting to say this, and not wanting to say this, ever since you started. Eesha, you were as qualified as anyone, even though you didn’t have the flying hours. Plus, you were excited, ambitious, and hungry for the job. You were smart and capable, you learn and adapt.”

“But. I sense there is a ‘but’ in there somewhere.”

“But, the truth is that’s not why I hired you. Near as I could tell, the other two men we considered had equally good qualifications.”

“So. What? You hired me because I was so pathetic?”

“You were pretty pathetic.”

“What!” She stopped on the street, putting her hands on her hips.

With a short laugh Matt said, “Actually, you were both pretty and pathetic. But, no. That’s not it.” They started walking again. Matt said nothing else for a few minutes. As they walked, he was looking down at his feet. Then he stopped walking, looked at her, and said, “I hired you because I wanted you in my life. You were...you are the most beautiful girl I have ever seen. Then I found out you are not just pretty, you are smart and clever and exciting. Besides all that, you flew the airplane flawlessly. My motives were selfish. I wanted to be with you. Love, however you define it, never treats everyone the same. It’s always selective. So I chose you, which eliminated the other two. If I didn’t hire you, I’d lose you. And I couldn’t just let you walk away.”

*Love, he said love, even though he qualified it with – however you define it.* Eesha put her arms around his waist, and leaned her head against his chest before she said, “Oh, I think I can somehow find it within me to forgive you for your selfish motives.”

He wrapped his arms around her and was surprised how thin she felt, almost frail. “And that’s when I thought you were a Hindu. So I thought it could never be more than just an infatuation blended maybe into some sort of friendship, which, of course, was still not right. But then, when you said how you had accepted Christ as your Savior through your uncle, well, that made it a whole new deal. Romance is a mutual sharing, so it is a form of fellowship, but Christians can’t have that with unbelievers. The Apostle John said light can’t fellowship with darkness. But now that I know we are both believers, walking in the light, well, now my motives are more...significant.”

“I like significant.”

“Eesha, I’m 38 years old with a 10-year-old son. I’m not just a teenager with a crush. I don’t know, maybe I’m a 38-year-old dad, with a crush. Anyway, my feelings for you have put you in harm’s way. You are in danger because of my feelings.”

She pushed back from his chest enough to look in his eyes. Then put a hand on his whisker-stubbed face. “Now it’s time for me to confess. Usually, I’m a ‘get straight to the point – tell the truth’ girl. But I haven’t been completely forthcoming either. The truth is, I wanted you from the first time I saw you. And when I learned that your wife had died, I pushed hard, not just because of the job but because I wanted a chance...with you. But now we are not only tangled up with each other but with some hardened criminals that will not quit until they destroy us. I have a foot in the door that might just lead to a resolution to the issue that will keep us from moving our relationship forward. So I want to pursue it...for us.”

# Chapter 14

## Characteristic #6

### Believer Fellowship Requires Fellowship with God

Salvation introduces us to a new life described as fellowship with God.

- **1 Corinthians 1:9** *God is faithful, through whom you were called into **fellowship** [κοινωνία (koinonia)] with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*
- **2 Corinthians 13:14** *the **fellowship** [κοινωνία (koinonia)] of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.*
- **Philippians 2:1** *Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any **fellowship** [κοινωνία (koinonia)] of the Spirit... [be] united in spirit, intent on one purpose*

Because the foundation of our fellowship with each other, as believers, is based on our fellowship with God. Fellowship with unbelievers is inappropriate. We might have a sort of friendship with them, but not fellowship. Fellowship with unbelievers is condemned by the Apostles Paul and John because it mixes *light with darkness*, the holiness of God with the sinful priorities of unbelievers.

**2 Corinthians 6:14** *Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what **fellowship** κοινωνία (koinonia) has light with darkness?*

This concept is best defined by the Apostle John in his first epistle. Notice how John ties our fellowship with one another to God's holiness. Like Paul, John also uses the word *light* as a metaphor of the truth and holiness of God, and that our fellowship must be connected to that *Light*.

**1 John 1:3-7** ...*what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may **have fellowship** [κοινωνία (koinonia)] with us; and indeed our **fellowship** [κοινωνία (koinonia)] is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ ... If we say that we have **fellowship** [κοινωνία (koinonia)] with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have **fellowship** [κοινωνία (koinonia)] with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

The Apostle John wrote to the new believers, probably the same churches of Asia Minor mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3, to tell them that the apostles and the older believers wanted to have fellowship with them. He said it was *so that our joy may be made complete*. But there is a big qualifier for such fellowship. John says *our **fellowship** [κοινωνία (koinonia)] is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.* Those receiving John's letter could only fellowship with John and the other believers if they *walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light*. Fellowship with one another requires fellowship with God. So believers cannot have fellowship with unbelievers, or even with another believer, if they are living in unconfessed sin, because those who *walk in the darkness* [are those who] *lie and do not practice the truth*.

So fellowship is not based on tolerating one another's sin, and calling it "love." There is nothing loving about tolerating or minimizing sin, since it grieves the Spirit of God (Ephesians 4:30) and destroys all possibility of believer fellowship. Once we tolerate unconfessed sin, sin that is being justified in some way, then whatever interaction we may be having, it is no longer Christian fellowship.

# Chapter 15

## Meeting the Parents

After a brief knock on her already opened door, Matt walked in to Eesha's office on Thursday morning. "I have a question for you."

"Yes, sir, Mr. Boss Man," she said looking up from a computer screen, "what can your humble servant do for her boss today?"

"Good grief. What's gotten into you?"

"Well, ya see, there's this really cute guy, and I think maybe he likes me."

"Hmmm. Well, actually, I have a message from that... 'guy,' well, at least I hope it's that guy. His parents put on a huge meal every Sunday for the family and the company supervisors and their families, and this 'guy' wondered if you would accompany him to that dinner next Sunday."

"Oh, my!" The question suddenly jerked Eesha into the real world. "Your family? But Matt, is that wise? I mean, I'm not sure they will like me. Having a brown Indian girl fly for the company is one thing, but bringing one to a family dinner is something else. I mean, yeah, okay, kids are colorblind, but adults aren't."

"It's not just family, it's also for fellowship with friends. All the men will adore you and all the women will be jealous. Don't worry about it. Just come. I will defend you from any and all savage attacks."

"Oh, that really makes it sound appealing! You are one heck-of-a salesman."

"Come on, Eesha, you have to meet them sometime. You already met my Dad, and you know the supervisors in the shop. So it's just a matter of meeting their curious, jealous, nosy, gossipy wives, and my curious, nosy, gossipy mother."

"Greaaaaat! How could I possibly pass up such a tempting invitation?"

"That's what I was thinking."

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Matt and Ben picked up Eesha at her apartment at 12:30 Sunday afternoon for the family dinner at his parents' house that began at 1:00. On the way over, Ben asked Eesha if she had made the corrections he had suggested in her procedure for landing the CJ3. Then they got into an argument about when to add flaps and how many degrees of flaps should be extended upon landing. Once again, Matt was left out of the conversation.

They drove up to the house just as Ralph and Mary Michaels were getting out of their car and only seconds before Bill and Ruth Carlson drove up behind them. So Eesha was able to meet two of the wives of the plant supervisors before they went inside. Once in the door, Ruth Carlson led Eesha into the kitchen where the food was being displayed. Everyone seemed excited about Eesha being there. Except Matt's mother. Matt told her he was bringing a "girlfriend". His mother knew the company had hired an Indian girl as corporate pilot. But she never put that 1 + 1 together. When she saw Eesha with Matt and Ben, her usual smile faded and her face turned almost gray. When Matt introduced Eesha, his mother said a quiet "hello" and disappeared into the living room.

During the half hour before dinner was ready, the other women spoke at length with Eesha, quizzing her mostly about India and how she came to be a pilot in America. But during this time, Matt's mother was absent. Then the women began to uncover the plates and get ready for the meal. Matt stayed out in the living room, talking with Ralph Michaels and Joe Daniels, but he also noticed his mother was fussing with a lamp in the living room rather than helping in the kitchen. After a half hour, Ruth Carlson came out of the kitchen to announce that the food was ready. Then the men and the children all joined them around the large island in the center of the kitchen.

After Stewart Jenkins' prayer, everybody filled their plates and moved about the house, finding places to park and eat. As Eesha was leaving the kitchen with a full plate, she was

approached by Matt's father, who said, "Could we sit together? I would so like to get to know you a little better."

"Of course, thank you having me here. It's a real privilege."

"It's a wonderful afternoon. Possibly we could sit out on the patio, if the noise of the children doesn't bother you."

"That sounds perfect, and no, the children don't bother me. I grew up with six brothers and two sisters." As his father opened the patio doors, Eesha looked back at Matt who had followed her out of the kitchen.

"You two go ahead," Matt said. "I want to talk to Mom a minute. I'll join you later."

As they settled in cushion-covered deck chairs, Stewart Jenkins said, "We are really pleased to have you with us, Eesha. May I call you Eesha? I'm sorry, I'm afraid I cannot pronounce your last name correctly. I tried three times, and Matt said I still had it wrong."

"Yes, of course, please call me Eesha." As she set her plate on the table, she added, "And I want to say that I really consider it a privilege to fly the Citation. I love the job. And as Matt may have told you, if it weren't for this job, I couldn't keep my visa. I'd be back in India fighting my Hindu parents to keep from marrying the man they picked out for me when I was five years old."

"Oh, my, no. He didn't tell me that. But he did tell me that you are a terrific pilot. We really need you right now, since I'm encouraging Matthew to take over the leadership of the company. It's time for me to step aside and get on with other things."

"What will you do?"

"I have several projects going on. One that I am excited about is a 60-acre piece of ground I bought and carved out dirt bike trails. A retiring lawyer friend and I put together a 501(c) 3 to make it a ministry. Another friend of mine has an inner city ministry and we bus some of his kids out for a day to ride quads and dirt bikes. Sometime during the day we also have a Bible study with the kids. We don't make them come, we just announce it, and the Christian kids invite the others. But most

of them are curious enough to come. We are now planning to expand it to a hundred acres and bus in more kids.”

“That sounds exciting. I’d like to see it.”

“Great, I’ll drive you out and show it to you, some day when you don’t have a flight.”

“Are you planning on leaving the Jenkins Equipment Company altogether?”

“I’ll be around. We are a family-owned company, so I’ll still be on the Board, and there are some customers who go way back with me, so I will keep them reined in. But I don’t want to be there on a daily basis, and I certainly don’t want to be CEO any more. That’s up to Matt now. And it would not be possible without you. Actually, we have had more orders for new equipment since you have been flying. I can’t tell you how much I appreciate your being here.” Then Stewart leaned toward her, lowered his voice, and said, “I hope you don’t mind a nosy old man, but it seems to me Matt is kind of sweet on you.”

She began to chuckle. “Yes, sir. Well, I think it’s kind of mutual.”

With that, Stewart began to laugh. “Oh, I hope so. Matt needs someone, and so does Ben. Oh, sorry, now I’m treading on ground that I should leave well enough alone.”

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Meanwhile, back in the kitchen, Matt’s mother was sitting with Matt’s sister Dora, Mary Michaels, and Ruth Carlson. When Matt walked in, they all looked up at him. “Good evening, ladies. Mother could I see you for a minute?” Gracie Jenkins looked at him for a few seconds before she got up and followed him into the living room. But Matt walked all the way through the living room to the front door, opened it, and held it open as an invitation for his mother to walk outside with him. He stopped just outside the door where no one else was close by and said, “Okay, mother, what’s going on?”

“I don’t know what you mean.”

“Of course, you do. You have given Eesha the cold shoulder ever since she got here. It’s rude, and you know it. Now out with it. What’s going on?”

“You didn’t tell me she was coming with you.”

“I told you I was inviting someone.”

“But you didn’t tell me it was *her*. I knew you hired a foreign woman, but I had no idea you would bring her into our home, as a ‘girlfriend,’ no less.”

“What difference does it make that she is a foreigner?”

“She’s Indian.”

“She a wonderful Christian girl. As a believer, she’s part of the church, and she is living for Christ. Everyone who has received Christ and is living for Him is part of the fellowship of believers. You have no basis for withholding fellowship from her.”

“She’s brown.”

“What the heck difference does that make? Do you know of something in the Bible that says Christians don’t fellowship with Christians if they are ‘brown’?”

“Ben needs a mother and I need grandbabies, and I don’t want them to be brown.”

“Mother, that’s disgusting. She’s a beautiful Christian in every way, There is no excuse for excluding her for her color. That’s sinful mother, and you need to stop it.”

“How dare you call your mother sinful! You didn’t used to be this disrespectful. Is she the one criticizing me and pitting us against one another? That girl is already causing problems, and it’s time you see that.”

“She’s done nothing but be helpful, and you need to apologize for the way you have ignored her today.”

“I’m not apologizing for trying to keep my family pure.”

“It’s your attitude that is polluting this family, not Eesha.” With that, Matt walked back into the house and out onto the porch where his father was talking with Eesha. Matt sat with them until they finished their meals. He said only enough to try to keep from revealing how upset he was with his mother. When they got up to return their plates to the kitchen, Stewart

pulled Matt aside, then put his head close and spoke softly in his ear. “That girl is a keeper, son. She’s smart, nice, a really mature Christian, and...well, it doesn’t hurt that she’s really easy on the eyes.”

# Chapter 16

## Characteristic #7

### Fellowship Defines Relationships Between Believers in the Church Age

Fellowship has another interesting emphasis in the Bible. It's almost exclusively a thing for this age. The word *fellowship* only appears one time in the (NASB) Old Testament. It's in Psalm 55:14 *We who had sweet fellowship* [better translated, *council* (KJV)] *together walked in the house of God in the throng*. The word *fellowship* also never occurs in any of its forms in the gospels. Jesus never called His relationship with His disciples, *fellowship*. Christ's ministry before His death and resurrection was basically a one-way street. He gave to His apostles. It was only mutual in the sense that they observed, received, learned, and obeyed. Jesus' ministry to the 12 was primarily an act of love, giving without reciprocity.

The word *fellowship* [κοινωνία (*koinonia*)] was also never used to describe what will occur after the church age. We are not told of any fellowship in the future Millennial Kingdom or the New Jerusalem. Not that there won't be any, but it will probably not be exactly the same as it is in our church age. At any rate, it's only mentioned for the church.

And it's a big deal for the church. It almost defines the church and certainly directs the way the church operates. Acts 2:42 tells us from the very beginning, *They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship* [κοινωνία (*koinonia*)], *to the breaking of bread and to prayer*. Possibly that's because in this age we have the regeneration, indwelling, baptism, sealing, filling, gifting, leading, and guiding of the Holy Spirit in a way that did not exist in other ages. But, for whatever reason, that fellowship which is peripheral in other ages is center stage for the church.

## **A Conclusion About the Definition of Fellowship**

There's an old saying, "Fellowship is two fellows in a ship." And that's not bad for Christian fellowship, if the ship is a context that honors the holiness of God. Christian fellowship is the **beneficial sharing** that goes on when (1) **two or more** Christians (2) **reciprocate** something to each other (3) of **value**, where they (4) *participate* in something together (5), which is **not confined to a place** or activity (6) and is based on **the holiness of God**, especially (7) during **this church/grace age**.

Christian fellowship realizes that God is with us when we are joking, laughing, crying, talking, or whatever we believers are doing together. And it can be about hunting, fishing, riding motorcycles, shooting guns, playing sports, our work situations, spreading the gospel, or discipling others. Christian fellowship may be taking care of children, helping hurting people, or dealing with our parents. It can occur in any place at any activity where believers understand that their interaction is taking place in the presence of God, and they are involved in beneficial sharing. Jesus said, "*where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst*" (Matthew 18:20).

# Chapter 17

## The Other "Family"

With the IFR systems all recertified on the CJ3, Eesha was back in business. She had a trip scheduled for Tuesday, but nothing for Monday. So she basically came into the office with nothing to do except prepare for the trip on Tuesday. As she parked her aging Ford Festiva, Stewart Jenkins' new white Ford F 350 Super Duty drove up and parked next to her. They exchanged morning greetings and went to their respective offices. After ten minutes of looking at her flight plan for Tuesday, Eesha realized her mind was divorced from her eyes. Her thoughts were on the Sunday dinner. After 10 more minutes, which she spent reviewing how she would approach the subject, she walked over to Mildred's desk. Stewart Jenkins' office was down a short hall, but except for a private back door, the only way in was past Mildred.

"I saw Mr. Jenkins in the parking lot this morning. Is there any chance he might be available for a few questions?"

"He has a meeting at 10:00, but I'll check."

Instead of using the intercom, Mildred walked to his office and returned two minutes later. "Yes, he can see you for a few minutes."

Eesha thanked her and walked to Stewart's office. Before she could knock, he opened the door and said, "Come in, my dear, have a seat. Would you like some coffee? I have espresso, too, if you like it."

"No, thanks. Um, actually, yes, an espresso would be nice."

As he prepared the small coffee, Stewart invited her to have a seat in one of the leather chairs that faced his desk. He talked a bit about how he enjoyed their conversation yesterday, then asked, "So how can I be helpful?"

"I probably shouldn't be here. I may just be imagining this, but you were so nice yesterday, I thought maybe I would ask anyway."

“Of course,” he smiled as he handed her the espresso and took a seat in a second leather chair next to hers. “Whatever it is, I’m pleased that you feel comfortable enough to ask.”

“I don’t really, feel comfortable, but, well, first of all, I want to say again how much I appreciate this job, where I can not only fly, but I can have Christian fellowship. In India, that would not be possible. I’d be excommunicated from my family.”

“Wouldn’t you have fellowship with the other believers in Calcutta?”

“Possibly, but you see my family is from a very low caste. Most Christians would support my father’s decision because the man he has chosen for me is from my caste.”

“Good heavens! I thought the caste system was no longer legal in India.”

“Legal or not, it is still the culture. A person’s caste is their most important basis for fellowship. When you meet someone, they will ask your name, where you live, and what you do, but all that is just to identify your caste. Your caste is everything socially.”

“Even for Christians?”

“Usually, yes. Many would refuse fellowship with me if I did not marry my father’s choice.”

“Well, that’s just wrong. We are only to separate fellowship from believers who persist in living in unrepentant sin. There is nothing sinful about not marrying according to your parents’ choice. Especially if he is a Hindu.”

“So, you are saying refusing fellowship to another believer is wrong, unless they are living in unrepentant sin, is that right?”

“Yes, and even then it has to be something a group of mature believers recognizes as clearly violating a biblical directive. It’s not that we can just decide to refuse fellowship to someone who offends our traditions or prejudices.”

“In that case, could I ask you about something that’s bothering me?”

“Of course. Please.”

“Yesterday at your house, it seemed to me that your wife, Mrs. Jenkins, refused to fellowship with me. She never greeted me or welcomed me or talked with me. Whenever I was in a room, she moved to another room. When I was in a conversation, she left and did something else. The other women were very friendly, kind, generous, and they went out of their way to welcome me, but your wife refused to have anything to do with me. Or is that just my imagination? That’s my question, really. Is it just me or is your wife actually refusing to fellowship with me? I know Matt talked to her while we were eating on the patio. He didn’t tell me what was said, but I could tell he was unhappy when he joined us.”

“No, it’s not your imagination, I’m afraid.” The older Jenkins looked at the floor for a minute. When he looked back at Eesha, his eyes looked concerned, and there was a wrinkle between them that was not there before. “Matt called me last night and told me about his conversation with his mother. Truth is, she doesn’t want Matt dating an Indian, even one as nice as you are. She’s wrong, Eesha. You are a wonderful young lady, and she has no right treating you that way. The reality is, my wife does not want grandbabies that look Indian, and as pathetic as that is, it’s the reality we have to deal with. And I want you to be assured, we will deal with it.”

“Whoa, wait a minute. Grandbabies? According to Matt, we haven’t even had a ‘date’ yet.”

“Eesha, everybody can see the way you two look at each other. Matt’s not looked at a woman like that in seven years. It’s not hard to let your mind go down that path and see where it leads. Especially if you are a woman wanting grandbabies.”

“White, Caucasian, Anglo Saxon, European-looking grandbabies.”

“Exactly. And she’s wrong, Eesha. She’s very wrong. But it puts us in a difficult place. Gracie is a good woman, but she has a blind spot when it comes to her family.” Stewart reached over and put his wrinkled white hand on top of Eesha’s smooth brown one. “We will deal with it, Eesha. I want you to know you are very welcome in our family. And whatever you

and Matt decide about each other, you are welcome in this company.”

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On Tuesday morning, Eesha flew the CJ3 to Dallas Love Field and picked up a group of prospective customers from Fort Worth, Texas. The group was to spend the night in Green Bay and return on Wednesday. She brought four men and two women to the Green Bay Airport, where the company van picked them up and delivered them to The Jenkins Equipment Company at 12:30 P.M. After securing the Citation, Eesha drove to a nearby Subway to get a chopped salad for lunch. While waiting in line, she heard her name, once again pronounced correctly, from behind her.

“Eesha Ghattamaneni.”

Turning, she saw the same man who gave her the package a week ago. “Oh, you again. The guy who doesn’t like Fed Ex.”

“Interested in making some more cash?”

“Maybe.”

“Get your food, then go out and get in your car.”

Eesha paid for her salad and went out to the parking lot. Before she got to her car, she saw the man in a black Mercedes parked to the side but facing her Ford Festiva. She got in her car, sat behind the wheel, and opened her window. The Mercedes then drove forward so that the two drivers’ side windows were next to each other.

“The package will be in the same dumpster at 6:00 tomorrow morning. Pick it up before 6:05 and secure it in the aircraft.” You will take it to Dallas with your passengers tomorrow afternoon. The same young man you met in Flint will meet you at Dallas Love Field and make the same exchange. Understood?”

“For the same money?”

“The same money.”

“Understood.”

The man rolled up his window and drove away. Eesha drove back to her office and waited for an opportunity to tell Matt about the second package. She assumed she was being watched or recorded, and she knew Matt would be with the Fort Worth group most of the afternoon, so creating a situation, which was not obviously an exchange of information, was difficult. Finally, she decided on another note, which she was able to give to Mildred by putting it in a file folder with the IFR certification papers. As she laid the file on Mildred's desk, Eesha asked her to look at it right away. Mildred found the note and kept it until Matt and his guests passed through her office on their way to dinner, then she handed it to him, saying, "This is something you may want to deal with today."

Matt opened the note. It said,

Another package to DAL tomorrow

E.

Matt nodded and said, "Yes, I'll take care of it. Thank you, Mildred." Between the car and the restaurant, Matt was able to excuse himself from the group, saying he had to make a quick call. Then he stepped back far enough to call his contact at the FBI and inform them of the second delivery. He was told they would watch her at Dallas Love Field as before, and she would be contacted by an agent posing as the lineman that would direct her to parking when she returned to Green Bay.

Matt did not see Eesha the rest of the day. They had agreed that if she was contacted again she would inform him with a short note but not talk to him about it, figuring the smugglers would be monitoring her activities until the package was delivered.

The next day, Eesha delivered her passengers to Love Field and walked through the pilot's general aviation entrance carrying the black carry-on bag without being detained. She went to the terminal and sat down at a restaurant. She only waited for five minutes before the same young man she saw in Flint came and sat beside her.

"Well, you certainly get around."

“Are they watching you?” the young man said.

“Who?”

“The Feds.”

“How would I know?”

“The family knows that your boss is in on the deliveries. I’m guessing he informed the Feds, and they are following you, watching us right now.”

“If you thought that, why would you be here?”

“Because my family will kill me if I don’t pick up the package. Just like they will kill you when you are no longer useful to them.”

“Who’s ‘they’ and ‘them’?”

“I told you, my family. My father was one of the brothers. He was killed, and my mother and I are stuck on the inside. They can’t let us out because we know too much. Look, pretty lady, I don’t want you to get killed and you are getting in too deep. My father’s family are killers, they are basically holding my mother and I hostage, threatening to kill us if we don’t keep working for them. If you are in touch with the Feds, then you can get us out. My mother and I, we will be informers if the Feds can make us disappear.”

“What, like witness protection?”

“Something like that.”

“This all sounds to me like a scheme to get me to tell you I’m informing the Feds so you can eliminate me.”

“Okay, I can see where you’d think that, but I’m going to tell you some things. You won’t want to believe them but you can check it out. My father’s family is not a major drug cartel, but they are connected to one, and the cartel does business with my uncle. His brother was my father, and he was shot and killed by your boss.”

“My boss! What are you talking about? That’s crazy.”

“No, it isn’t, and I think you know that. My father shot and killed Mrs. Jeanne Jenkins, your boss’s deceased wife, six and a half years ago.”

“I heard she was caught in the crossfire of a drug deal gone bad.”

“That’s what her husband thinks, but that’s not what happened. She was the target of the shooting. She was assassinated by the family, and my father was the one who had the assignment of offing her. He didn’t count on your boss, Matthew Jenkins, carrying a gun.”

“Why would they kill Matt’s wife?”

“She was doing what you are doing, delivering drugs. She was carrying them when she traveled with her husband. Matthew Jenkins had no idea about it.”

“You are telling me Matt’s wife was transporting drugs and was killed for that? Why would they kill her for transporting their own merchandise?”

“That’s not why she was killed. They shot her because she was stealing from them. What she was carrying, and what you have been carrying, is uncut heroin smuggled across the Canadian border from Iraq by the drug cartel. Uncut heroin has an enormous street value. When Mrs. Jenkins figured that out, she wasn’t satisfied with the delivery money. She started skimming some of the uncut heroin off the top. She began opening the bags and taking some out so she could sell it herself. She got money hungry, and it cost her – her life. She was one of their prime assets until she got greedy. They looked for six and a half years for someone as convenient as she was. And now here you are. You are her replacement.”

“Let’s see if I got this right. You are telling me Matt’s wife was delivering drugs, but stealing some to sell, they found out and killed her, but Matt shot back, killing your father. So now his brother wants revenge, and that’s why Matt and I are getting all those threatening notes.”

“Yes, but it’s not just about revenge. If they don’t make a statement about what they will do to anyone who crosses them, they will be seen as weak, and the cartel won’t like that. And, wait, you are getting the notes, too?”

“Yeah, so?”

“So, it means you are their target, too.”

“What about you. Don’t you want revenge for your father’s death?”

“My mother and I just want out. We are tired of living under threats on our lives and watching all the suffering they cause with the drugs and the killing. But we have no way to get out, unless you help us.”

“Why don’t you just go to the Feds yourself?”

“Are you kidding me? We’d be dead before the day was over, and our bodies would never be found. We are easily replaced. But you, you they need. They will keep you alive until they think you are a liability.”

“Is someone from your family watching us now?”

“I don’t know. Probably. But it doesn’t matter. The family is going to get their uncut heroin delivered if I get them this bag, so they won’t interrupt the process. The Feds aren’t going to stop me today because they want my uncle and the whole family. That means the family will get their drugs on the street in Dallas and make their profit. If I get caught, the family will just eliminate me and look for another courier. If they find out what I told you, I’ll tell them what you said, that I was just trying to get you to reveal the fact that you are a plant for the Feds. So you have to decide who to believe. But you can check out my story. Check on Matthew Jenkins’ deceased wife. She got a lot of money from the family, it had to show up somewhere.”

“That’s just bizarre.”

“The next time you deliver a package I will be there to pick it up. That’s what I do for them. I will have my mother hidden somewhere close by. You will take us with you to the Feds. Then my mother and I will tell the Feds how to get the whole family at once, in exchange for permanent witness protection. I can’t get them to the cartel, that’s impossible, but I can give them the family, and that will put an end to a whole lot of drugs hitting the streets.”

Eesha looked at him for a few minutes. “If this is just a trap, I’m dead, right?”

“You are dead either way, if you don’t believe me.

They won’t let you live beyond your usefulness to them. And if you don’t help us, my mother and I will be dead, too, or we’ll live the rest of our lives in their prison and we’d rather be dead.”

# Separation of Fellowship

## Chapter 18

### Characteristic #1

## Separation of Fellowship Is From Unrepentant Believers

### Fellowship Has an Enemy

Externally, the enemy of Christian fellowship is the satanic world system created by the devil and his evil angels. When a Christian starts following the world, his Christian fellowship is in danger of being destroyed. But the enemy of Christian fellowship is **not** the unbelieving people who are following Satan's system. Our spiritual battle is not against the people promoting political liberalism, moral progressivism, educational reconstruction, and evolutionary assumptions. These people haven't formed a conspiracy for sin and evil. But the devil has. All the foolishness of the world is a creation of *the god of this world* (2 Corinthians 4:4). It often seems like the problem is bad people. But, as a matter of fact, *our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places* (Ephesians 6:12).

Paul made it clear that we should not be interested in dealing with the sins of unbelievers.

*For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves* (1 Corinthians 5:12-13).

So **the external enemy of Christian fellowship is the devil**, with his demonic forces and his evil world system, not bad un-

believers who are duped by the devil into believing their tolerance of sin is “progressive.” Our battle with Satan’s evil world system is a battle the world does not have. The world is happily moving downstream, as if on the Niagara River progressively paddling toward the Falls, happy with how things are going, and resisting those who want to go “backwards.” They are unwittingly following Satan, *in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God* (2 Corinthians 4:4).

**Internally**, believers in Jesus Christ have another war going on. We don’t need the devil to sin. Believers have a conflict that the world does not have. We have a new nature that is at war with our sin nature, and our job is to *lay aside the old self...and put on the new self* (Ephesians 4:22-24). Our enemy is sin encouraged by our sin nature. It destroys our fellowship with God, making Christian fellowship impossible.

### **But Here’s the Strange Thing**

Even though sin is the enemy, it’s not sin that prevents fellowship. If it did, nobody could have fellowship with anybody. The qualification for fellowship is not to be experientially sinless. Perfectionism eliminates everyone. Fellowship with one another is maintained by confession, not perfection. Fellowship comes by constant, continual, daily repentance, confessing our sins to God. It’s when we *confess our sins* that we remove the barrier of fellowship with God and open the door for fellowship with one another. While discussing fellowship, John said,

*If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. And If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us* (1 John 1:8, 10).

Not only are we all sinners, we are continually sinning. Paul said, *For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want* (Roman 7:19, see 14-25). Only the

secular Satan-following world thinks they are not sinners. They call sin malevolence, mistakes, addictions, diseases, weaknesses or needs requiring support groups, rehabilitation, correctional facilities and counseling, not repentance. But one cannot become a saved, born again, child of God without repentance. And repentance means realizing we are a sinner. When I repent and receive Christ into my life (John 1:12) and He gives me a new nature from God, I do not lose my old sin nature this side of the grave. So what should I do about the fact that *I practice the very evil that I do not want?* John said,

*If we **confess our sins**, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness* (1 John 1:9).

## **How Often Do We Forgive Believers Who Confess their Sin?**

Peter thought he had a generous idea when he suggested *seven times*. But *Jesus said to him, I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven* (Matthew 18:22). When sinful barriers to fellowship end in repentance, then those barriers should immediately go away. In such a case, Paul said,

*Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him* (2 Corinthians 2:6-8 KJV).

So sin does not need to destroy Christian fellowship. What destroys fellowship is: ignored sin, unconfessed sin, intentionally premeditated sin, and justified sin. It's not how often we strike out. It's about changing the rules of the game. It's one thing to be thrown out at first base, it's quite another to say, "In my case, I don't have to tag first base before going to second." If you insist that the rules don't apply to you, then you are no longer part of the activity.

What destroys Christian fellowship is when we claim our sin is okay with God, tolerated by God, or allowed by God. It's when someone faces their sin by saying, "I know it's wrong, but I am going to do it anyway," or "I prayed, and God gave me peace about it," or "God wouldn't want me to live like this, God would want me to be happy." When we fellowship with believers who ignore, premeditate, or make a case supporting their sins, then the fellowship is no longer Christian.

## **How Do We Know If a Person Is a Christian?**

All of this discussion about Christian fellowship assumes that we know whether or not a person is a Christian. Of course, there is no way to know that for certain. And, although an unrepentant sinner may be saved, assurance of salvation should not be given for those who continue in unrepentant sin. But if we assume that all unrepentant sinners are unsaved, then there would be no point to all the passages on separation of fellowship, since we are not commanded to remove fellowship from sinning unbelievers. Also, if we assume a person is not a Christian, when they claim they are, we are making a judgment call we are not qualified to make. It seems that the apostles encouraged fellowship among believers, and separation of fellowship from unrepentant sinners who claimed to be believers.

So, for the purposes of separation of fellowship, **we can only take people at their word.** If they do not claim to be a Christian, then separation of fellowship is not a consideration, since there is no Christian fellowship to separate from. If they claim to be a Christian, then there is 1 Corinthians 5:11.

## **When Should We Not Separate Fellowship?**

The following people are **not** candidates for separation of fellowship.

- 1. Unbelievers** – *Those who are outside God judges* (1 Corinthians 5:13). Christian fellowship is about Christians. Friendship with unbelievers is a fellowship of sorts, but it is not Christian fellowship. It is not how the apostles dis-

cussed fellowship in the New Testament. We might decide that the sins of certain unbelievers are something we should not be exposed to, or expose our families to, and therefore separate from them by creating a barrier to protect our families or ourselves. But it would be inappropriate to separate fellowship from them. **It's important to distinguish between an individual separation from sin and a separation of fellowship.** To separate from the influence of sinners is not the same as separating fellowship from them. For example, I would not go to a party with non-Christian business associates, if the party included sex and drugs, but that does not mean I would refuse to have lunch in a respectable restaurant with those same people. I would not want my grandchildren exposed to the affection of a non-Christian homosexual couple for each other in my home. But that does not mean I would refuse to talk with the homosexuals in some other social setting. Although we are to separate ourselves from sin, we are never called upon to apply biblical principles to unbelievers because they do not have the Holy Spirit. Although they can understand what the Bible says, they are incapable of understanding it to be true (Ephesians 1:18).

**2. Repentant Believers** – As Jesus told Peter, they are to be forgiven *seventy times seven* (Matthew 18:22). No matter how many times believers repent of the same sin, we should always forgive them and not separate fellowship from them. We are all repeat offenders of the sins that easily tempt us. All any of us can do is live on our knees, asking God for forgiveness. Of course, continually repeated sin needs control. If we are in chaos, we need others to come along side us and help us regain order. Repeated sin may require special attention from other believers, but it does not call for removal of fellowship if it is being repeatedly confessed.

**3. Really Bad Believers Who Have Repented** – For example, if a sex offender, a rapist, a prostitute or a murderer

repents ...*ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him* (2 Corinthians 2:6-8 KJV). These may be believers who need special boundaries, but the decision to have or remove fellowship is not to be based on the seriousness of the sin. If we refused to fellowship with another believer because they used to be really bad, then we are the ones at fault and need to be disciplined.

**4. Believers Who Offend Our Prejudices.** Let's look a bit more closely at this one.

## **Christian Fellowship Avoids Personal Prejudice**

When we sense a possible breach of Christian morality or violation of sound teaching, we must be sure that what we are challenging is indeed sin, not just something that offends our prejudices. Just because someone violates our conservative standards, does not attend the meetings we think he or she should, is of the wrong political party, offends our lifestyle, or does things we object to because of what we think "it will lead to," these are not a basis for removing fellowship. "Don't drink, dance, and chew, or go with girls that do" is not biblical advice. Paul told Timothy,

*I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality (1 Timothy 5:21).*

In things not condemned in Scripture, we should be *bearing with one another* (Colossians 3:13). Paul told the Roman believers,

*The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. **One person regards one day above an-***

*other, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind* (Romans 14:3-5).

For example,

- It's illegitimate for the Amish to remove fellowship from one who leaves to join modernity.
- It is illegitimate for a Baptist to remove fellowship from someone who drinks alcohol.
- It's illegitimate for a nonsmoker to remove fellowship from a smoker.
- It's illegitimate for a conservative Republican to remove fellowship from a liberal Democrat.
- It's illegitimate for someone who likes hymns to separate fellowship from someone who listens to modern music.
- It's illegitimate for someone who likes modern music to separate fellowship from someone who listens to hymns.

This is not about what you think is good for the economy, the country, the society, the good old days, a progressive future, or the environment. It's not about being patriotic, wearing the right clothes, someone's lifestyle, or the friends they have. And it's not about what you think something, not sinful in itself, might lead to. This is about God and His holiness. This is not about you and your prejudices. **Get over it! Move on!** When it comes to personal preferences, *do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged* (James 5:9).

# Chapter 19

## Matt's Wife

On Wednesday evening, Eesha flew back to Green Bay and gave the money envelope, which she had received for transporting the package, to the FBI agent. As she was told, he was posing as the lineman directing the Citation to parking in front of the Jenkins Equipment Company hangar. That evening, she called Matt and told him it was crucial that they talk, real soon, and in a private place. He suggested that she come over to his house. Ben would be in bed, and they could sit in her car outside the house.

As she predicted, Matt did not take the information well.

“Have you gone insane! My wife was not a drug smuggler. You are even saying she was selling the stuff herself. That’s a terrible accusation. That’s ridiculous.”

“Knock it off, Matt. I’m not saying anything. You have no right getting angry with me. I’m just telling you what the young guy said. What? You want me to lie to you? Okay, she was perfect, white as snow, innocent as a dove.”

“Cut it out.”

“No, you cut it out. You have no right to be mad at me. Christian fellowship is supposed to be based on truth, not lies. The world says lies are sometimes good because they can protect people from the truth. But Jesus said it’s truth that sets you free, not lies. Since we are both believers, our fellowship has to be connected to the truth. We need to be walking in the light, not darkness. So if you don’t want the truth, then go live in your own world.”

“This would be devastating to Ben.”

“Then don’t tell him. Keep him in the dark, and see how that works out. I’m just telling *you*, and apparently, you aren’t interested in the truth. And by the way, I’m willing to bet Ben is a whole lot tougher than you think he is, tougher than you, maybe. My guess is he’ll be interested in the truth.”

“How do you know it’s true?”

“Here’s what I know is true. The young man told me your wife was killed because she was stealing drugs from some really bad people. All I know is, that’s what the young guy told me. I have no idea if what he told me was true. I’m just saying we should check it out.”

“I need some time on this.” With that Matt got out of the car and went back into the house, and Eesha drove away.

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For about a half hour, Matt sat at his kitchen table sipping on some coffee and trying to remember anything he could about the times his wife traveled with him, anything that would yield some evidence about drug trafficking. He had no clue that anything like that was going on. It was true that after they arrived at a city to visit potential customers, he would not see her for several hours before the return flight. She often used the airport courtesy car and said she was going to do some shopping. The company was less prosperous back then. They were flying a Beechcraft King Air, and mostly just visiting potential customers. Sometimes they would bring someone in to visit the plant, but that only started to be a regular thing after they bought the CJ3.

As Matt thought about their travel on the King Air, he recalled that Jeanne always carried a red bag on their trips. She would usually have some other bag as well, but there was always the red one. He had no idea what happened to the red bag, but just for something to do with his troubled thoughts, he went to the attic to see if it was still around. Sure enough, after about 20 minutes of digging through old boxes, he found one containing the red bag. Then he called the Wisconsin State Police detective that had been assigned to his case. After the detective informed Matt how late it was, Matt asked, “I was just wondering, if a suitcase-type-bag has been used to carry drugs, you can test it to prove that, right?”

“Oh, yeah, do it all the time.”

“What if it was used to carry drugs seven years ago, could that still be detected?”

“Not sure. I can check. I’m guessing some residual could still be detected. Why?”

“I’ve got a bag that I’d like checked, can you do that for me? Say, tomorrow?”

“You need it that fast, huh?”

“I do. I’ll tell you the story tomorrow.”

“Meet me at the station at nine, and don’t call me any more tonight.”

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When Eesha arrived at her office Thursday morning, there was a message on her desk saying the Citation would not be available for the next two days. When she asked Mildred about it, she said, “All I know is that Matt said he was taking the plane to Florida for a couple of days and to leave you that note.”

“What’s in Florida?”

“He didn’t tell me, but I know his deceased wife’s parents and her sister live in St. Petersburg.”

“Any idea why he would visit them?”

“None at all. They’re not really close. They send Ben birthday presents, and they usually come for either Thanksgiving or Christmas. But in the six plus years since Jeanne’s death, I don’t think Matt has ever gone down there. Wait. No. Now that I think of it, it may be that he went down to get them in the Citation and bring them up for Christmas. But he never spent any time down there with them that I know of.”

“Interesting.”

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At 10:00 that evening, Eesha’s cell phone rang, displaying Matt’s picture.

“Hi, Matt.”

“Hi, Eesha. I know, I owe you some explanations, and I think I found out what happened. We should probably not talk about it on the phone. I’m sorry I took the CJ3 without telling you, but there were some things I had to find out right away.”

“It’s your airplane, Matt. You don’t have to tell me when you want to use it.”

“Yes, I do. I put you in charge of it. It was wrong to just take it without checking with you. I’d like you to meet me at the hangar when I get back. I should be in Green Bay by 10:30 tomorrow morning. Get us a Starbucks and some of those scones you like, we’ll sit in the airplane and talk, that’s probably the most secure place. I just called now because I want you to know I’m sorry for being so harsh the other day. You were right. Our relationship, like all Christian fellowship, must be based on the truth. As you said, it’s the truth that sets us free.”

“Actually, Jesus said that.”

“Yeah, well, you are the one who remembered it. I miss you, Eesha.”

“I miss you, too, Matt. I’ll see you at the hangar at 10:30 in the morning, with coffee and scones.”

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Matt’s IFR clearance Friday morning was delayed for a half hour at St. Petersburg. He was able to make up some of the time enroute, but it was 10:50 before he arrived at the Jenkins Equipment Company hangar. He had the tug push the CJ3 inside where Eesha was waiting with a coffee tray and a bag of scones. He opened the door, thanked the attendant, and helped Eesha by taking the bag and holding her arm as she stepped off the top of the stairway. They sat in the cabin where there were tables and places to put their coffee.

“I think the coffee’s cold.”

“Sorry, ATC delayed my departure. Here, let me take that tray, we can zap the coffee in the microwave.” After one minute, and some beeps from the microwave, he returned with hot coffee.

Eesha began with, “On the phone it sounded like you have begun to come to grips with all of this.”

“First of all, I want to say again how sorry I am for yelling at you the way I did.”

“Thanks, Matt, that means a lot. But I understand, you loved your wife. She was apparently a great wife and mother. You didn’t want someone shooting holes in her legacy.”

“She wasn’t who we thought she was, but there is also an explanation, not a justifiable one, but an explanation nonetheless. First of all, your young man was right. She was running drugs, and skimmed some off the top. Near as I can tell, she never used the drugs, but she did sell them for huge amounts of money. I found her old travel bag in the attic, and the police were still able to find trace amounts of heroin on it. What I don’t understand is how she could do that for so long without anyone in the family or at the company knowing anything about it. It’s almost like she had someone inside the company helping her. But I’m sure that’s just me being confused and paranoid about all of this.”

“What did you learn in Florida?”

“In all this time since her death, I’ve never visited her parents in their home. The last three years, since I had the Citation, I flew down and brought them, and Jeanne’s sister, up to spend Christmas with our family. They really seemed to enjoy that. But they met me at the airport in St. Petersburg. I never went to their home. But this time I did. Eesha, you wouldn’t believe it. They are living in a mansion. These people were flat broke, barely able to make payments on a doublewide trailer. And they didn’t win the lottery. The only explanation is that Jeanne bought it for them with drug money.”

“I understand her sister was sick, maybe she helped her, too?”

“She did. Jeanne’s sister, her name is Allison, was nine years younger than Jeanne, only 15 when Jeanne and I got married. Allison was badly deformed, a birth defect that distorted part of her face. She needed a series of facial reconstruction surgeries that their insurance wouldn’t cover. I’m guessing Jeanne first agreed to move the drugs to help her parents make payments on their trailer and it just got out of hand. When she realized how much those drugs were selling for on the streets, she found a contact, or more likely a contact found her. Anyway, she apparently started stealing from the cartel to finance

her sister's surgery. She did it for her parents and her sister. At least we can have the knowledge she was not doing it to spend money on herself. Actually, that's one reason we never expected anything. She never changed her own lifestyle at all. We were living okay, but nothing fancy. She never bought a new car or expensive clothes or jewelry or anything that would alert us to an influx of a lot of cash. Apparently, she was transferring it all to her parents' house, and then her sister's surgeries. By the way, her sister looks great now. She even has a steady boyfriend."

"Matt, do you think what Jeanne did was wrong? I mean, aside from it being illegal, was it morally wrong?"

"It certainly was. The end does not justify the means. It got her killed and left her son without a mother. What she did brought about the threats you and I and Ben are all facing. Her own son is being threatened with kidnapping because of what she did. She put all our lives in danger. Seven years after her death, we are still in danger. Of course, she didn't intend any of that, but it happened because she was willing to smuggle drugs, steal them, and sell them on the street. And those drugs ended up destroying the lives of people she didn't even know.

# Chapter 20

## Characteristic #2

### Separation of Fellowship Is a Believer's Responsibility

When someone in close Christian fellowship with us enters into unrepentant sin, then we have at least four responsibilities:

1. To God
2. To the sinner
3. To the other believers who are close to us
4. To ourselves

#### 1. Separation of Fellowship Is about the Holiness of God

Christian fellowship is not like anything we find in any worldly fellowship or that of other religions. Our fellowship with each other is only Christian fellowship when it is connected to fellowship with God. Paul told the Corinthians, *you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord* (1 Corinthians 1:9). The Apostle John zeroed in on this in his first epistle. During Christian fellowship, we might tell jokes, share hunting stories, talk about our children or our parents, but the discussion is overshadowed by the presence of God. The presence of God does not make our conversation religious, stoic, stiff, and stilted, it makes it about truth, compassion, and reality.

John desired fellowship with the new believers who were coming to faith in Christ. But he realized that was only possible when they were in fellowship with God. Read how he put it.

*...what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed **our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.** ...If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; **but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the***

*Light, we have fellowship with one another* (1 John 1:3, 6-7).

## **2. Separation of Fellowship Is About Restoring the Sinner**

The primary reason for removing fellowship from an unrepentant sinning believer is because continuing such fellowship offends the holiness of God. But there is a second reason for separation—the hope for restoration of the sinner.

As believers in Jesus Christ, our salvation does not need to be maintained. Our regeneration, our indwelling by the Holy Spirit, our baptism of the Spirit, our sealing with the Spirit, our reconciliation, redemption, and justification do not need to be maintained (2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 8:1). But our **fellowship** with God, and with one another, **does**.

We have a responsibility to love the sinning believer, even when he or she is unrepentant. But there is nothing loving about allowing a fellow believer to spin, crash, and burn, just because he or she feels happier on the way down.

*Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness* (Galatians 6:1).

One of Paul's reasons for removing fellowship from an unrepentant sinning believer was to turn him or her over to Satan's world system. Concerning the man living in adultery in Corinth, Paul said,

*I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus* (1 Corinthians 5:5).

Paul also told Timothy,

*... some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith. Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme* (1 Timothy 1:20).

An unbeliever, who has been faking being a believer, will not mind being turned over to Satan and his world system. That's what they were actually following anyway. There may be some awkwardness about leaving some friends and moving to others, but an unbeliever is more comfortable with sin being part of the definition of fellowship.

A believer, on the other hand, will suffer when turned over to the Satan's world system. A real believer is indwelt with the Holy Spirit and has a new nature received at salvation. Both of these will convict the believer and cause him or her to seek fellowship with other believers. **When a believer becomes unrepentantly sinful, it is crucial that he or she not be able to find Christian fellowship.** If they do, they can become comfortable in their sin. But if Christian fellowship is unavailable, the believer will be pressured by the Holy Spirit, and his or her new nature, to come to grips with their sin.

This **pressure to come to grips with their sin** is what Joseph gave his brothers in the last chapters of the book of Genesis. This was the hope given to Israel during their captivity. This was the pressure Nathan gave David after his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah. This pressure is what Peter did with Simon the magician. And this pressure is what Paul gave Hymenaeus, Alexander, and the adulterer of 1 Corinthians 5. Christian fellowship requires coming to grips with, repenting of, and dealing with our sin.

### **3. Separation of Fellowship Is About Protecting Other Believers**

*1 Timothy 5:20 Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.*

The third reason for separation of fellowship is because *A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough* (Galatians 5:9). There is a reality we need to understand. **Tolerance is approval.** Whatever you tolerate becomes the new normal. For example,

if you tolerate cohabitation, adulterous, lying, homosexual, or LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) activity with your children, then you have approved of it. If you do nothing about unrepentant sin when it occurs in someone in your family, then you are telling the rest of your family that particular sin is okay. Can you really afford to do that?

As a grandparent, if you tolerate unrepentant sin in a child or grandchild, you may have just sold a whole generation into sin. You have told everyone in your family and extended family that such sinful activity does not matter because nothing will be done about it. God never approves of tolerance when it comes to sin, because tolerated sin offends God's holiness, and it leads others astray. Jesus told the believers in Thyatira,

*But **I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality*** (Revelation 2:20-21).

**A verbal stand without action may be worse than no stand at all.** If you only take a verbal stand against sin, say, with your family, and claim, "They know where I stand," yet do nothing about it, then you are telling your family that your words don't matter. If you make biblically moral claims and do nothing when that morality is violated, you are saying biblical morality doesn't mean anything. It's just a bunch of words. To talk about it or send around emails, only states your opinion. So what? Everybody is entitled to their own opinion. If it's just your opinion, then your family can ignore it and press on with activity that sells them to Satan. Addressing the Corinthians who did nothing about an unrepentant sinning believer, Paul said,

*You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be **removed from your midst*** (1 Corinthians 5:2).

Of course, you can't respond to every unrepentant sinning Christian you know. Most of our lives are surrounded by people who call themselves Christians and go about violating the Word of God with no thought of repentance. Separation of fellowship assumes there has been fellowship. Fellowship is where there is a significant relationship of camaraderie, a friendship with some sort of mutually beneficial support or togetherness. What constitutes significant fellowship is, of course, a judgment call. But a good question to ask might be: "Would my children, grandchildren, employees, business associates, or those in my Bible study group, notice how I respond to this unrepentant sinning Christian?" If it is someone that others realize you only know of from a distance (say, a false teaching preacher in a different state), then they will not be affected by your ignoring the situation. But if it is someone close to you, your non-action is acceptance.

#### **4. Separation of Fellowship Is about Self-Examination**

Outsiders may say, "You are just a hypocrite, pointing the finger at someone else," or "Instead of pointing a finger at the sins of others, you should look at the fingers pointing back at yourself." It's true. We should be constantly examining ourselves. But what causes us to do that? Let's return to Galatians 6:1 and focus on the last phrase of the verse:

*Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.*

I have been involved in several situations over the years where separation of fellowship was carried out. Without exception, the biggest impact was upon those making the decision to carry out the separation. The decision to separate fellowship jerks our moral chain faster than anything I know. It is far more effective at conviction of sin and self-examination than an accountability group. Nothing against accountability groups, they can be very helpful. But if you want to really examine yourself,

take action against the unrepentant sin in the believers close to you.

The reality is, there is probably nothing as self-convicting as taking a stand against sin. The tendency of everyone involved in the process of evaluating and confronting the unrepentant sinner, is to think “There, but for the grace of God, go I.” Actually, one of the main reasons people do not want to take a stand against unrepentant sin is because they do not want to examine themselves. But Paul said,

***Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you (2 Corinthians 13:5).***

I know of no better way to *examine yourselves* than to take a stand against unrepentant sin.

# Chapter 21

## Matt's Sister

After the discussion, sitting across from each other in the cabin of the Citation, which was parked in the company hangar at the airport, Matt sat silently, trying to think about all the implications of what his deceased wife had done, and what they should do next. Eesha got up from her place across from him and sat next to him. She held his hand, laid her head on his shoulder a few minutes, then said, "How can I help?"

They sat a bit longer before he said, "Do you have any trips today?"

"No, I couldn't schedule any because you had the CJ3."

"Oh, yeah."

"What are you thinking?"

"Let's just spend the day together. I originally told Mildred I'd be gone until tomorrow. Let's go for a drive, find a place for lunch, and talk things through. I have some other things I want to talk to you about, too. It's time to make some decisions. And we are the ones that have to make them."

"That sounds wonderful. I hope I didn't screw things up by agreeing to transport the packages."

"No, you did what you thought would bring an end to the threats. And maybe it will. You took a chance, and it paid off. At least we know we are dealing with the same people who are giving us the threatening notes. Let's go for a drive."

They drove up the bay, rehearsing their whole situation, thinking through the possible consequences of each decision. Before they stopped for lunch, they came to the conclusion that the only reasonable way out of this was to go through with it. That meant their best bet was to go along with the plan of the young man who collected the black bag, and hope he was telling the truth. Matt insisted on going with her on the next drop, but she convinced him that was unwise. If the young man saw Matt, he would never make contact with her. So, she would have to go alone as before.

It was impossible to figure out what the drug family knew about the FBI's involvement. All Matt and Eesha knew for sure was that a man asked her to deliver drugs and one scared kid in his late teens wanted, or at least said he wanted, to turn himself in. So it was decided that at the next opportunity, they would inform the Feds about the young man's hope for immunity, and Eesha would transport the package. Then she would return with the unnamed kid and his mother, hopefully with a plan for catching the entire family.

It was nearly 1:00 P.M. when they stopped at a small restaurant. After they both ordered the fresh perch, Matt said, "There is something else we need to talk about. It's family stuff."

"Let me guess. Your mother just loves me and can't wait for us to get married and have lots of brown babies. No, let's see, you are white, I am brown, maybe she wants to compromise and settle for tan babies."

Matt began to laugh. "Yeah, something like that. Well, maybe not exactly like that."

"Matt, she hates me."

"Yeah, she does."

"Hey! You are supposed to say, 'No, she doesn't, she really loves you and eventually she will get used to the idea of having tan babies'."

"I thought you were a 'get straight-to-the-point – tell the truth' girl."

"I said that, didn't I? Well, the straight-to-the-point of it is that she hates the fact that we are in any way together. It's best if I just stay away from her."

"Just the opposite. You need to go back with me to the family dinners."

"No. Matt, she..."

"She has no basis for having anything against you. There is no need for you to stay away. In fact, you need to be there and force the issue. She can't remove fellowship from you because of your color or race. It's just wrong."

"But she can remove fellowship from me individually and refuse to welcome me in her home."

“No, she can’t. Removal of fellowship isn’t just something someone decides to do. In order to remove fellowship from you, my mother would need to come to you with her suspicions of actual wrong doing, then come with others, then have some group, some plurality of believers agree that there is indeed some basis for separation. And that’s never going to happen. There is no way any group of believers is going to agree with her about that. You just need to keep going to the Sunday dinners with Ben and me.”

“You have no idea how hard it is to go somewhere, knowing the hostess doesn’t want you there.”

“But everybody else does. The other women think you are adorable, which you are, by the way. And my dad is nuts about you. He’s said more positive things to me about you than he’s ever said about anyone, even Jeanne. And he loved Jeanne.”

“He’s a sweetheart, and a perfect gentleman. He invited me up to see the property he is using for dirt bikes involving inner city kids.”

“You should go. It’s quite the operation. They are still developing it, but I think it will be a great outreach.”

“But the thing with your mom is no small deal. I think she wants me excommunicated from the family. I don’t know what to do with that. I don’t want to just keep aggravating her.”

“Excommunication is for organizations, not people, and it has nothing to do with removal of fellowship.”

“But I thought excommunication was the same as removal of fellowship.”

“No. Excommunication is a corporation keeping you from its activities. It’s like getting fired from a job, or an institutional church refusing to give a person Communion. Excommunication has nothing to do with your friendships with the people you know, or God. Fellowship with people has to do with those people, so only people can remove it.”

“Okay, so I used the wrong word. It’s not excommunication, it’s removal of fellowship. By the way, since you mentioned removal of fellowship, what are you going to do about your sister?”

“Dora? What about her?”

“I mean about her and her boyfriend.”

“What about her and her boyfriend?”

“Oh-oh. Oh no! Oh crap! Now I’m guilty of gossip, too. You don’t know, do you? Crap!”

“Eesha, what’s going on?”

“Matt, I thought you knew. I don’t want to be the one to tell you.”

“Were you told this in private? Is this some sort of secret?”

“Not quite. Your sister was bragging about it in the kitchen to everybody.”

“And...”

“She is moving in with her boyfriend. She was talking like it was some great thing, like she was proud of it. Anyway, she talked it up with all the women in the kitchen before the meal last Sunday. Nobody else really said much one way or the other, but Dora was sure excited.”

“And my mother was there.”

“Long enough to hear about it.”

“So my mother keeps silent about something that clearly violates a biblical directive, but goes berserk because you have brown skin.”

“Yeah, but, Matt, don’t put me in the middle of this. Your mother hates me already. She will jump all over me for gossiping or for poisoning you against your sister or something.”

“You didn’t gossip. Apparently, I’m the only one who didn’t know about this.”

“I’m not so sure your father is aware of it either. As far as I know, the announcement was confined to the women in the kitchen.”

“That brings me back to my original point. You need to keep going with me to this meal. If you don’t go, I won’t go. If my mother wants you to leave, I will leave. From now on, it’s you and me. And we stay together.”

She reached across the table and put her hand over his. “I like ‘together’.”

# Chapter 22

## Characteristic #3

### Separation of Fellowship Is Not Private

#### **Separation of Fellowship Is for the Church**

The word *church* [ἐκκλησία (*ekklesia*)] means *called out ones*. It's a word representing a plurality of believers called out from the world to be disciples of Jesus Christ. And we live in pluralities. We live in households where there are other believers, attend local churches where there are other believers, work in jobs where there are other believers, go to schools where there are other believers, and live in cities where there are other believers. Plus, we are to be in fellowship with those believers around us—the closer our relationships with the believers around us, the greater the responsibility. A Christian is not to function as a private person, disconnected from other believers. The apostles considered themselves responsible to and for the believers in their network of relationships.

**No local assembly was ever given a directive from the apostles to separate fellowship from an individual or to separate fellowship from another assembly.** Remember, Matthew 18 and 1 Corinthians 5 describe the separation of believers from believers, not assemblies from anybody. But we also need to make the observation that believers were told to separate fellowship from unrepentant sinning believers in the cities in which they lived. Believers were not to live private lives disconnected from other believers.

In Revelation 2 and 3, Jesus evaluated the churches in Asia Minor as being all the believers in the city in which they lived. The book of Revelation is addressed to the seven churches of Asia Minor, now western Turkey. Jesus' message was to the

*church in Ephesus, the church in Smyrna, the church in Pergamum...*, etc.

From the emphasis on the seven lampstands representing those churches, it seems that Jesus had a special protection for the believers in those cities, which He might remove if they allowed the unrepentance of professing believers to continue unchallenged. Whether that lampstand protection is true for all believers in all cities, or believers in certain cities, is not clear. For example, no such protection is mentioned for the believers in Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, Rome, or the cities of Macedonia. At any rate, that was the case for these seven cities.

Next, we should notice that the *church* in these cities was defined as all the believers in that city. This is not only the case in the seven cities of Revelation 2–3, but in the epistles to the Thessalonians, Corinthians, Romans, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. The epistles to the Galatians, and those of James, Jude, John, Peter, and the one to the Hebrews included several cities or an even larger geographic region. The other epistles are all written to individuals: Timothy, Titus, Philemon, the lady of 2 John, and Gaius. **So we must conclude that the believers are the church, and they are responsible for one another.**

Every epistle of the New Testament, except Philemon, challenges believers to deal with the false teachers, false prophets, and immoral people who were identifying themselves as believers. If we were to assume that the churches were institutional “local churches” or assemblies, such as we have today, then we would be forced to conclude that unbelievers are part of the church, since unbelievers attend most of those assemblies and certainly the larger ones. But it’s impossible for a mixed group of believers and unbelievers to be a church, since the church is always and only believers (1 Corinthians 5:12-13). The apostles never referred to unbelievers as the church. Unbelievers might attend their assemblies, but the assembly itself was not the church. Assembling was just one of many things

the church did (Hebrews 10:25). The church was simply a plurality of believers. The word *church* never included unbelievers.

If you define the church institutionally, then you have to do what the apostles did not do, and come up with some stringent requirements for “membership.” And that assumes your membership requirements can actually weed out unbelievers. Still, no particular assembly could be called a church, since an unbeliever might come in. On the other hand, if believers gather themselves together (Hebrews 10:25), then they are the church. If unbelievers happen to join their assembly, the believers are still the church, but the assembly is no longer the church.

There had been believers in the church of the city of Ephesus, in Revelation 2:1-7, for over 30 years. The Apostles Paul and John, as well as Priscilla and Aquila, had lived and taught there for years. We can, therefore, assume with certainty there were many houses where churches assembled in Ephesus. But the believers were not told to focus their judgment around the particular house church they were involved in. Nothing anywhere comparable to what we today would call a “local church” was even mentioned.

Today, we have large cities and a global community. But the fellowship principle is the same. Our networks go beyond our cities, and most of our cities are too big for all the believers to fellowship with each other. But that was also the case in the larger geographic regional churches in the New Testament, like the churches of Galatia, Galilee, Judea, and Samaria (Acts 8:1; 9:31). Like them, we are responsible for our fellowship networks. That would be the believers we are close to in our families, Bible study groups, churches, schools, those we communicate and telecommunicate with, close to home and across the world. Sometimes we also have to address ourselves to believers in our network of fellowship who are following certain well-known false teachers in far-away cities because, with global communication, they may be impacting those close to us.

## **Separation of Fellowship Begins Individually and Ends with a Plurality of Individuals**

I should never remove fellowship from someone until I have first taken the issue to that person. But before any separation takes place, I must also take it to a plurality of believers, i.e., the church. I should not remove fellowship from someone if I am the only one who thinks fellowship should be removed. Jesus gave us the formula for that:

1. *If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.*
2. *But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.*
3. *If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.*
4. *If he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector (Matthew 18:15-17).*

This format gets warped into all kinds of atrocities when we define the word *church* by reading into it today's definition of an institutional church, rather than the word "church" as it is used by Christ and the apostles. If the church is some sort of institutional assembly of the believers of this age, one wonders why Jesus would use the word *church* at all. This makes no sense, because in Jesus' day, there was no such thing.

Those insisting on imposing our traditional institutional definition of "church" on the passage will say Jesus was projecting the idea forward into this age. So, are we to believe that He meant that the apostles could not use this procedure at His time? Are we to believe that Jesus meant that the apostles were to wait until the church age began and we established institutions before the apostles could follow Jesus' instruction? I know of no other instruction Jesus gave that could not be followed at the time He gave it. In this passage, Jesus was looking at the 12 and referring to those *called out* of the world to follow Him, the ἐκκλησία (*ekklesia* means *called out*).

Actually, Jesus defined the ἐκκλησία (*ekklesia*) the same way the apostles did in the book of Acts. An ἐκκλησία (*ekklesia*) is simply a plurality of believers – not a meeting, an assembly, an organization, a 501(c)3, or an institution. The Age of Grace is the time between the day of Pentecost (the one in Acts 2) and the Rapture (of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and John 14:1-3), but the word “church” itself, the ἐκκλησία (*ekklesia*), is simply a plurality of believers in Christ.

This word for “church” not only refers to a plurality of believers before the Age of Grace in Matthew 18, it also refers to a plurality of believers after the Age of Grace. Hebrews 12:23 refers to *the church* [ἐκκλησία (*ekklesia*)], *of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven*. So if we do not read today’s institutional assembly definition into it, the most natural way to understand step #3 in the procedure of Matthew 18, is not to take it to an organization but to a plurality of believers.

This procedure which Jesus gave the apostles is very effective, if it is done with the *church*, the ἐκκλησία (*ekklesia*) as defined by Christ and the apostles. Separation should begin with a *private* meeting. The word *private* [μόνος (*monos*)] means *alone* or *only*. So when we are troubled by what someone is doing or saying, we should first meet with that person *alone*. I have often done this with people teaching something false, or acting inappropriately, and it almost always ends there and ends well.

If there is no agreement, then *take one or two more with you* because it should not just be your private observations and assumptions that govern your actions. This second step assumes we are talking with other believers about the situation. This is not gossip, since the purpose is not to defame someone’s character but to see if the facts are indeed as you suspect them to be. Removal of fellowship has to be based on true information, not suspicions or suppositions. If the facts are confirmed and the sinner is still unrepentant, then we must *tell it to the church*, a

larger (more than three) plurality of believers who must also agree that this is a separation offense. Since the sinner is expected *to listen* to them, the larger plurality must make a determination for the sinner *to listen* to.

Finally, if *he refuses to listen even to the church*, then separation is indicated. Jesus defines that separation as the Jews would treat *a Gentile and a tax collector*, not including him or her in any social activities.

The point is, we should not make a separation of fellowship decision without consulting other mature believers. If you are the only one who believes a person is sinning, you may be right, but you have no biblical basis for separating fellowship. Actually, when a person is being challenged about his or her sin, he or she often separates fellowship from everyone who is confronting him or her. But that violates Matthew 18. One person should not stand alone in removal of fellowship.

In the more obviously sinful situations, individual separation will include the whole group, but that's not the same as group separation. Suppose a "Christian" member of a Bible study group is committing adultery with a "Christian" co-worker. Both are married to other professing Christians and refuse to give up the affair. Some concerned believer in the group should go to them, then take other witnesses, then bring it to the whole Bible study. The group should discuss it and eventually decide that the only proper course of action is removal of fellowship. In other words, every participant in the study individually decides to remove fellowship from the one unrepentantly committing adultery.

This should not be confused with group separation, even though it looks the same in this case, since everyone in the group agrees. Group separation would be where some pastor (an episcopal type of government), an official leadership team (a presbyterian type of government), or a majority vote (a congregational type of government), of (in this case) the Bible

study, declared that everyone in the study must remove fellowship from the adulterer, and the adulterer should not be allowed to attend the Bible study.

It may look the same when everyone agrees, but actually, it's quite different. Because, with an individual removal of fellowship, if someone in the group disagrees with the others, then that one is free to continue the fellowship. Of course, like the rest of us, they will also have to stand before Jesus one day with their decision (2 Corinthians 5:10).

In an institutional definition of removal of fellowship, another conflict has been added. The group now has to decide if it is to remove fellowship from the one continuing fellowship with the adulterer. The result is usually a huge argument and possibly a split in the group.

In a large institution, the decision to remove fellowship has little relevance for the sinning believer, or most of the people in the institution, for that matter. Most would have to be shown a picture to even know who the sinner is. Since the sinner does not know most of them, he or she can simply go somewhere else without personal impact. So we can conclude that the gatherings of believers in the first century was quite small. Removal of fellowship is only relevant when there is significant fellowship to be removed from.

Separation of fellowship is to be done in consultation with a plurality of believers who *sigh and groan* over sin. Notice how the Old Testament prophets made special notice of those who spoke to one another about the unrepentant sin in their midst.

- **Ezekiel 9:4** *The LORD said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, even through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the **men who sigh and groan** over all the abominations which are being committed in its midst."*

- **Malachi 3:16** *Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name.*

## Chapter 23

### Confrontation

On the way back from the restaurant, Matt called the company he used to secure the buildings and asked if they could sweep the whole office area, his truck, Eesha's car, and his house for bugging devices. They said they could do it next Monday.

When he dropped her off by her car, Matt said, "Eesha, I need a favor."

"Sure, what can I do?"

"Tomorrow I need to find my sister and deal with this living-with-her-boyfriend thing. I was wondering if you could stay with Ben for a few hours between eleven and one. At 1:00, Billy Michaels' mom will pick Ben up for a soccer game. I should be home around 2 P.M."

"Sure, I'd love to stay with Ben. I need to talk to him anyway. I need to straighten him out on his landing procedure."

"Yeah, that's what he says about you. Actually, he told me the other day that you'd make a perfect mom, if you would just slow up your approach speed, use more flaps, and keep the nose of the airplane higher when you flare out."

"See, that's his problem, busy airports need faster approach speeds, and the flaps need to be...perfect mom? He said that?"

"He said that. He also said your landings suck."

"My landings are perfect. He needs to understand that flaps are for..."

"Hey. I don't want to hear about it. Tell *him*. You two tend to leave me out of your conversations anyway."

"Awww, poor baby."

"Just be there by 11:00."

"Eleven, got it."

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As soon as Eesha arrived, shortly before 11 on Saturday morning, Matt left for the meeting he scheduled with his sister. Con-

frontations are always unpleasant things. Usually, the anxiety is worse just before the contact is made. Once into the conversation, the tension usually loosens up, even if there is no agreement. So it was with Matt, as he contacted his sister Dora about living with her boyfriend. He called her Friday evening and told her why he wanted to talk to her on Saturday. So this was no intervention. She was aware of the reason for getting together, and Matt came alone. Their parents were gone for a luncheon with another couple, so it was more convenient for him to come to their parents' house, especially since Dora was living there, at least for now. After an uncomfortable greeting, Matt figured the best thing to do was to jump directly into the issue.

"I understand that you have been telling people that you are moving in with Donnie, is that correct?"

"That Indian woman you are hanging around with told you that, didn't she? Mom said she wants to break up our family, and I guess she's right."

"Dora, you made the announcement to a room full of women. What'd you think, that it was going to be some well-kept secret? Don't divert the issue by talking about how I know about it. I want to hear it from you. Is it true that you are planning to move in with Donnie or not?"

"Yes, it's true. I already started moving my clothes. We took a load over yesterday."

"You claim to be a Christian and Donnie claims to be an atheist. The Bible says nothing about dating an unbeliever, so we haven't insisted you stop. But dad and I have both warned you that marrying him would violate Paul's clear command in 2 Corinthians 6:14, *Do not be bound together with unbelievers*. By dating him, you have decided to live on the fringes of what the Bible allows. Instead of asking what is close to the heart of God, you seem to be asking, 'How far can I go without stepping over the line?' Well, now you have stepped over that line. The Bible clearly condemns fornication. Sex outside of marriage is not ever right. This is not a fuzzy area. This is clearly sinful."

"How do you know we are going to have sex?"

“Come on, Dora. Nobody on the planet would believe you are going to live together and not have sex. There is no other reason for you to move in together. You don’t need to save money, you don’t need a place to live, you don’t need to spend more time together. Even if you thought you were going to avoid sex, it would happen. And what kind of testimony is that to everyone who knows you claim to be a Christian?”

“That’s the way dating works today. Living together is a step between dating and marriage. You and dad are just Neanderthals, living in the Dark Ages of the past. Society is progressing, moving on to try new ideas. Besides, there is so much divorce today that you need to find out if you are compatible together before you take that step.”

“But it doesn’t work.”

“Maybe it doesn’t work that way for you.”

“No, I mean statistically it doesn’t work. Living together actually increases the divorce rate. I looked this up on the internet last night. There are a bunch of quotes I could read, but listen to this one.” Matt pulled out his phone, Googled an article and read,

“According to statistics gathered by US Attorney Legal Services, a couple who does not live together prior to getting married has a 20 percent chance of being divorced within five years. If the couple has lived together beforehand, that number jumps to 49 percent.”

In fact, it doesn’t help marriage at all. It only encourages having sex before marriage, which tends to destroy marriage. And that’s not even the big problem, Dora. Even if it didn’t increase the divorce rate, it would still be wrong. The bigger problem is that it violates a command of God.”

“So, what are you saying, God is against people being happy. Why wouldn’t God want us to be happy? Donnie and I love each other, and this is the right step for us. Quoting a bunch of statistics doesn’t change anything. This is the way it’s done today. All you need to do is accept it, and the family will be fine. This is not what is breaking up our family. It’s your intolerance and that gossiping Indian woman that’s destroying the family.”

Matt thanked her for her time and left. As he drove away, he called Eesha to see if she was still there and if she wanted him to bring home some Chinese food for lunch. She informed him that Mrs. Michaels had just picked up Ben for soccer and she was about to leave, but she would be glad to stay if he wanted to bring lunch. A half hour later they were sitting at Matt's kitchen table attempting to eat with chopsticks when there was a knock on the door. Before Matt could get up to answer it, the door flew open and his mother came charging in.

"How dare you confront your sister?!? She's not perfect, but at least she found someone who was born in this country. And Donnie doesn't cause trouble. When he comes over he's a perfect gentleman. All you had to do was tolerate him. You don't have to be his friend if he offends you so much. Just stay out of it. Donnie is not the one destroying our family, SHE is. She just couldn't wait to gossip about this, she wants to take you away and split up our family. Everything was fine until SHE got here."

"Mother, she..." But Gracie Jenkins just turned around and walked out slamming the door so hard it knocked two porcelain souvenir mugs off a shelf, and they fell to the floor and shattered.

Matt looked at Eesha and said, "Well, I thought that went well. We were able to think things through, consider the issue together, apply biblical standards, and come to a rational conclusion."

Eesha put her head down on Matt's kitchen table with her forehead resting on her arms. Then her muffled voice said, "She hates me. I can't keep her from hating me. Everything I do, she just hates me more." Then she sat up but kept looking at the table. "Maybe she's right. Maybe I have ruined everything. I penetrated your mother's orderly world as a foreigner with brown skin." Eesha turned to look at Matt. "And I am, after all, the one who told you about your sister. And maybe I did the wrong thing agreeing to transport packages for drug dealers. I didn't even ask anybody, I just agreed to it. Boy, if your mother knew about that, she would have me arrested."

She put her head back down on the table again before she muffled, “I’m breaking up your family. I’m no good for you.”

Matt put his hand on the curtain of smooth black hair that fell down her back. “You are not breaking up our family, Eesha, Jesus is.”

With that, she sat up and looked at him with eyes that were red and wet. “What do you mean, ‘Jesus is’?”

“Let me read it to you. I think it’s somewhere in Luke chapter 12.” He tapped in the Bible app on his phone and then to Luke 12. “Yes, here it is.

*“Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division; for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”*

“I forgot He said that.”

“It’s not you, it’s the truth that my mother can’t stand. It’s the truth revealed in the Word of God that divides people. In Hebrews it says the Bible is *living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit*. That’s what’s bothering my mother. She’s trying to blame you for her own disobedience to the Word of God. My sister is putting her boyfriend above God, and my mother is putting her idea of what our family ought to be above God. If I do nothing about it, if I just go along and participate in the family dinner with Dora bringing a live-in atheist boyfriend, then I’m telling Ben it’s all right for him to do that some day. If I do nothing but talk about it, I am saying that Christianity is just a bunch of words that do not really translate to a lifestyle. I can’t afford to do that. This is about standing up for biblical morality for everybody around me, and especially to God. And you didn’t cause any of that.”

Dabbing her eyes with a tissue Matt handed her, Eesha said, “I get it that your sister’s thing had nothing to do with me. But there is something that bothers me. I am Indian.”

“Not that again. Eesha, it doesn’t matter. Interracial da-

ting and marriages are not biblically prohibited. The apostles were real clear that Christianity from the get go had many different races. Let me read to you from Acts 2.” Matt got out his phone again. “There were *Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs.*”

“I understand that. But what about the issue of being a stumbling block. Aren’t we being a stumbling block to your mother?”

“If we were, that would be something to consider. But it isn’t. Stumbling blocks are things that keep a weaker person from growing spiritually.”

“But isn’t that what your mother is?”

“No. What’s hindering my mother’s spiritual growth is that she is condoning sin rather than taking a stand against it. And when it comes to you, well, she’s mad because I won’t marry one of those white, German Lutheran women from her German Lutheran Church or her German Lutheran missionary societies. I’ve gone out with a few of them. They’re nice, they are single, and they want to find a husband. But I’m just not attracted to them. I’ve never been attracted to anyone since Jeanne died — until you. And Ben loves you, and I’m not giving you up because of my mother’s silly prejudices.”

# Chapter 24

## Characteristic #4

### Separation of Fellowship

### Is Not Corporate

#### Churches Were Not to Separate from Other Churches

Whereas God had both a commitment to individual Israelites and a corporate, covenant, commitment to Israel as a nation, He gave no corporate commitment to the church. **Only individual believers will stand before Christ in judgment.** No denomination, local church, or missionary organization will stand before Christ collectively. But all believers will stand before Him individually.

- **2 Corinthians 5:10** *For we must **all** appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that **each one** may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*
- **1 Corinthians 3:13** *...**each man's** work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.*
- **Hebrews 10:37-38** *For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. But My righteous one shall live by faith; and **if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.***

Although they were certainly not the same, the closest thing to our “local churches” in the New Testament was the house church assembly. The only recorded church assemblies were in homes:

- **Acts 2:46** *...breaking bread **from house to house**, they were taking their meals together with gladness*
- **Acts 5:42** *...**from house to house**, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ*

- **Acts 20:20** ...teaching you publicly and *from house to house*
- **Romans 16:5** ...greet *the church that is in their house*
- **1 Corinthians 16:19** *Aquila and Prisca greet you...with the church that is in their house*
- **Colossians 4:15** *Greet...the church that is in her house*
- **Philemon 2** ...to *the church in your house*

**But here's the thing.** No house church was ever told to separate fellowship from another house church. Early on, when a church was first established in a city, which simply meant there were believers in that city, no doubt when they assembled, all met together in someone's house.

**Acts 16:40** *They went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.*

But before long, and especially in the larger cities such as Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus and Rome, there were several house churches (groups of believers) in the same city (as listed in Roman 16). Nevertheless, all the believers in that city were called the church of that city (Revelation 2–3). The leaders, sometimes called elders, bishops, deacons, or just leaders were those more mature men who had responsibility for (not authority over) believers in their city (Acts 20:17). But all the believers in the city were (or were supposed to be) one church, united, not divided.

The apostles had strong objections to one assembly separating itself from another, in the sense of being a different church. We see that especially in Antioch, when the coming of certain men tried to form a Jewish church and a Gentile church. The idea of two distinct churches in one city brought strong objections from the Apostle Paul (Galatians 2:11-14). The same was true when the Corinthians began forming distinct church assemblies, identified by following certain leaders, saying, *I am of Paul,* ”

and “I of Apollos,” and “I of Cephas,” and “I of Christ.” Paul responded with the question, “Has Christ been divided?” and the comment, “I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius” (1 Corinthians 1:10-13).

### **Churches Were Not to Separate from Individuals**

Neither was any house church ever told to collectively separate fellowship from an individual. There is only one example in the New Testament of a house church assembly separating fellowship from an individual, and the Apostle John objected to it strongly. In 3 John, we read about John’s friend Gaius who was removed from his local house church assembly. In a letter to Gaius, the Apostle John said,

**3 John 9-11** *I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church. Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good.*

The church separated itself from Gaius for illegitimate reasons. And that’s what often happens when an assembly collectively separates fellowship from someone. But there’s a bigger problem here. The church’s separation from Gaius was itself illegitimate, even if the reasons had been legitimate. There is absolutely no example or command for a house church assembly, what we today might call a “local church,” or any other group of believers, to separate fellowship from a believer who is a part of that group. In this case, it was because *Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them*, objected to Gaius supporting itinerant missionaries who had not been approved by his house church. But John said,

**3 John 7-8** *For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth.*

Why couldn't Diotrephes simply say he doesn't think he should support itinerant missionaries and Gaius does, so let Gaius support them and Diotrephes not support them? Why couldn't the individuals, in that house church assembly, decide for themselves if Gaius was right to support these itinerants? If Diotrephes felt strongly enough to think that fellowship should be removed from Gaius, why not just remove fellowship from him, instead of insisting the whole church do it?

The answer, at least in the terms we would state it today, is because Diotrephes saw the church as a corporate entity that must decide things as an ordained institution of God. So if Gaius insisted on supporting those missionaries, he must be removed from the fellowship of the institutional local church because he was challenging the institutionalization of the church, and the authority of ["Reverend"] Diotrephes. When the church is viewed corporately, then individual differences among believers, which the leadership considers significant, cannot be allowed.

We have seen similar illegitimate separations of fellowship all through history, when an assembly of believers makes a corporate decision. Church assemblies have separated from individuals, and from each other, over whether or not there should be musical instruments used in worship, whether or not women should wear jewelry, whether or not they should allow dancing, whether they were too "Calvinist" or not "Calvinist" enough, whether Communion was to be open or closed, and what kind of bread or drink to use in Communion. I heard of one church that split over men wearing neckties.

# Chapter 25

## Slow as a Glacier

Sunday morning, Ben was invited to a special program for kids at Billy Mitchel's Baptist church, with the idea that Ben would meet up with his dad at his grandparent's house for lunch. Meanwhile, Matt picked up Eesha to attend a new independent Bible-oriented church called The Bay Area Fellowship, just to see what it was like. Bill and Ruth Carlson were part of 10 families that started the church, and they had invited Matt and Eesha to visit.

As Eesha climbed in the cab of Matt's truck, before she fastened her seat belt, before she gave him any kind of a greeting, she said, "I'm not going to your parents' house."

"Good morning, Eesha."

"I'm not going."

"And how are you today, Eesha?"

"Matt, I'm not going to your parents' house for dinner."

"Lunch. It's just a big lunch."

"Whatever. I'm not going."

"Yes, you are."

"No, I'm not."

"You look very pretty today. I love your hair like that, with loose curls."

"Matthew!!! No."

"You don't want me to think you are pretty?"

"No. Yes. I. You know darn well what I mean."

"Make that ravishing."

"I'm not going Matt, and that's final."

They sat with the Carlsons, and Eesha met nine new families. That actually made things a bit easier for her. During most of the service her brain was painting a picture of a confrontational lunch at the Jenkins' house, disrupted by a yelling match between Matt and his sister, with Eesha and Gracie Jenkins throwing food at each other. After church, Eesha tried a new approach. Instead of just being defiant, she begged and

pleaded with Matt to just take her home and go to the luncheon without her. But he flat-out refused.

“My mother is just trying to intimidate you.”

“Yeah, well, it’s working.”

“Eesha, just ignore her. If she says anything to you, let me handle it.”

“Are you going to fight with your sister about living with her boyfriend?”

“No, this is not the right occasion to deal with that. We need to give her some time to think it over. Then my father and I both need to talk to her, and then if there is no change, we will need to bring the issue to the other adults that attend and see what they think.”

“Matt, can’t you see I’m scared.”

“Of what?”

“Of what! What do you think? Of your mother, of course.”

“Eesha,” Matt said, looking over at her way too long to be safely driving, “Relax, trust me, it will be fine.”

Surprisingly, it was. Gracie Jenkins said nothing to Eesha. But everyone else was as friendly as usual. Eesha joined the women in the final meal preparations, and they included her in their conversations in the kitchen before the meal. Ruth Carlson asked her how she liked their new little church, then drilled her with more questions about the one back in Calcutta. Matt’s father greeted Eesha warmly and gave her a big side arm hug. Then she and Matt sat and talked with Mildred while eating. Everything went on as if nothing had happened. The few times Eesha glanced over at Matt’s mother, she was always engaged in conversation with someone, as if Eesha wasn’t there. Otherwise, she put on a front of business-as-usual.

Eesha joined Matt, with a room full of mostly guys, and watched the last half of a football game she did not understand. At one point she asked, “Why do they stop all the time and just walk around, why don’t they just keep going?” When Matt only gave her a frowny look, she didn’t ask any more questions.

Around 6:00, she left with Ben and Matt. They went to the mall and walked around a bit. Eesha bought a red and black

scarf, Matt bought Ben a new pair of shoes, then rented a Star Wars movie to watch that evening. On the way home, they stopped at Subway for sandwiches and took them back to Matt's house to eat while watching "The Force Awakens." After the movie, they watched the end of an old western on TV, then Ben went upstairs to bed. Matt and Eesha made some coffee in the kitchen, then sat back down on the couch. They talked about the day, Eesha admitting it went far better than she thought it would.

As they talked, their heads moved closer together. Soon their noses touched, and then their lips brushed lightly over each other. They both closed their eyes, and just as their lips began to press softly together, there was a KABUMB, THUMP, CLUMP, BUMP behind them. They both jumped to their feet and turned toward the stairs, viewing an embarrassed crumpled up Ben at the bottom.

"Ben, what the, are you all right?" Matt spoke as he rushed toward the boy sprawled out on the floor.

"Yeah...I'm fine. I just...um...slipped."

"How could you slip? Wait a minute. You were watching us. You were spying on us from the stairway just above the landing."

"Are you sure you are all right?" Eesha repeated Matt's question, combing her fingers through the boy's ruffled hair.

"Yeah, I'm okay, really."

"And, you were..." At this point, realizing what happened and being assured Ben had not been injured in the fall, Eesha began to chuckle. "You were watching us, and you bent too far forward and lost you balance and rolled down the stairs?" This, she followed with more laughter.

"Well, I wanted to see if dad would really kiss you. He's so darn slow, I didn't think he'd ever get around to it. So when it looked like it was actually going to happen, I didn't want to miss it. So I leaned forward to see. And, well, yeah, I leaned too far and slipped."

At that, Eesha laughed uncontrollably, Ben smiled sheepishly, and Matt just glared at both of them. Then Matt

said, "I can't believe you would spy on us, or that you think I'm slow at...things."

"Dad, when it comes to romance, you move at about the speed of an Alaskan glacier in the winter."

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"They didn't find anything," Matt said as he walked through the open door into Eesha's office unannounced, just before noon on Monday. When she looked confused, he continued. "Bugs. They couldn't find any listening devices or any other detection equipment. The drug family who is constantly threatening us is not listening to us. How can that be? Why wouldn't they listen to us? It doesn't make any sense."

"I don't know. Maybe they don't need to listen to us. Or maybe they are listening to us in some way we haven't figured out yet."

"Have you heard any more from them since your last carry?"

"No. Have you received any more threatening notes?"

"No. Maybe they are done with us. Anyway, Eesha, I have a flight for you. It just came up. I need you to fly a man to Denver, leaving in one hour, can you do that?"

"No problem. The Citation is fueled up and ready to go."

"Thanks, I really appreciate it."

"One hour, that's pretty sudden. Is everything okay?"

"It is with us, but the president of the company in Denver, the one we are building a tunneling excavator for, he called a few minutes ago. He said one of their executives was here in Green Bay on other business and needs to return to Denver immediately. Apparently, there is some family emergency, and the airlines can't get him home until tomorrow. So he asked if we could fly him back right away. I've never met this guy, and it's not exactly our problem, but I'd like to help him out. Besides, we are in a huge project with these people, and it would be good for our relationship to do them a favor."

"Sure. Great. Where do I meet him?"

“His name is William Binkley, and he will meet you at the General Aviation Terminal at 1:00.” Matt walked around her desk, took her hand, and pulled her to a standing position. Then he put his arms around her waist and said, “I was thinking you might get back just in time to go and sit with me on a hard bleacher seat in a smelly gym to see one of Ben’s basketball games, even though he’s not much good at it.”

“Wow. How charming! How could a girl turn down an offer like that? You are turning into quite the romantic, Matthew Jenkins. But this is still not a date, right?”

“No, no, it’s not a date, but it is an expensive outing, it cost a whole five-dollar donation to the school to get in.”

“Wow, and a big spender, too!”

“Yeah, and this is just to prove I am not as ‘slow as a glacier’.” He pulled her toward him and gave her a quick kiss on the lips. It surprised her so much, she barely had time to blink before it was over.

“No,” she said. “No, no, no, you are not going to get away with counting that as a kiss which gets you out of the glacier category.” She put her arms around his neck and pulled his head down for a kiss that lasted until she was late leaving for the airport.

# **Chapter 26**

## **Characteristic #5**

### **Fellowship Separation Is Determined Personally**

#### **Let's Suppose**

**Let's suppose** Pete and Joe are in the same local church. Pete thinks no believer should drink alcohol at all. Joe owns a bar where alcohol is sold regularly. Pete confronts Joe, who does not believe he is sinning by owning a bar. Pete believes fellowship should be removed from Joe. If Pete believes in an institutional definition of the church, he will take the issue to the elders. If they agree with Pete, then Joe will have to leave the church. If they agree with Joe, then Pete will have to leave the church because he would be in fellowship with what he considers sin. So one way or another, someone has to leave. The church has made itself a dictator of fellowship with the authority to remove fellowship from someone. More likely, some in the church will agree with Joe and some with Pete. That means the only way to solve the problem is for the church to split into two churches, one that allows the drinking of alcohol and one that does not.

**OR** if they all had an individual view of the church, where each individual must stand before God with his or her decision, then Pete could simply not drink and not go to Joe's bar. If Pete felt this required removal of fellowship from Joe, and he found a plurality of believers that agreed with him, then he could simply not fellowship with Joe.

**Let's suppose** Mary believes every woman should have her head covered in church, but Sue does not. If Mary believes in an institutional definition of the church, she will have to go to the elders and insist that the church make a policy about it. Then Sue must be removed from fellowship, if she doesn't

comply, or Mary will have to leave if the church does not establish such a policy. The church has viewed itself institutionally, with the authority to remove fellowship from someone, whether the other believers in the congregation think so or not. Most likely some in the church will agree with Mary and some with Sue. That means the only way to solve the problem is for the church to split into two churches, one that allows head covering and one that does not.

**OR** if they all had an individual view of the church, where each individual must stand before God with his or her decision, Mary will simply wear a head covering and Sue will not.

**This has actually happened** with church practices that I've mentioned, plus many others (such as what kind of bread to use in Communion, the mode of baptism practiced, whether we should assemble on Saturday or Sunday, the use of musical instruments, or more recently whether we sing modern music or hymns). An institutional definition of the church requires some sort of leadership decision and a separation of fellowship from those who don't comply.

**OR** if the church is a plurality of believers, then some group of believers will decide to do things a certain way when they gather together and other believers are free to join them or look for a church that practices what they believe.

**Actually**, there is something interesting that happens here. If someone believes strongly about a certain practice an assembly of believers should or should not do (like those mentioned – the use of alcohol, dancing, the mode of baptism, the use of musical instruments, modern music vs. hymns, head covering, the use of leavened or unleavened bread in Communion), the strongly objecting person will usually be the one to leave. They will then find an assembly that does what they believe. So, in what sense is separation of fellowship collective? The individual believer will make his or her individual decision anyway. And no actual removal of Christian fellowship has happened at

all. The dissenting believer simply switches churches, and most of their Christian fellowship remains unaffected. The only thing that has happened is believers have decided to go to different meetings, and they have made the decision individually. No matter what authority an institution thinks they have, all real decisions are made individually anyway.

### **What About Real Unrepentant Sin?**

In the cases of real moral unrepentant sin, where separation is required, institutional separation is rarely effective. And where that may have been effective in the past (say, small towns in the 1800s), it is usually ineffective today. In the rare case when such “excommunication” is carried out by a “local church” today, it is usually just an opportunity for a sinning believer to move to a different institutional “local church” and be welcomed as a “seeker.”

In Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, the clergy claims the church institution plays a part in the parishioner’s salvation, so they see themselves as carrying a big stick when it comes to “excommunication.” But there is no such thing in the Bible, and it usually leads to atrocities, the Inquisition of the Middle Ages being the mega example. In traditional Protestant churches, the big stick is usually family ties. Parents and grandparents with traditional connections to the church will apply pressure to comply, giving the institutional church unbiblical authority over who attends their meeting or receives Communion.

But all this creates an institutional authority structure which Christ and the apostles have strictly forbidden (Mark 10:42-45). The church becomes a dreaded ruler, a place where the leaders are feared instead of God, where uncomfortable forces exist, or at best, a boring tradition, rather than an exciting fellowship of believers individually contributing to one another. Because such “excommunication” threats create an uncomfortable church, most churches today, rather than accept an individual

definition of removal of fellowship, cling to an institutional definition of the church and do no removal of fellowship at all. Anything that does not increase attendance at their meetings is seen as unwise. Taking a stand against sins, most of which others in the group are also committing, might make those others afraid to attend. And we can't have that! The result is the tendency to embrace sin and call it love.

Instead of the local church leadership telling everybody, "This is what we will do," the apostles challenged every individual believer to decide what was the right thing to do, based upon the teaching of Christ and the apostles (our New Testament). Church "excommunication" is not something ever mentioned in the New Testament because it assumes an institutional definition of the church and involves removal of a person from involvement in the programs and activities of that institution. So I have avoided tying the expression "excommunication" to the removal of fellowship.

## Chapter 27

### Colorado

Matt waved as Eesha drove off to meet the unknown Mr. William Binkley at the airport. Then he went back inside, feeling a strange sense of loneliness he had never felt before. That's crazy. How could he miss her already? He walked back toward his office, wishing he could go with her and hating the thought of his next meeting, a meeting he didn't want to tell Eesha about until he knew how it would turn out. He was only back in his own office for five minutes before Mildred buzzed him with the message, "They're ready for you." Matt got up and went to his father's office, where he and Matt's mother were already seated.

"Hello, Mother, Dad."

Gracie only glared at Matt and said, "This is absurd, there is no reason for this."

Stewart put his hand over his wife's before he said, "Yes, there is, dear. Matt is not just complaining, he is saying you are wrong, your actions are sinful, so we have to talk about it." Gracie opened her mouth but closed it again when her husband raised his hand and said, "I want to hear what you have to say, but first we need to hear Matt's concern. So go ahead, Matt, state your concern in a few simple sentences."

"She refused to fellowship with Eesha when we attended the Sunday meal. She intentionally gave her a cold shoulder, trying to make her feel unwelcome, and only because she is Indian. It's wrong to refuse fellowship to another believer just because you don't like the color of her skin."

Again, Stewart raised his hand, postponing his wife's waiting comments as he said, "But to be accurate, son, the problem is not that she is Indian, but that she was there as your girlfriend. Is that not correct? Your real problem is that your mother is objecting to you having a girlfriend from India."

"She's not exactly my, well, yeah, I guess that's right. But she didn't just object, she treated Eesha coldly. What she

did was mean-spirited. It made Eesha feel like an outcast, and that's just what Mother intended."

No longer able to be restrained, Gracie pointed a finger at Matt, saying, "You brought that foreigner as a girlfriend, and she is destroying our family, gossiping about Dora, and taking you away from us. She is a trouble causer."

"Dora decided to live with her boyfriend and that's okay with you, but when I find a beautiful, sincere, godly Christian girl, you can't stand it because she's brown. The real problem is you are afraid you will be embarrassed with the gossiping women at your lily-white Lutheran church."

"That Indian is the gossip. She spread lies about Dora."

"Dora announced her fornication to a room full of people. Eesha just assumed I already knew."

"Hold on now," Stewart intervened, "Dora's situation is not part of this discussion. We need to deal with it but at some other time. Now Gracie, it does seem that Eesha had no intention to gossip, and Matt, you have no right to judge your mother's motives as 'mean-spirited.' The only question here is, did Gracie intentionally refuse to treat Eesha the same as the other women at the Sunday dinner, with the purpose of making her feel unwelcome?"

"Yes, that's exactly what she did."

"I don't like her. I don't have to like her. Nothing says I have to like her just because she claims to be a Christian."

"No, dear," Stewart put his hand over his wife's again. "You don't have to like her, but you don't know her at all. I understand you are disappointed that Matt is seeing an Indian girl. You don't have to like that, but you can't refuse to fellowship with her. If you talked with her, you might like her. I talked with her only briefly, and she seems like a nice girl and a maturing Christian."

"I don't want to talk to her."

"Okay, but it's wrong to be rude to her, to make her feel unwelcome."

"I don't want her to feel welcome either."

"You don't have to want to do what's right. But you do have to do what's right. Jesus didn't want to go to the cross. He

did it because His heavenly Father sent Him to do so. Nobody is saying you have to *want* to make her feel welcome in our home. But you have to do it anyway. Okay?"

"Humph."

"Gracie?"

"Okay, okay. I'll try not to make her feel unwelcome."

"And Matt, that should end this matter, okay?"

"Yeah, as long as she..."

"Matt, don't muddy the water. You asked that she extend fellowship to Eesha, and she's agreed to do that. All right?"

"Yeah, I guess. I mean, yes, that's fine."

At Stewart's request, they all hugged each other before they left, although Matt and his mother did not show much enthusiasm for it.

After Matt left his father's office and passed Mildred's desk, she said, "There is someone to see you. He said his name is Craig Mulder. I don't know who he is, except he said it was about the Denver mining project and that it was important he see you right away. So I told him he could wait in your office. I hope that's all right."

"Sure. Did he say what he wanted?"

"Only what I told you," Mildred shrugged.

"Okay, thanks." Matt walked in his office and closed the door. Mr. Mulder introduced himself and shook Matt's hand. Matt pointed to the stuffed chair near his desk, and they both sat down. As he was about to ask Mr. Mulder how he could help him, Matt looked up to see a 9 mm Glock semiautomatic handgun pointed at him.

"We will sit here for a few minutes," the man, whose name Matt assumed was probably not Craig Mulder, announced. "Then we will be taking a little trip together."

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When Eesha pulled up in the parking area next to the General Aviation Terminal at the Green Bay Airport, she noticed a man sitting in a parked car. As she got out of her car, so did he. She

immediately recognized him as the drug contact man, and he was carrying the usual black bag.

“Hi, there, Eesha. Making another trip I see.”

“How could you possibly know that? I just found out an hour ago.”

“Oh, you’d be surprised what I know.”

“Well, if you want me to carry that bag, you better give it to me now. I have to meet a man inside to transport him to Denver, and I’m already late.”

“You are meeting a man named William Binkley.”

“How did you...”

“He’s not inside. He’s outside. I’m William Binkley. Well, not really, but you can call me that if you like. And you are not only taking this black bag to Denver, you are taking me as well.”

“I’m not taking you anywhere.”

“Oh, I think you are.”

“So. Like what? You have a gun in that coat and you plan to shoot me if I don’t?”

“Actually, I do have a gun, but I’m not going to shoot you.” Opening his jacket far enough for Eesha to see the gun, he added, “We are, however, going to take this gun with us. Legally, a passenger is not allowed to carry a gun onboard an aircraft, but a pilot is. And since you are the pilot, I’ll just let you carry it.” With that, he pulled a .45 semi-auto Smith & Wesson pistol out of his belt, took it by the barrel and handed it to Eesha, with the handle pointed toward her.

With confusion added to her frustration, Eesha reluctantly took the gun. First, she just looked at it. Then she hit the clip release, which dropped a loaded clip into her hand. She looked at it a minute and slid it back in to the gun. “So why don’t I just shoot you now and save us the trip?”

“Oh, I don’t think you want to do that. I have a significant message for you on my phone.”

“A message?”

“Yup. Let me show you.” He reached into his pants pocket and pulled out a phone, tapped his text messages and held up a text photo for Eesha to see. Her eyes widened, her

mouth opened and her brown skin almost turned pale. In front of her was a picture of Matt with a gun pointed at his head. “So,” Binkley, or whatever his name is, continued, “if you want to see your boss-slash-boyfriend alive again, you will do exactly as I say. The man holding the gun on him is a hired killer that works for the man who isn’t happy about your boyfriend killing one of his brothers and putting him in prison for over six years. And if I don’t check in with him every 30 minutes, or if I check in with discouraging news, your boyfriend is history. Is that clear?”

With her mouth still open, Eesha just nodded her head.

“Good. Excellent. Then we can get going.”

As is usual when going through the general aviation terminal, there is no security check and no questions asked if a passenger is with a pilot and the personnel at the desk recognize the pilot. So twenty minutes after her arrival at the airport, Eesha was in the air, headed toward Denver at 417 knots (489 miles, 772 kilometers) per hour, with one black bag, one .45 semi-automatic hand gun, and one passenger carrying a cell phone with a disturbing text photo. Once they leveled off, the man, calling himself William Binkley, gave Eesha some additional information.

“When we arrive in Denver, I will wait here in the plane, and you will deliver the package to your contact man as usual. The young man’s name is Michael Schroder, by the way. I doubt if he ever told you that. He is 17-years-old, and he is expecting you to take him and his mother back with you to Green Bay to be protected by the FBI until he testifies against the whole family.”

Eesha looked over at him with an obviously surprised expression without saying anything. He continued, “Oh, yes, we know about his planned desertion, and we don’t like deserters. We allowed him to function for a while because, like you, he was useful, even though you were communicating with the Feds, and he was planning to do the same. But now he, you, and your boss-slash-boyfriend are becoming dangerous. So, all that has to come to an end. Anyway, back to the point, when we arrive in Denver you will say nothing to him about all this,

and deliver the package so he thinks we don't expect anything. Then you will bring him and his mother back here to the plane. If all that does not happen in 30 minutes, your boyfriend gets a bullet in the brain. Got it?"

Eesha only nodded.

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When they arrived at the Denver airport, a flagman signaled them to a parking place on the tarmac across from the general aviation terminal. The man called Binkley told her to file a flight plan back to Green Bay before she delivered the bag to Michael Schroder. Eesha took the black bag, which usually contained packages of uncut heroin, climbed down the small stairway, and was given a golf cart ride to the office area. She went to the main desk and asked to have the Citation refueled, saying she would return in about a half hour. Then she called to file a return flight plan and went to the designated restaurant in the main terminal.

She hated the fact that she was betraying the young Michael Schroder and his mother. But she also realized that if she attempted to alter the plan, the drug family would have the boy and his mother killed immediately. So she used the FBOs courtesy car to drive to the main terminal, where she parked and walked to the restaurant as she was told.

She sat only five minutes before Michael Schroder came and sat beside her. "Is it all set up? Are we a go?"

"It's all set up. Where's your mother?"

"In our car, short-term parking, lot A, aisle 4."

"Take this bag, go to your car, leave short-term parking, and drive around to the general aviation terminal and park next to the big Philipps 66 sign. I'll meet you there in about 15 minutes."

"Don't you want to ride with us?"

"I have the FBOs courtesy car. I'll wait here a few minutes, then I'll drive around. I should get there just a few minutes after you do."

“All right. Meet you there.” With that, Michael Schroder got up and left with the black bag.

Eesha waited five minutes before she left the restaurant. She walked to short-term parking and drove back to the general aviation terminal. Michael and his mother got out of their car as Eesha approached. She greeted Mrs. Schroder, then led them through the office area. She introduced them as her passengers, then paid the fuel and parking bill with the Jenkins Equipment Company MasterCard. A service man gave the three of them a golf cart ride out to where the Citation was parked. Eesha thanked the man and asked him to take the chocks away from the wheels. Then she signaled for Michael and his mother to board the plane ahead of her. With Mrs. Schroder in the lead, they walked up the steps and into the cabin. As soon as she was inside, Mrs. Schroder stopped suddenly. Michael bumped into her and looked up to see William Binkley sitting at a table with a gun in his hand. “Welcome aboard,” Binkley said. “Have a seat.”

Michael swung around to be face-to-face with Eesha. “You betrayed me. You set us up.”

“No, she didn’t,” Binkley said. “If she hadn’t led you in here, you would be lying dead in your car in short-term parking lot A, aisle 4. She bought you another couple hours of life, to, you know, say goodbye to each other, make your peace with God or whatever.”

“Sorry, Michael,” Eesha attempted. “They have a gun to the head of my boyfr... my boss, and they said they would kill him if I didn’t go along with this. I just couldn’t think of anything to do.”

“Yeah, yeah,” Binkley interrupted, “now get your clearance to Green Bay, and let’s get this thing in the air.” Binkley gave handcuffs to Michael and his mother, instructing them to cuff themselves to the chair armrests. After he made sure they did so, he took his place in the copilot seat.

They got their clearance, taxied out and took off, making a gentle turn to the east then northeast toward Green Bay. They had barely leveled off at their initial assigned altitude of

10,000 feet, when Binkley said, “Call ATC and cancel your IFR flight plan.”

“What!?! Why? That’s going to sound strange.”

“Tell them you have a change of plans, your passenger wants to visit friends, and you will refile later.” Eesha just looked at him for a few seconds. “Do it!” So she did. “Now squawk VFR and turn west. When we cross the Rockies turn the transponder off altogether.

“Where are we going?”

“Fly to Vail, then fly west following I-70 past Edwards to the town of Wolcott, then turn north. Keep it low, within 200 feet of the tops of the mountains.”

“I really hate to be a pessimist, but there are no airports up there, at least none the Citation can land on.”

“There is one, and it’s not on the map.”

“It better not be small, this airplane needs a sizable runway, especially at this altitude.”

“You’ll make it.”

They flew over Vail and followed I-70 west. It only took a few minutes to pass over the town of Edwards. “We’ll be over Wolcott in a minute. Then what?”

“Turn north. Actually turn north now and get up about a hundred feet. There off to your left.”

“What? That? I can’t land the Citation on that. It’s dirt and gravel and way too short. No way.”

For the first time, Binkley took out his gun and pressed the muzzle against Eesha’s head. “Look, honey. This airplane is landing on that runway, one way or the other. Got it!”

Without responding, Eesha climbed up another 500 feet and circled the dirt strip surveying the mountainous terrain. There was a hockey-stick shaped valley off to the south side that looked like a possible approach. Eesha circled to the southeast and lowered the Citation into the valley. She extended the landing gear, put on full flaps and extensions, slowing the luxury jet as much as possible. She thought about Ben’s argument for a slow approach as they screamed along 20 feet above the valley floor at 150 miles per hour, leaving a dust storm in their wake. Then came the hockey stick turn between

high rugged peaks on either side. She made the turn at 120 then suddenly, she saw the end of the runway charging toward her. She pulled the throttles back all the way and began lifting the nose. The wheels threw up a cloud of dust and dirt as they touched the gravel at the near end. She hit the reverse thrusters and laid on the brakes, bringing the Citation to a stop not 10 feet from the end of the so-called runway.

# Chapter 28

## Characteristic #6

### Separation of Fellowship

### Is about Morality and Theology

#### Moral Reasons

I'm sure it's not meant to be all-inclusive, but Paul gave us a list in 1 Corinthians 5:11.

*I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is,*

1. *An immoral person*, this is the general word for *sexual immorality*
2. *Covetous*, this is the common word for *greedy*
3. *An idolater*, following some other supernatural power, Paul also applied it to materialism
4. *A reviler*, this is an abusive person or slanderer and would include verbal blasphemy
5. *A drunkard*, in today's world that would include addictive drug use
6. *A swindler* or thief

*—not even to eat with such a one*

Although this is not an exhaustive list (see also 1 Corinthians 6:9-10), most actions requiring removal of fellowship would be applications of these sins. Paul told the Thessalonians,

**2 Thessalonians 3:6** *Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.*

We can here assume the *unruly life* is represented by the six categories above and *the traditions which you have received from us* is what we call the New Testament.

The idea is to remove fellowship from everyone who claims to be a brother and sister in Christ, who does not live according to the teaching of the apostles.

## Theological Reasons

Separation of fellowship, however, is not just for moral reasons. In the New Testament there is just as much emphasis on separation from false teachers. When Jesus evaluated the churches of the cities in Asia Minor, He praised them for not tolerating false apostles.

**Revelation 2:2** *I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you **cannot tolerate evil men**, and you put to the test **those who call themselves apostles, and they are not**, and you found them to be false.*

He also criticized them for not separating fellowship from those who followed false teaching.

**Revelation 2:14-15** *'But I have a few things against you, because **you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.***

What is interesting is that Jesus criticized them for not being critical. He judged them for not judging. It is like what was said through the prophet Zechariah,

**Zechariah 8:16** *These are the things which you should do: **speak the truth to one another; judge with truth and judgment for peace in your gates** [that is, the gates of your cities].*

Here are a couple of examples where Paul deals with the issue of separation over theology.

- **Romans 16:17-18** *Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances **contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.** For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.*

- **Titus 3:10** *Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.*

Again, notice *those who cause dissensions and hindrances* and the *factious man* (KJV *heretic*) are not just those who are disagreeing with the majority. Christ and the apostles did that constantly. The dissension Paul is telling them to watch out for was *contrary to the teaching which you learned*, that is, what you learned from Christ and the apostles recorded in our New Testament.

It would seem that any sin, be it moral or theological, that is pursued without repentance would be grounds for separation of fellowship, when it persists with justification, without remorse, and after a period of time when such a person is confronted several times.

## Chapter 29

### A Mountain Road

“Congratulations. Nice landing.” Binkley lowered his gun, smiling. “Now turn us around and taxi us back to that shack off the middle of the runway.” Eesha gave him the dirtiest look she could conjure up as she raised the flaps and extenders while increasing the power enough to turn the airplane around. “Of course, the bad news is you are all going to die. But I do have some good news for you.” Eesha just looked over at him without comment. “Your boyfriend is here to die with you.”

“Matt? Matt is here? How did...?”

“He and the family ‘cleaner,’ left Green Bay just about the time we did. He put Matthew Jenkins on a Beech King Air and made him fly it out here. The King Air is slower, of course, but they didn’t have a stop in Denver, so they are already here. See? There.”

Eesha looked up and saw the King Air. She had been so focused on the length and condition of the runway, she had not noticed it before. Now she saw the aircraft parked in front of the shack and a vehicle parked beside the shack that looked like an armored car or a cube van. When they got closer, she could see Matt sitting in the left seat of the King Air. As Eesha taxied toward the shack, Matt and his kidnapper got out and began walking toward the Citation. Eesha cut the power and looked at Binkley, who said, “Go ahead, say hello.”

Eesha climbed out of her harnesses, walked to the cabin, opened the door, hurried down the steps, and ran into Matt’s open arms. The engines of the Citation were still whining when Matt wrapped his arms around her waist, and she put hers around his neck. With her mouth pressed against his ear, she said, “I’m sorry. I’m so, so sorry. All this is my fault. And now we’re going to die, and it’s all my fault. I’m so sorry, Matt. I’m so...”

“Shhhh. This is not your doing. It’s their doing. It’s not your fault, honey. It’s their fault. And we aren’t dead yet.”

“There is no way out. It’s like we are hemmed in on every side.”

“Then we look straight ahead. Just keep moving forward and look for an opportunity. If I make a move, just move with me, okay?”

“Okay.”

“That’s enough, you two.” The order came from the man who called himself Craig Mulder, standing several feet behind Matt. “The honeymoon is over. Get in the van.”

“Who are *you*?” Eesha asked feeling defiant and angry.

“I’m the cleaner, the one who cleans up the family’s messes. Call me Mulder.”

“Where are we going, Mulder?”

“You are a gutsy little beauty, aren’t you? We are going to meet the father and the brother of the man your boyfriend killed, plus you’ll get a chance to meet a few other male family members. They all want a piece of this action. The father insists on being part of it, or I’d have killed both of you back in Green Bay. Enough questions. Get in the van.”

Matt was forced to drive while Mulder rode shotgun—with a shotgun. Binkley cuffed Eesha, Michael, and his mother to each other and to the bench seat they were forced to sit on. Then Binkley sat on a bench seat behind everybody. Both he and Mulder kept their guns in their hands. Alongside the makeshift air strip was a gravel road that led to a narrow paved road with two lanes, but no shoulder. “Turn right,” Mulder ordered. So Matt turned right onto a road that was heading up into the mountains.

“I’m curious,” Matt said, after they drove for about 10 minutes. “How did you know what we were doing. You knew everything all along. And I had the place swept for listening devices, and there was nothing. How did you get all your information?”

“Humph. Wouldn’t you like to know?”

“Come on, what difference does it make? You are going to kill us anyway.”

“I’m surprised you didn’t figure it out. Listening devices are not the only way to get information. Listen-ers are better.”

“We thought about that, but everybody there has been with my father for years, except the guests, and there is no way they could get the information.”

“Therefore, one can only conclude...?”

“That it wasn’t one of the guests. But the foremen are all loyal, and they didn’t even have access to the information. The only people that knew everything were Eesha, and I, and...and... Oh, my word. Mildred?”

“Mildred?” Eesha echoed from the seat behind them. “But why?”

“Seems she had a thing for the old man years ago. Head over heels in love with Stewart Jenkins, as I understand it.”

“With my father? No way. He’d never do that. He’d never have an affair with Mildred.”

“Yeah, well, I think that’s exactly the problem. It was all one way. Mildred thought he was in love with her when he wasn’t, and when she finally figured that out, or he made that really clear, well, hell hath no fury.”

“So she did all this to get back at my father for not having an affair with her?”

“I guess. Anyway, it began back when your wife was transporting for them.”

They rode on in silence for another 10 minutes before Mulder told Matt, “Okay, pull off in that flat turn-around place over there on the right.”

“What are we doing here?” Eesha asked.

“We wait here for the father and the brothers to arrive.”

Matt parked the van, leaving the keys in the ignition, and they all got out on the flat gravel area, which was the only place they’d come to which was wide enough for a car to turn around since they’d left the air field. They were forced to sit on the ground. Michael Schroder was cuffed to his mother and Eesha was cuffed to Matt.

After a few minutes of silence, Matt told Eesha, “Dad and I had a talk with mom.”

“How’d that go?”

“Reluctantly she agreed to quote ‘not make her feel unwelcome.’ I wanted more, but I guess that is as much as she could agree to for now.”

“I guess it won’t matter anyway, since we’ll be dead. I’m sure your mother will blame me for that, too. And maybe she’s right. At least I won’t be around to hear it.”

“Hey, I told you, we’re not dead yet.”

After a few more minutes of silence, Eesha said, “So what’s the deal with your sister, did you talk about her?”

“No. Dad kept the discussion on point, although he assured us that situation will be addressed.”

“Do you think she will change?”

“Unfortunately, no. I really think mother will come around and eventually be your friend. But not Dora. She will stick with Donnie. I suspect the Sunday group will have to decide if we should remove fellowship from her. Anyway, if we do, Mom won’t go along with it. So it’s bound to split the family.”

“Um, Matt, don’t you think we have been here a long time. The rest of their family should be here soon.”

“Yes.” Matt silently mouthed the words, “*Follow my lead.*” Then he said, “Hey, Mulder, I gotta pee.”

“Me, too.”

“Yeah, me, too.”

“So do I.”

“There’s a thick clump of trees behind you,” Mulder said. “Go one at a time, and remember, if you don’t come back, somebody dies. So don’t make us come and get you.”

“Women first,” Matt suggested.

Mrs. Schroder went first, followed by Eesha, then Michael and finally Matt. Each one was uncuffed while they went behind the bushes, then recuffed when they returned. As Matt was returning from the bushes, he saw a black Mercedes coming up the road. He knew their time was up, and it was now or never. “Is that the family car coming?” Matt asked. As they all turned to look, Matt tapped Eesha’s arm and pointed to Binkley, who was standing in front of her now, momentarily turned to

look at the car. She nodded and plunged herself into him knocking him off balance as Matt grabbed a rock and hit Mulder in the head as hard as he could. Mulder dropped as fast as the rock, and Matt dove for his gun.

Just as Binkley regained his balance and aimed his gun at Eesha, Matt shot him. Matt aimed for center mass and hit him just inside his shoulder. Since the gun was a 45 caliber, the impact of the bullet knocked Binkley to the ground. That gave Matt enough time to kick the gun out of his hand and put his foot on Binkley's neck, while pointing the gun at his head. "Eesha, get the keys out of his jacket pocket, and Michael, get that gun," Matt barked.

As Eesha was getting the keys for the cuffs, the black Mercedes was pulling in the turn-around. "Everybody, quick, in the van. Hurry up. You two help Mrs. Schroder in the sliding door and get that door closed." Meanwhile, Matt ran around the van, got in the driver's seat and started the engine. Looking over his shoulder, he yelled, "Are we all in? Get that door shut." Michael had pushed his mother in and all three were laying on the floor, knotted together by the handcuffs. While Eesha was sliding the door shut with her foot, bullets from an automatic weapon pelted the side of the van. One got through the opening by the door, but it lodged harmlessly in the inside wall of the van. Matt threw the van in gear and tore out of the turn-around, spraying gravel behind him.

With no idea which way to go, but knowing there wasn't much back the way they came, he turned right and headed uphill, higher into the mountains. The Mercedes stopped only long enough to pick up the wounded men before it came speeding after the van. They were easily able to catch the van and get close-up behind it, but Matt was able to keep them from passing on the narrow road by swerving into the oncoming lane whenever they tried to get alongside. The Mercedes kept shooting at the van, but the bullets could not penetrate the van.

Eesha released everyone from the handcuffs and moved up to the shotgun seat. "What do you think?" she asked Matt, and continued with, "We can't outrun them, and there is no

place to go up here. And it's getting dark. I don't see any lights anywhere, except those flickering ones down there in the valley."

"What do you think those lights are, anyway?"

"Seems to be a row of small fires. I don't see any real lights, like house lights or street lights."

"You're right, they are fires. I remember now. We sold a piece of equipment to a logging operation out here once. They burn their brush in piles at the end of the day. But there is nobody there that could help us."

"Matt, we have to come up with a plan. They took our phones. This road could go on forever before we come to a town or anywhere we could get help. Apparently, their bullets can't penetrate the van, but they can simply wait us out."

"And that might not take long."

"What do you mean?"

"Although this thing seems to be bullet proof, the fuel tank is not. We are losing fuel rapidly. Apparently, they shot a significant hole in the tank. We'll be out of fuel in minutes."

"Oh, no. Matt, what are we going to do? Any ideas?"

"No, but let's go over what we know."

"We know we can't outrun them, we can't lose them, we can't turn around, or even turn off this road, and there is nobody down there to help us, even if we could."

"Wait a minute, you just gave me an idea. Eesha, can you shoot a gun accurately?"

"What? No!"

"Hey, Michael," Matt yelled over his shoulder, "Can you shoot accurately?"

Michael stuck his head forward and said, "Sure, the family teaches everyone to shoot."

"Okay, listen. This is a long shot, no pun intended, but it's the only thing I can think of. I'm going to pull over in the left lane and hit the brakes. That will bring us up alongside the Mercedes. Eesha, I want you to open the sliding side door just enough for Michael to stick the nose of that .45 through it. Michael, I want you to lie down on the floor. When we get alongside the Mercedes, shoot one hole near the bottom of their fuel

tank. Just one. Not a bunch of holes. I just want a stream of fuel coming out. You'll only have a second or two at the most. Can you do that?"

"I think so. If I can see the tank, I should be able to hit it."

Eesha opened the side door a crack. Matt pulled over in to the left lane and hit the brakes in one sudden move that caught the Mercedes off guard. "A little further back, I can't see the tank," Michael said. Matt touched the brakes again.

"How's that?"

"Yeah, I can see it. Cover your ears everybody, this is going to be loud."

BANG. "Dang, I hit the frame." BANG. "Okay, I got it that time."

All of it happened so fast, the Mercedes driver was unable to react. When he saw the van alongside of him, he tried to push the car into the van. It hit the right front fender, but the van was far too heavy to be moved by the Mercedes. Matt stomped on the gas, regaining the lead position.

"We did it, Matt," Eesha said returning to her position in the shotgun seat. "Aaaah, Matt. What did we do?"

"We shot a hole in their fuel tank."

"Yeah, but, I mean why did we do that? We are still going to run out of gas long before they are."

"I know. I'm counting on it."

"That's a good thing?"

"You gave us the only possible way out of this. We may not make it, but there is one chance. EVERYBODY GET THEIR SEAT BELTS ON," Matt yelled over his shoulder. Then he looked over at Eesha. "Got your belt on?"

"Yeah, but..."

"You said there was nowhere to go, not up, not back. But then you gave us a possibility." With that, the engine of the van began to sputter, then it quit all together.

"We are out of gas," Eesha exclaimed.

"Exactly, and they are not."

"Exactly, and that's good because...? What the. What are? HOLYCRAP!!!! WHAT THE...AAAAAHHH."

As the engine in the van died, Matt shifted to neutral, turned sharply to the left, rolled onto the left side of the road, across the lane, and over the cliff.

# Chapter 30

## Characteristic #7

### Separation of Fellowship Is Applied Individually

#### Suppose:

- We have become aware of professing Christians pursuing moral or theological unrepentant sin.
- We have gone to the unrepentant sinner with our concerns.
- We have discussed the situation with other mature believers to make sure the facts are correct, and that the offense is indeed a biblical violation, not just a matter of our personal prejudice.
- We have challenged the sinner to repent of it on more than one occasion.
- We have discussed it with a plurality of mature believers who concur about the need for separation of fellowship.

Yet the professing Christian insists on pursuing his or her immorality or false teaching.

#### Then, what should we actually do about it?

The Apostle John wrote,

**2 John 9-10** *If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting.*

Every time I have been involved in a separation situation, once it becomes clear that something must be done, everybody wants to know just exactly what he or she should do. We would all like a formula to follow, because whatever we do will be hard, and most people will condemn us for being “unloving,” “uncaring,” “hypocritical,” or something like that.

Unfortunately, there isn't any simple formula. There are parameters with general guidelines, and I will give some examples. But what actually must be done in your situation depends upon your situation. For example, if we said that we should no longer do business with the unrepentant sinner, that would be irrelevant for someone who doesn't do business with him anyway. If we say we shouldn't play golf with him, that is only relevant for those who play golf.

Everyone has a different set of circumstances, different personalities to deal with, and a different kind and depth of relationship. Separation from a business partner would not be the same as from an employee. Separation from a neighbor would not be the same as a close relative. Separation from someone with a strong personality is not the same as someone on the verge of depression. Knowledgeable people are not the same as low-information people. Jesus did not treat the Pharisees the same as Levi's friends. He did not treat Nicodemus in John 3 the same as the woman at the well in John 4.

But we should not conclude that our situation does not require separation of fellowship just because the unrepentant Christian is inexperienced, uneducated, or of a certain personality type. It only governs what is most appropriate for: (1) the holiness of God, (2) the hopeful return of the sinner, (3) the impact on the other believers close to us, and (4) our own responsibility. Having said that, here are some possible applications:

- Refuse to attend an illegitimate wedding of "Christians."
- Refuse to allow a "Christian" family member, in an illegitimate dating relationship, to bring their partner into your house.
- Refuse to attend a family gathering if a "Christian" homosexual is bringing his or her partner or spouse.
- Withdraw financial support from a "Christian" college student cohabitating with a girlfriend or boyfriend.

- Not do business with a “Christian” client who continues in dishonesty.
- Refuse to invite a “Christian” relative, having an adulterous affair, for Christmas dinner.

### **What about Debated Things—Like Head Covering and Modes of Baptism?**

What about when we disagree about what a biblical passage teaches? What happens when the group we are in, such as a family, Christian school, local church, or Bible study does not agree on what a passage teaches? What should we do when the issue is not about disregarding Scripture but a matter of interpreting it? Well, that’s a problem if you see separation of fellowship as a corporate thing. Then the very idea of separation causes more separation.

But if we see separation as an individual thing, and some have a different view than others on an interpretation of biblical passages, then each one must do what he or she feels is most *pleasing to the Lord* (Ephesians 5:10). If I read the Bible and I am convinced that what a certain person is doing is sinful or theologically significant, and you do not think that the Bible teaches that, and there is a plurality of believers who agree with both of us, then you are free to fellowship with that person and I am not.

Remember, each of us must stand before God with our own beliefs about what is an immoral practice or what teaching is false. Of course, if I am the only one thinking what I’m thinking, then separation is inappropriate according to Matthew 18, since I have not taken it to the church, a plurality of believers. And that would be true no matter how convinced I am that I’m right.

If I believe a thing someone is doing or teaching requires me to separate from a group that they are a part of, and other mature believers concur, then I should do that. But that does not mean

I should insist everybody in the group agree with me. As long as the disagreement is about the meaning of Scripture, and not whether or not we should consider the Bible at all, then I should not condemn the other person's views. I can, and should, discuss and debate the meaning of the passages involved, but I should not insist everyone agree with my position, or demand that everyone base their separation of fellowship on my position.

### **What about attending activities that an unrepentant sinner "Christian" attends?**

Once we have determined what a passage means, say, for example, on the subject of divorce, remarriage, homosexuality, cohabitation, lying, cheating, adultery, etc., then, using the Matthew 18 procedure, we should remove fellowship from those who unrepentantly violate our understanding of the biblical teaching. But that does not mean we should avoid being in any gathering where that person attends. For example, if I determine a certain marriage is illegitimate, then I should not attend that wedding. But it does not mean I should refuse to attend other legitimate weddings just because the sinning couple also attends. If we go down that road, we would need to ask, "What about a store, school, ball game, or the county fair?" If I refuse to go anywhere there are sinning unrepentant "Christians," then I won't be able to go anywhere. I certainly would not be able to go to most "local churches" or any mega churches. Discernment is the key. A good rule of thumb would be,

**If the activity focuses on the sin of sinning believers,  
or somehow draws attention to it,  
then I should decline involvement**

For example, an unrepentant homosexual "Christian" at a football game does not focus on the sinner. But when such a person brings their partner to a family dinner, then it does.

# **Chapter 31**

## **It's All Downhill from Here**

As Matt plunged the armor-enforced van with no fuel over the cliff, Eesha screamed, while Michael and Mrs. Schroder just stared out the front window, mouths and eyes wide open.

“Eesha,” Matt ordered, “Stop yelling and help me look for boulders, sharp rocks, bushes, trees, anything we can’t drive over. It’s almost dark. Fortunately, the headlights are still bright, but I can’t see far ahead, so help me navigate this hill.”

It was not a sheer drop but it was probably a 45-degree angle, and it was all Matt could do to keep the van upright while steering around obstacles, without the aid of power steering and pumping the brake.

“Okay, okay, there’s a rock up ahead on the right. See it? Yeah, there. Good. Okay, now a tree on the left. TURN RIGHT. Okay you missed it. Whew! That was close. Now it looks like some sort of drop off coming up. See it?”

“I see it. But there is no way around it. We’ll just have to go straight over it. Everybody hang on.” The van swayed radically but remained upright as it bounced over a small rocky drop. After the drop, the grade decreased to a 25-degree angle. Matt glanced in his rear view mirror and saw the lights of the Mercedes following them. “Good.”

“What’s good?” Eesha said, hopeful for some encouragement.

“The Mercedes is following us down the hill.”

“WHAT! And that’s good?!?” Eesha bent over until she could clearly see the lights of the Mercedes behind them in the side mirror of the van. “They must want us awful bad to follow us over that cliff. And here I thought there was only one person in the universe crazy enough to drive down this hill.”

“If we get to the Feds, they all go to prison for life. There is no way they can let that happen. They have to follow us. What we need to do now is get them closer to us.”

“Closer????!!! Are you crazy? I thought we were trying to get away from them.”

“There is no way to get away from them. The only thing we can do is eliminate them.”

“And this is going to eliminate them?”

“Maybe. Maybe not. But I have a plan, and it seems to be our only chance.”

“Don’t you think you might have shared that with me?”

“You wouldn’t have liked it.”

“Well, that’s true enough. I don’t like it so far.”

“Just keep watching for obstacles. Fortunately, they are still on a steeper grade than we are, so they are gaining on us. And we are clearing a path for them.”

“Yeah, fortunately!?!?”

Matt began to pump the brakes, slowing the van and allowing the Mercedes to catch up. Soon the family car was tailgating the van. He pumped the brakes some more, bringing the Mercedes so close he couldn’t see the headlights in the mirrors. Then he began steering in a direction he knew would freak out Eesha, so he said nothing about it. But it wasn’t long before she noticed.

“Matt you are heading for one of those brush fires. Steer left. Or right. Matt, veer off. MATT TURN NOW!!!”

With the Mercedes right on his back bumper, Matt plunged the cube van straight into a brush fire that was shooting flames into the air higher than their roof. Whoosh. They hit the burning pile, and with fire shooting up all around them, Matt pushed both feet on the brake pedal as hard as he could. The van plunged through the burning brush and came to a stop just at the far end of the flames. “Hang on. Everybody grab a hold of something and brace yourself.” As the cube van came to a stop at the far end of the burning brush pile, the Mercedes came crashing into the back of the van stopping right in the middle of the burning brush.

KABOOM!!!

The gas tank on the Mercedes exploded, throwing the van forward, pushing it up on its nose and, tottering there for a moment, it fell forward onto its top then rolled over on its left side. Meanwhile, the explosion threw the Mercedes straight up

in the air, turned it over, and brought it crashing down into the flames in a fireball that incinerated everything inside the car.

“Is everybody all right?” Matt first looked over at Eesha, who was now above him hanging from her seat belt and shoulder harness.

She pushed the release button and came crashing down on top of Matt. With her mouth now pressed against the side of his head, she said, “I’m fine.” She struggled to a sitting position and looked at the two in the rear seat hanging sideways in their belts. “You guys all right?”

Michael had a slight cut on his right arm and his mother had bumped her head, highlighted by a bloody scraped spot, but both confirmed that they were otherwise fine.

“Michael, can you get that sliding door open?” Matt asked.

“Yeah, I think so.” Michael Schroder freed himself of his belt and shoulder harness, then helped his mother do the same. Next, he climbed up on the right arm rest of the seat and jerked at the handle on the door over his head. “It’s a bit jammed, but I think I can... Okay, there it goes. I got it.” With that, he slid it back far enough for a person to crawl through.

“Go ahead and get out and down on the ground, Matt said. “Eesha, you get up on top and I will help Mrs. Schroder up through the door, you can help her from the top and down to Michael on the ground. Then you go ahead and climb down and I will follow.”

The escape process went fairly smooth. Fifteen minutes later, they were all standing behind the overturned van looking at the upside-down Mercedes in the midst of the fire. There was black smoke billowing out the broken windows and fire shooting up from the seats. They sat silently for a few minutes, watching everything inside the car, including six human bodies, burn to ashes. Matt automatically reached in his pocket for his phone to call 911, but then he remembered the kidnappers had taken their phones, which had now burned up inside the Mercedes. There was no longer anything an emergency crew could do here, anyway. “I hate to sound cheerful in the face of death,”

Michael finally said. “But the truth of the matter is—we are free!” He looked at his mother and they hugged.

“We are free!” Mrs. Schroder repeated, hugging her son. “We are free. That horrible family is finally gone. Those horrible men are all finally gone.”

They all just stood there watching the fire begin to die down. After a few more minutes, they could hear some sirens in the distance, getting gradually closer. Matt and Eesha had their arms around each other, and Eesha’s head was on Matt’s shoulder. As they continued to gaze at the fire, she said, “That was pretty smart, I have to admit. We were out of gas, so nothing to explode. They still had a tank of gas, but with a stream of it flowing out for the fire to ignite like a fuse.”

“It was a big gamble.”

They stood for a few more minutes in silence. Then Eesha said, “You sure know how to show a girl a good time. So, what do you think, does this qualify as our first real date?”

Matt, still looking at the fire, began nodding his head before saying, “Well, yeah, I mean we didn’t do dinner and a movie. But we did take a ride together...in the evening...and watched some fireworks. Yeah, I think that counts as a date.”

After another pause, Eesha said, “It wasn’t as romantic as I had hoped for...for our first date. But it wasn’t boring either.”

# Conclusion

The research for this paper has led me to the conclusions I have stated above. Here is a summary of those conclusions: [Note: in these statements *fellowship* means Christian fellowship.]

## Fellowship Is Beneficial Sharing

### Characteristic #1

Fellowship is between a Plurality of People (Chapter 4)

### Characteristic #2

Fellowship Reciprocates (Chapter 6)

### Characteristic #3

Fellowship Sacrifices Something Valuable (Chapter 8)

### Characteristic #4

Fellowship Is Participation in Something Beyond Ourselves (Chapter 10)

### Characteristic #5

Fellowship Is Not about a Place or an Activity (Chapter 12)

### Characteristic #6

Fellowship Requires Fellowship with God (Chapter 14)

### Characteristic #7

Fellowship Defines the Relationships of a Believer in the Church Age (Chapter 16)

## Separation of Fellowship Is the Removal of Beneficial Sharing

### Characteristic #1

Separation of Fellowship Is from Unrepentant Believers (Chapter 18).

**Characteristic #2**

Separation of Fellowship Is a Believer's Responsibility  
(Chapter 20)

**Characteristic #3**

Separation of Fellowship Is Not Private (Chapter 22)

**Characteristic #4**

Separation of Fellowship Is Not Corporate (Chapter 24)

**Characteristic #5**

Separation of Fellowship Is Determined Personally  
(Chapter 26)

**Characteristic #6**

Separation of Fellowship Is about Morality and Theology  
(Chapter 28)

**Characteristic #7**

Separation of Fellowship Is Applied Individually (Chapter 30)

**A Personal Note**

I began this study thinking removal of fellowship was both individual and corporate. As a result of the study, I came to the conclusion that corporate removal of fellowship was not intended by the apostles. Fellowship is only between individuals, and therefore, so is the removal of that fellowship. Of course, that requires a plurality of believers (via Matthew 18) to concur that removal is indicated, but in the end, we must all stand before God with our decisions. Individually.

# Epilogue

## Three Months Later

Matt looked around his mother's Lutheran church. He noticed she was dressed in her Sunday best. He suspected that was a new dress, but, truthfully, he never paid enough attention to know. For sure, Gracie would not darken the door of the Lutheran church without the accepted attire. She and Eesha would probably never be friends, but at least they were on speaking terms, and Gracie put in enough effort to make Eesha feel comfortable at the Sunday family dinners.

Dora was another matter. Matt looked at the empty place where she would usually be sitting next to their parents, sometimes even with her atheist boyfriend Donnie. But not today.

Matt and his father had a talk with her, too, but it didn't go well. They pointed out she and Donnie living together was clearly beyond what the Bible permitted. She called them archaic men who needed to climb out of their caves, put away their axes, and live in the modern world. She freely admitted she and Donnie were having sex, and she planned to marry him, even though he was an atheist. Matt and Stewart had pointed out 2 Corinthians 6:14, where Paul said, *Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?* Dora's response was to say that the Bible belonged in a museum. She said it was a great ancient document about how Christians believed back then, but it is not relevant for today. She said Donnie was willing to go with her to "One of those Emergent churches" and that Matt and her father "should learn to be more tolerant and start living in today's world." She said she did not want anything to do with either of them until they decided to be reasonable and tolerant.

It had been two months ago now that Stewart and Matt brought the situation to the group that gathered at the Jenkins' home for dinner on Sunday afternoon. There were many questions, and several wanted to talk to Dora themselves. Then an-

other meeting was held a month ago, when everyone agreed that Dora was living in unrepentant sin while calling herself a Christian. Everyone, except Matt's mother, understood that this required a separation of fellowship or they would be essentially condoning what she was doing. All of the young couples understood they could not communicate to their children that such activity was acceptable according to the Bible.

Although everyone, except Matt's mother, agreed separation was indicated, no one was sure what that meant. Everyone understood she should be asked not to attend the Sunday dinner, but beyond that, many didn't know what to do, or not do. Matt said that everyone would have to decide for themselves what that looked like, but it should look like something, something that actually changed their social patterns when it came to Dora.

Gracie said she would continue in fellowship with Dora, but understood Dora should not come to the Sunday dinners because then most of the others, including Matt and Ben, would not come. Matt remembered telling his mother, "Not separating fellowship from Dora is your prerogative Mother. We all have to be accountable before God for our decisions."

Mildred Hogan usually attended this Lutheran church, but she was also not there, for obvious reasons. She had been sentenced to five years in prison for aiding the drug dealers. But hers was actually a better situation, fellowship-wise. Matt went to see her after she was in prison for a week. She apologized to Matt and said she had confessed her sin to God. When Stewart rejected her affection, she was angry and found revenge in providing information to the drug family that recruited Matt's wife, Jeanne. When they came to her again, demanding she supply information about Eesha, she didn't know how to get out of it. Matt assured her she was forgiven and when she got out, which Matt expected to be in maybe a year, he would help her get reestablished. He had told her, "You are welcome back at Jenkins Equipment, but, if that is too uncomfortable for you, I'm in touch with lots of companies around the country, and they are all looking for quality administrative help. I will help you get a good job where ever you want to go."

Then Matt looked to his left. He couldn't help but smile. Ben looked so handsome, dressed in a navy suit with a white shirt and red tie. His best man. His son was his best man. He had looked so manly when he had walked down the aisle arm-in-arm with Mary Michaels, who stood a whole head-and-a-half taller than Ben. Next to Ben was Jerry Metcalf, and Ralph Michaels. To Matt's right was the pastor, then Mary Michaels, Ruth Carlson, and Margaret Daniels.

The piano had been playing Mozart's Piano Sonata No. 16, but then the music stopped. After a beat of silence, the doors opened at the back of the church and the piano began playing the traditional song only known as "Here Comes the Bride." Starting down the aisle, Eesha walked slowly, escorted by Stewart Jenkins. Her white dress was a shiny silk that covered her from her neck to the floor and trailed several feet behind. Her big brown eyes, sharp nose, and tapered chin were framed by soft curls that fell across her shoulders and down nearly to her waist. Her eyes never left their focus on Matt, and his never left hers as she approached him down the aisle. When they arrived in front of the church, the pastor asked, "Who gives this woman to be married to this man?"

Stewart Jenkins said, "Her future mother-in-law and I do." He stepped forward and gave his son a hug, then he turned and hugged Eesha. Then he turned to join his wife. Matt didn't notice because his eyes never left Eesha's, but Stewart was glad to see his wife smiling as she linked her arm in his when he sat beside her.

It had not been part of last night's rehearsal, but before the pastor could begin, Matt stepped forward, put his hands on either side of Eesha's head. Pulling her ear close to his mouth he said, "I love you, Eesha Ryia Ghattamaneni," pronouncing her name correctly, "I love you with all my heart." Then Matt straightened up, but Eesha pulled his head back down and said, "I love you, Matthew Charles Jenkins, I will love you forever."

The rest of the wedding proceeded as planned. Traditionally.