

Study and Fellowship

Who else should be involved with my study?

- We've been talking a lot about our personal responsibility to study
- This is only right
- Every believer has a personal walk with Christ
- And when we walk with Him, this means knowing, understanding, and obeying the scripture
- But the New Testament has no message for the believer who has no church
- Therefore the local church is central to our continued learning and growth in the word

- Today, we are privileged to have published resources beyond the local church
- But the church is the starting point and the home for our spiritual accountability and exhortation
- Therefore, when we talk about others involved in our study, we must always begin in the church
- With brothers and sisters in Christ who have made a commitment to one local body
- Who live in covenant with us for the purposes of building one another up to accomplish His mission

- The commitment of brothers and sisters starts at the very beginning
- When we first come to know the Savior
- For every one that proclaims the gospel message is tasked also with teaching anyone who believes "all things whatsoever [He] ...commanded"
- The task of every local church evangelist is aiding their converts, leading converts, in study

- God's plan, as outlined by Jesus, is to sanctify individual disciples by truth
- But we work together, to be set apart - as a local body - by truth
- This process is outlined for us in numerous ways throughout the New Testament

- We'll begin reading about it in Ephesians 5...

25 ¶ Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;
26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,
27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

- The context, of course, is family
- But in talking about family we get some insight about the church

- And about God's plan for the church
- That it would be set apart "with the washing of water by the word"
- Certainly this must reference to word "of God," because it is truth that sanctifies
- And His word is truth

- There is a lengthier passage in I Peter 1 that may help...

13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

- We know the passage is talking about being set apart
- That is what holiness is - a set-apartness unto God, for His exclusive use
- And while this book is written to those believers scattered throughout "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia," it is obvious they have gathered themselves into local assemblies, based on our further reading...

I Peter 1:17-21

17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:

18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

- There's no doubt these are believers
- Those saved by the precious blood of Christ
- Believing in His death, burial, and resurrection
- But they are also living, together it seems, in obedience to the truth...

I Peter 1:22-23

22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned

love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

- They are clearly dwelling together in love
- All being, together, purified by truth
- Born again, based on the incorruptible word of God
- Which abides forever...

I Peter 1:24-25

24 For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

- We need each other
- We rely upon each another
- But we only do so temporarily
- For man fades and falls away like all living things
- So we teach each other to rely to an even greater extent on God's truth
- For it endures forever

- Churches are not about men, as much as we may love and admire the men in them
- They are not about our relationships, as important as our relationships can be
- They are about God's glory, God's purposes, and God's mission
- And God has given us an eternal text that extends beyond men's lives
- That extends beyond our current relationships
- And provides the foundation for a strong, victorious church in any era

- How, then, are we interacting regarding the scriptures within the body
- Let's start with those who teach and lead
- Look at the beginning of I Timothy 3, where it talks about the office of a bishop or pastor...

1 This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

- Why must he be apt to teach, what must he teach?
- The scriptures, of course

- Bishops will be a key teacher for us in the word of God
- And the scripture warns that we must heed their authority, saying in Hebrews 13...

17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

- This certainly refers to those who have authority in the church
- Who lead in it
- Who teach in it
- For who else watches for our souls?

- This is why God has gifted us differently
- Providing just the right mix of gifting within the body as He has seen fit
- Ephesians 4 explains...

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

- Disciples are made complete within the church
- God has designed it this way
- So we can accomplish the work He has given us together
- Relying upon one another for many things
- Help in study of the scripture, certainly one of them
- Help in obedience to it, certainly another

Ephesians 4:14-15

14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

- We don't want to be caught up in all manner of error and false teaching
- That's we are to speak certain things in a certain way

- Only the truth and only in love
- Because there are others about who would deceive
- So, we need to rely upon one another

Ephesians 4:16

16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

- The body edifies itself in love
- That means we build each other up
- We are one of the means by which other Christians grow
- That is, if we are fitly joined together
- Providing the supply that we need to supply
- Working effectively and playing our part
- This is God's purpose

- We must teach and live in a specific way
- A Biblical way
- as Colossians 3 explains...

12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

- Because you are who you are - that is Christ's
- We should act and interact with all brothers and sisters with, among other things
- Mercy
- Kindness
- Humility
- Gentleness
- And patience
- We should also bear with one another
- Be quick to forgive
- Above all, putting on charity (or love)
- In a perfect bond of unity

Colossians 3:15

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

- The peace of God can rule in the hearts of any people behaving this way
- And we will become a thankful people
- For this is our calling

- But remember this...

Colossians 3:16

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

17 And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

- The word of Christ should inform and alter every interaction
 - As we teach and admonish (or exhort) each other, in every category of song we sing
 - And in every other word or deed
 - And we must do it in the name of Christ
 - He is the One setting us apart
 - And we are, together, on His mission in life
- So, how should we interact when we come together?
- I think we can go back to Hebrews for help

Hebrews 10:23-25

23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

- Together, we should hold fast
- Because God is faithful
- And we should "consider one another"

- But what does this mean?
- To understand them, be attentive to their needs, to learn how we can assist

- This may catch us by surprise, if we've come to the conclusion that the church must
- Understand us
- Be attentive to our needs
- And learn how it may assist us

- None of that is incorrect in a technical sense
- We are to consider "one another"
- But if either party becomes self-focused, unity becomes very difficult

- So our responsibility is to consider
- But it is also to provoke

- This is a fascinating word, it is an incitement, even to the point of irritation
- But it's not a negative
- This is exactly the right kind of an irritation
- It is the kind that the one being irritated understands is good for them
- And it may not always be pleasant, but it is always helpful

This provoking has been described in this way: "to remind and keep reminding, to encourage and keep encouraging, to help and keep helping"

- Notice what we are provoking unto: love and good works
- We are using our gifts (and our presence) within the body to push others towards God's best for their lives
- This is a worthy and wonderful pursuit, that we should be excited about undertaking

- We should also be happy that others within the body must do the same for us
- We will push them, and they will push us, toward loving one another more
- Toward loving those who need Christ more
- Toward getting involved with people who need love more
- Toward speaking loving words
- Toward loving God's commands
- And toward actions that profit others and please God

- If we consider one another enough to have any success in this work
- We will be truly uncommon people in the world

- This passage also reminds us to assemble and not to forsake it
 - While there are (obviously) legitimate reasons not to meet
 - Forsaking is deliberate and something we often make excuses about or justifications for
 - We should never behave in that way
 - Remember, God knows every detail of our heart's attitude and motivation
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- The assembly referenced is the local church
 - Which meets in various ways and in various times, but never the less meets
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- This is a reminder that the meeting of God's people is important
 - It is not something to be taken lightly, because we need each other
 - We are key to the spiritual growth of others - and they are key to our spiritual growth
 - Certainly not the only key, but one God encourages
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- This reminds us that some do "forsake" the assembly
 - And we should not follow their example
 - Or use their example as a justification for our own forsaking
 - We are to do the opposite
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- Because we must exhort, that means coming alongside one another
 - We do so, that we may (in a Godly way) push each other forward in our discipleship
 - When we are alongside we are perfectly positioned to help
 - And to encourage
 - And to confront, if necessary
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- All of this must be done in perfect accord with God's word
 - And should be saturated with God's word
 - But we must be alongside them to do it
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- And we are to do all this "so much the more" as we see the day approaching
 - The day when we can no longer work
 - The day when Christ calls us home to be with Him
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- As we have seen, without any lack of clarity, others in the local church play a big part in our study
 - And we play a big part in theirs