

Church Fellowship: Working Together for the Truth

Lamb of God Lutheran Church, Columbus, OH

Winter/Spring 2014

*Adapted from "Church Fellowship: A Bible Study Course for Adults,"
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Lesson Two:

Scriptural Principles – Working Together for the Truth

Church Fellowship, pp. 23-31

Goals

1. To see that contending for true doctrine is a dominant concern of Scripture.
2. To learn what attitudes we should have as we practice the scriptural principles of fellowship.
3. To grow in our willingness to practice this teaching faithfully in our church and personal lives.

Review

- What fellowship do we enjoy as members of the one holy Christian Church?
- Why does God want his people to gather together in Christian congregations and synods?

Church fellowship refers to every activity in which members of visible churches join together to express their unity of faith and doctrine.

Truth and love—the two pillars of the practice of church fellowship

- Read **Romans 5:8** (p. 1116), **1 John 4:10-11** (p. 1209), and **Romans 13:9-10** (p. 1124). How does the Bible define love?
- You see smoke coming from the garbage can outside your neighbor's back door. What is the loving thing to do?

- Read **1 Corinthians 13:6** (p. 1137) and **Romans 12:9** (p. 1123). Given the fact that God's Word makes us wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, what is the most unloving thing we can do to a person?
- What is the most loving thing we can do for a person?
- Why must truth and love always be kept together in the church?

Working together for the truth

Read **2 John** (p. 1211).

- How many times does John mention the two pillars of church fellowship – faith and love?
- Why not show love by welcoming a false teacher into your home?
- Is it wrong to let Jehovah's witnesses or Mormons come inside?

Read **3 John** (p. 1212).

The recipients of 3 John were practicing church fellowship. They had helped fellow Christian brothers. John praises them for this and encourages them to continue.

- **3 John 8** provides an excellent definition of God-pleasing church fellowship. Using that verse, complete this sentence: God-pleasing fellowship is . . .
- According to **3 John 5,6,8,12**, how did John and his friends work together for the truth?

- Read **2 Corinthians 13:8** (p. 1150). The opposite of working for the truth is working against it. What are some ways in which Christians may become guilty of working against the truth?

The Lord gives us the principles of church fellowship to help us continue working for the truth and to keep us from working against the truth.

Opposing false teachers and doing so in a spirit of love

- Read **2 Timothy 3:1-9** (p. 1179) and **2 Timothy 4:2-5** (p. 1180). Why are false teachers so popular today?
- Read **2 John 9-11** (p. 1211) and **Matthew 28:18-20** (p. 989). How do we recognize enemies of the truth?
- Read **1 John 4:1,5,6** (p. 1209). How must we react to enemies of the truth?
- Read **1 Timothy 1:3-5** (p. 1174). What is always our goal when we oppose false teaching?
- Read **2 Timothy 2:23-26** (p. 1179). Describe the manner and spirit with which we should oppose error.
- Read **2 Timothy 2:14** (p. 1179). What is meant by avoiding word battles?
- How can a pastor prepare to battle against false teaching?
- How can his members help a pastor in the battle against false teaching?

- In our day many Christians claim that showing love and speaking against false teachings are opposite activities. Have you ever experienced this attitude? Why is it common in our day?
- Read **3 John 9-10** (p. 1212) and **1 Timothy 1:20** (p. 1174). When it came to naming false teachers and false teachings, what practice did John and Paul follow in the above verses?
- Why must we oppose specific false teachings and specific false teachers by name, rather than simply speaking against false teaching in general?

Summary

Churches join in fellowship to work together for the truth. Fellowship is built on truth, for without the truth of Christ no one can be saved. Fellowship is also built on love, for unless Christians love others they will not speak the gospel to them. True love speaks the truth, defends it, and warns against anything that goes against the truth, always desiring the salvation of all.

During the week

1. Read 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. There is much instruction in these books on speaking for the truth and against falsehood. Paul displays the attitude pastors and people should have as they do this work.
2. Suggested Additional Reading: *Church Fellowship*, pages 40-42.