

14. Destroying the New Testament Pattern with New Words: Community Church

This is the last part of **our study**. Previous terms studied are *corporate worship*, *praise* and *praise worship*, *emotion(s)*, *celebrate*, and *contemporary service*. You will remember that these new terms hide the innovators' ideas with a semantic cloak of deceit. Their language is the language of Ashdod (Neh 13:24). *Community church* shows how far reaching the apostasy goes. The term *community church* exchanges New Testament Christianity for movement to modern denominationalism and sectarianism not unlike that of the Christian Church of 100 years ago. In fact today, the movement to the community church captivates the entire denomination world.

Community Church.

What will they say? *Community Church* is a term that is used by some churches that break off after a division from those that stand for the truth on the innovative practices. They also call themselves Community Church of Christ. One sign read Church of Christ – Unity. Their worship is characterized by the term *praise worship* and their fellowship is extended to those of other denominations. Once the true church rejects contemporary worship practices, the next step for change agents is to move completely to the community church. The appeal is to widen the church to include the largest number of people. In places where the apostasy is full-grown, the church has all the trappings of a community church, if not the name. Fellowship is open to the largest possible number of people.

What does the Bible say? The idea of the community church speaks for those who see believers in denominations as fellow Christians. The error of this idea – beyond errors of worship – are abundant. However, at its core is the error of what constitutes the fellowship of true believers. John lays down the foundation principles of fellowship in 1 John 1:3-7:

. . . 3 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. 4 These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete . . . 5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Christian fellowship is based on what the apostles proclaimed (verse 3); what the apostles and prophets wrote (verse 4); what the message was that they heard from Him and announce to us (verse 5); practicing the truth (verse 6); and, finally, walking in the light as He is in the light (verse 7). The results are stated: "we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." The Bible is not vague or uncertain about what they heard from Him: "16 "He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved." Mark 16:16. Matthew quotes the Lord on how we become disciples:

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Matt 28:19-20.

Peter, Luke, and all those thousands of obedient souls on the day of Pentecost understood it the way Jesus said it. In Acts 2:37-38, "They were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?'" Peter's answer then and the answer now was stated clearly: "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." There is no way to avoid this teaching. It is what it is. Repent and be baptized.

Luke describes the outcome of their actions on the issue to fellowship in Acts 2:42: "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to *fellowship*, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." Acts 2:42-47. They kept feeling a sense of awe (verse 43); all those who had believed were together (verse 44); they were sharing (verse 45); they were continuing with one mind (verse 46); they had gladness and sincerity of heart (verse 46); and they were praising God. The way into fellowship is certain and the characteristics of that fellowship are certain.

The Lord who commanded the terms and character of fellowship understood exactly what was happening: "And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved." Acts 2:47. How? By their obedience in believing, repenting, and being baptized.

Just as the New Testament is clear on the subject of fellowship, it is also clear on the dangers of fellowship with error. In 2 Cor 6:14-18 Paul wrote:

14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? 16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God . . .

To these same Corinthians, Paul wrote in 1 Cor 12:12-13:

For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

The teaching on the fellowship of true believers is clear. The teaching of the change agents and innovators is clear. Paul's rhetorical question concludes the matter: *what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?*