

## **“Problems” in the Church, and THE Solution**

“Yes,” churches have problems. Brethren fuss and feel ways about one another they shouldn’t, and seemingly invariably say things to one another that they shouldn’t. Worship becomes mindlessly ritualistic rather than being heartfelt praise and adoration. Some older folks “retire” from the Lord as well as their occupations. Some of the younger folks become more interested in extra-circular activities and the opposite sex (or perhaps even their own). And some of the middle-aged folks are too busy with work and paying for “things” to be bothered by any of it. Just about every congregation faces a few (or all) of these problems, or others like them, from time to time.

But do you know what really “gets my goat” (if I actually had one)? The all-too common “solution” that invariably gets proposed should any of these problems arise. Someone is going to suggest, “What we really need is more ‘fellowship’- you know, to spend more time with one another outside of services and get to know one another better.” Don’t get me wrong, there is nothing wrong with spending more time with brethren *in* or *out* of normal worship and bible classes. And “getting to know one another better,” well, I’m all for that too. **But let’s be absolutely clear about a couple of things:**

1. **Denominational concepts and practices of “fellowship” don’t *make* or spiritually edify disciples, the Word of God does.** The “*gospel*” is “*God’s power to save,*” Rom.1:16; and we’re supposed to *build ourselves up* in “*the most holy faith,*” Jude 20. This “*most holy faith*” is *built-up* by the same thing that produced it: “*hearing the word of God,*” Rom.10:17. If Spaghetti Suppers, Volleyball Games, Singles Nights, Game Nights, and Church Picnics are such powerful evangelistic and edification tools, it’s an incredible wonder the Lord never suggested them.
2. **True local church “fellowship” is the result of discipleship, not the cause of it.** True *joint-participation* in the worship and “work” of the Lord in local body of Christ comes from: *sharing* a “common birth” by being *born again* with other believers, 1Cor.12:12-13; sharing a “common desire” of *glorifying God* and *going to heaven*, Eph.5:7-10; sharing a “common purpose” of *serving the Lord*, Rom.12:9-13. **True discipleship produces fellowship, not the other way around.** Note Acts 2:41-42 in these regards: a) “*receiving the word*” and being “*baptized*” produced disciples; b) these *disciples* “*continually devoted themselves*” to “*the apostles teaching, fellowship (joint-participation or sharing, PCS), to the breaking of bread (communion, PCS), and to prayer.*” The result of these dedicated devotions is found in Acts 2:43-45: *awe; togetherness; commonality; and sharing.*

What do these things mean? “**Church problems” are solved by better understanding of and greater dedication to THE WORD OF GOD, rather than by misunderstood, misappropriated, and misapplied concepts of “fellowship.”** Don’t ever forget or misconstrue two vital truths: 1) “***the gospel... is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek,***” Rom.1:16; and 2) *Faith* is born of, grows by, and matures from “***hearing the word of Christ,***” Rom.10:17, and then doing what it says, Jas.2:17,24. If your local collectivity of believers has “problems,” go back to the Book to get it “right” rather than resorting to man-made solutions that compound rather than resolve the issue(s)!

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