

8. Bible Study and Fellowship Meetings

In our last several topics, we have been talking about various types of one-to-one meetings. As we saw, those meetings may involve more than one person and may even have a large crowd in the surrounding area. However, we saw that one-to-one meetings or house-to-house meetings can include some of the following types of Bible studies:

1. Evangelistic Bible studies
2. Follow-up Bible studies
3. Growth Bible studies
4. Ministry-Equipping Bible studies
5. Specialized training Bible studies and many others

Today, we will begin looking at a second form of meetings that are mentioned in Acts 2:41-47 - Bible study and fellowship meetings. Acts 2:42 tells us, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” In this verse, we see that the apostles' doctrine (Bible study) and fellowship are linked together. This is due to the fact that Bible study and fellowship meetings are a very important part of our growth as Christians. Bible study helps us grow in our relationship with God, while fellowship allows us to grow in our relationship to one another. A Bible study and fellowship meeting allows us to grow both in our relationship with God and with one another at the same time. Another title for this form of Bible study would be a small group Bible study.

Christ created an on-going small group Bible study when He chose the twelve to be with Him. As Christ and the twelve traveled together, ate together, and just spent time together, they were learning how to build their relationships with each other. This helped people who were from totally different backgrounds and with totally different interests to learn to understand and accept one another. Before Matthew followed Christ, he was a tax collector working for the Roman government. Before Simon the Zealot followed Christ, he was a Zealot which was a group of radicals who were trying to overthrow the Roman government. By traveling together with Christ, and spending time learning the Word from Christ, they were being transformed and learning to work as a team rather than being in total opposition to one another.

It is in our relationships with one another, especially in a small group, that we learn how to put the one anothers of Scripture into practice. Scripture gives twelve one anothers that we are to avoid in our relationships with one another. God tells us:

- * Let us not judge one another anymore - Romans 14:13 (to assume the office of judge and condemn another)
- * Do not go to law with one another - 1 Corinthians 6:7 (to have lawsuits)
- * Stop depriving one another - 1 Corinthians 7:5 (in marriage, to use sex as a weapon to get even with one another rather than as a way to meet the needs of one another)
- * Do not bite one another - Galatians 5:15 (to wound the soul with words)
- * Do not devour one another - Galatians 5:15 (to make a habit of wounding the soul)
- * Do not consume one another - Galatians 5:15 (the last act of swallowing down - the process of “bite” – “devour” – “consume” speaks of the process which destroys a relationship)

- * Do not challenge one another - Galatians 5:26 (to call forth as a contest, hence to stir up what is evil in another)
- * Do not envy one another - Galatians 5:26 (envy is the feeling of displeasure produced by hearing of or witnessing the advantage or prosperity of another)
- * Do not lie to one another - Colossians 3:9 (to deceive by telling lies to one another)
- * See that no one repays another with evil for evil - 1 Thessalonians 5:15 (used to speak of the reverse of doing good to one another)
- * Do not speak against one another - James 4:11 (to speak against or slander)
- * Do not complain against one another - James 5:9 (to groan; used of an inward, unexpressed feeling of sorrow)

A small group Bible study where we regularly spend time together provides the opportunity to learn how to avoid these things in our relationships with one another in the body of Christ. In a sense, a small group Bible study provides the opportunity to learn how to develop healthy spiritual family relationships, instead of practicing these things which destroy relationships.

That is why Scripture also gives us thirty-one things that we are to learn to do in our relationships with one another in the family of Christ. God calls us to:

1. Accept one another - Romans 15:7 (to take to oneself, signifying a special interest or welcome on the part of the receiver)
2. Admonish one another - Romans 15:14; Colossians 3:16 (instruction which is primarily a warning against things that are wrong)
3. Bear one another's burdens - Galatians 6:2 (to bear the weights that are pressing down on another)
4. Bear with one another - Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13 (to hold up against a thing so as to bear with, be patient, or endure)
5. Build up one another - Romans 14:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:11 (to promote the spiritual growth and development of character of believers, through example and teaching, suggesting such spiritual progress is the result of patient labor)
6. Care for one another - 1 Corinthians 12:25 (to have a great concern for others which causes us to share ourselves with one another)
7. Comfort one another - 1 Thessalonians 4:18, 5:11; Hebrews :13, 10:25 (to come to the side of another and provide comfort, encouragement, or exhortation)
8. Be comforted together through faith in one another - Romans 1:12 (to encourage one another by the mutual faith we have in one another, as well as our mutual faith in the Lord)
9. Have compassion one of another - 1 Peter 3:8 (to suffer with another)
10. Confess you sins to one another - James 5:16 (to confess openly and freely)
11. Be devoted to one another - Romans 12:10 (to have a tender love for one another such as the love of parents for children and children for parents)
12. Fellowship with one another - 1 John 1:7 (the sharing together of our lives with one another)
13. Forgive one another - Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13 (to bestow a favor unconditionally so that things from the past are not held against the other person. The failure to forgive one another is one of the greatest hindrances to spiritual growth and development)
14. Seek what is good for one another and for all men - 1 Thessalonians 5:15 (that which is good in its character and beneficial in its effects)

15. Greet one another - Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Peter 5:14 (to greet, welcome, and make one feel comfortable)
16. Be hospitable to one another - 1 Peter 4:9 (to show love to a guest)
17. Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another - 1 Peter 5:5 (to make yourself low of mind and show respect to one another)
18. Be kind to one another - Ephesians 4:32 (to be good, pleasant, and gracious even to those who are ungrateful and evil)
19. Be members one of another - Romans 12:5; Ephesians 4:25 - (members are parts of the body and we are called to have the same relationship to each other as parts of the body)
20. Be of the same mind one to another - Romans 12:16, 15:5 (to have the same concern and regard for one another that we have for ourselves)
21. Be at peace with one another - Mark 9:50; 1 Thessalonians 5:13 (to bring to peace, to reconcile or to make peace)
22. Pray for one another - James 5:16 (keep continuing to pray for one another)
23. Regard one another as more important than self - Philippians 2:3 (esteem one another)
24. Serve one another as a slave - Galatians 5:13 (to serve as a slave, viewed as a relationship to his master)
25. Employ your gift in serving one another - 1 Peter 4:10 (to be a servant, attendant, to serve, wait upon, minister, viewed as a relationship to his work)
26. Stimulate one another to love and good deeds - Hebrews 10:24-25 (a sharpening of a feeling or action which causes a greater desire to love and do good deeds)
27. Submit to one another - Ephesians 5:21 (to place yourself under the authority of another)
28. Teach one another - Colossians 3:16 (to give positive instruction)
29. Wait for one another - 1 Corinthians 11:33 (to make sure that all share equally in the love feast - potluck - and none are left out by the selfishness of others)
30. Wash one another's feet - John 13:14 (speaks of service to one another that will produce a feeling of acceptance and comfort)
31. Love one another - John 13:34-35, 15:12, 17; Romans 13:8; 1 Thessalonians 1:3, 4:9-10; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Peter 1:22, 4:8; 1 John 3:11, 23, 4:7, 11-12; 2 John 5 (this speaks of the kind of love that Christ showed by His self-sacrifice and obedience to God. It is primarily a decision of the will, rather than a feeling.) Notice how many times this one another is repeated.

One very practical way to help a group learn to put these one anothers into practice is to take a few minutes in the Bible study each week to discuss and share one of the thirty-one positive one anothers. Then, the group can discuss ways that they can put that particular one another into practice, both in their relationship to others in the group as well as their relationships with other people. May the Lord richly bless you as you help Christians learn to build a healthy relationship with one another.