

EXPRESSIONS OF FELLOWSHIP

Much of the confusion in the church over fellowship can be traced to the confusion between fellowship itself and expressions of fellowship.

The mention of eating in **1 Corinthians 5:11** has led many to equate fellowship with eating. **Jude 13-15** shows us an example of false teachers who associated with Christians but were not in fellowship with God or His children.

A more careful look at **1 Cor. 5:9-11** will help us to see that eating is a form of keeping company. Keeping company cannot in itself be fellowship. If it were, then we could not keep company with anyone outside the church. **1 Cor. 5:10** rules out that idea, as well as the idea of eating in **verse 11** as the eating of the Lord's Supper. The eating forbidden with a brother in **verse 11** is an eating permitted with an outsider in **verse 10**.

Eating with brothers because they are brothers, spending time with brothers because they are brothers, are expressions of fellowship. It is what the Jews were not allowed to have in their relation with Gentiles (**Acts 10:28**). It is wrong not to have it with faithful Christians (**Galatians 2:11-20**). It is wrong to have it with unfaithful Christians (**1 Cor. 5:1-13**).

We do not withdraw fellowship. We withdraw our expression of fellowship with one who has broken fellowship by willfully sinning and refusing to repent of it. Our actions must harmonize with spiritual reality. Because we are not in fellowship with a brother who willfully sins and wishes to remain in it, we withdraw our expressions of fellowship. It may make him feel bad ("*ashamed*"); it is after all else has failed to motivate him to repent.

This does not mean we cut off all communication; we must still love and counsel him to change (**2 Thess. 3:6-15**). We must lovingly affirm the faithful with expressions of fellowship and remove them from those who deny Christ by their impenitent attitude.