

**What Does the Bible Say About ... Fellowship?**  
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Romans 12:2-18

Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>3</sup> For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. <sup>4</sup> For as in one body we have many members and not all the members have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. <sup>6</sup> We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; <sup>7</sup> ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; <sup>8</sup> the encourager, in encouragement; the giver, in sincerity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

<sup>9</sup> Let love be genuine; hate what is evil; hold fast to what is good; <sup>10</sup> love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. <sup>11</sup> Do not lag in zeal; be ardent in spirit; serve the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; persevere in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Contribute to the needs of the saints; pursue hospitality to strangers.

<sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. <sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with one another; do not be arrogant, but associate with the lowly;<sup>[b]</sup> do not claim to be wiser than you are. <sup>17</sup> Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup> If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Holy Wisdom, Holy Word.

One of the best things about being the pastor here is seeing new folks come here to worship, and to see them coming back. It is wonderful to see people come in, and start to make friends, and get to know people. I look around the sanctuary and see a bunch of folks who have started attending worship over the past year. One thing I hear consistently with why people come back is that we are a friendly and welcoming congregation. What we have is a good fellowship here. Of course, I am biased.

Fellowship is defined as a “community of interest, activity, feeling, or experience” and “companionship, company,” according to Merriam Webster.<sup>1</sup>

The letters in the back of the New Testament, some written from the Apostle Paul, were written to communities like us. A fellowship of Jesus followers.

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<sup>1</sup> Merriam Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fellowship>

The letters that Paul and others wrote are such a gift for us to read today. The letters are addressed to congregations who are in strife sometimes, divided over practices of faith, or discord over theology. And sometimes the letters are ones of encouragement and affection.

We here don't agree on everything, and we have different views on theology, on how worship should be done, the music that should be played. That's not to mention differences in local and national politics and matters of culture in our country today. Differences of opinion are good, and it would be boring if we all believed the same thing. We can learn from each other, and no one has a monopoly on good ideas. What I think we are blessed with is a unity of spirit here and in our belief and love of the triune God and our fellowship with each other and with Christ.

I imagine if Paul was writing a letter to this congregation, the letter would be one of encouragement and gratitude. Our fellowship here is good, and it is only getting stronger. As far as I know, we are not divided by strife over a theological issue, or a political one. Even in the diversity of our opinions and beliefs, we are unified in fellowship, the ties of belief in and faith in Christ, and in each other, and in this congregation. In Matthew 12:25, our unity in purpose, in fellowship together and its importance is starkly stated:

“He knew what they were thinking and said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand.” Maintaining our unity in Christ and commitment to each other is critical for the continued success and health of this congregation.

Like the early congregations in Antioch, Corinth, Galatia, Thessalonica, we are a fellowship, believers in Jesus Christ as Lord. We are one body, as the scripture today says, and we have many members. Here at Faith, we all have different gifts to make this fellowship of the Lord go. Some of us are teachers, some are caregivers to those who suffer, some of us are leaders, some are members of the body who encourage us all along.

Fellowship means a group of people who have something in common. We all profess a belief in Jesus Christ. Fellowship was what bound the early Christians together. There were so few all they had were each other. They had a bond with each other. Like us. They were happy to see each other on the Lord’s Day or whenever they gathered in the Lord’s name. They sustained each other. In the early days, sometimes the Christians would be outcasts in their respective communities. Their only refuge was each other because so few other people believed what they believed.

I think for a lot of us here, coming to worship on Sundays gives us a chance to see our friends. We get to enjoy coffee hour with each other. We get to enjoy fellowship with each other who are like-minded people. By being here, this congregation, this fellowship means something to us. We get to enjoy the uplifting experience of worshipping God together. We get to feel the positive energy in the church when our voices are joined together in song, or in warmth we feel when we greet one another at the sign of peace. Worshipping together is such a blessing. And for so long in our lives we took it for granted. Think of that time not long ago when we couldn't meet in person because of Covid. Think of what it was like to not gather. Remember how painful that was. One of the great lessons of Covid for me was how much I loved worship and being in fellowship with Jesus followers.

To our friends worshipping online today I want to tell you how much it means to me that you can worship with us. Let's remember those of us who are worshipping remotely, who do not have the luxury of coming to worship in person for a variety of reasons. I suspect there would be some more people here if we met on another day because they must work on Sunday mornings. Or they've worked all Saturday night and they're dog-tired and need rest. At least they can worship online when they are able.

I know some folks still don't feel comfortable coming to worship because of their health and I can understand that completely. For others it is just too difficult physically to attend. I pray that a day may come when we can all join together in worship. I am grateful we can offer worship online, and rest assured, I am praying for you, as we all are here, for those who are worshipping online. Although we are separated physically, we are still a fellowship. We are still a community, and your community at Faith Presbyterian is here for you.

Let us give thanks today for the fellowship of Faith Presbyterian Church, a faithful community of the Lord Jesus Christ since 1984.

“For as in one body we have many members and not all the members have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We are many unified in the love of Christ. May our fellowship remain this way now and forever. Amen.