



# Christian Life Fellowship

Becoming fully devoted followers of Christ



## Building Christian Relationships

October 26, 2008

Rev. David Koch

### Introduction:

Let me mention this. I trust you will go and vote in just over a week. I trust that you will educate yourself as to the values and record for which the candidates stand. I trust that when you vote, you will vote with Biblical principles in mind. As important as the economy is, there are greater issues at stake that we need to be urgently concerned about as followers of Jesus Christ. Our country is about more than just money.

We continue on in our study of Romans this morning. We are working on the twelfth chapter. We hear much today about being relevant. What we believe should impact greatly how we act. The things we embrace Biblically, the values we stand for from the scripture should be imbedded in our hearts and minds in such a way that it impacts everything about us. It is not enough for us to understand Paul's doctrines on justification. It must translate into our daily lives and show that we trust God's Word.

The key idea in this section of Paul's letter is relationships. A proper relationship to God will play out in our having a proper relationship with people who are part of our lives. **1 John 4:20 If someone says, "I love God," but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we have not seen?**

### I. Our relationship to God (12:1-2)

What is true dedication to God? Paul says there are three aspects to being dedicated to God.

#### 1. We yield our physical body to God.

Before we followed Christ, we gave our body for sinful pleasure. The body of a follower of Jesus is the temple of God's spirit. **1 Cor. 6:19-20 Or don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.** We are to give our body as an instrument of righteousness to God – **Romans 6:13.** In the Old Testament, the sacrifices that were offered

to God were dead sacrifices. Paul refers to us as *living sacrifices.*

There are two living sacrifices that are mentioned in the scriptures. The first is Isaac in **Genesis 22.** Isaac willingly allowed himself to be placed on the altar. The Lord sent a ram in his place. Isaac died to self and willingly yielded himself to God's will. When he got off the altar, he was a living sacrifice to God's glory.

The Lord Jesus Himself is the *present* illustration of a living sacrifice, because He actually died as a sacrifice in obedience to His Father's will, but he overcame death and lives now as a living sacrifice in heaven. The word *present* means to do this once and for all. It means a definitive commitment of the body

to the Lord. This is a decision that determines what we do with our body.

Paul gives us two reasons why we should make such a commitment to God. The first reason is because it is the right response to all God has done for us. The second is because it is our reasonable service. Every day is a worship experience when your body is yielded to God.

## 2. We yield our mind to God.

The world wants to control your mind. In fact, there is a book written titled, “The Battle for the Mind”. Scripture tells us that we are to be transformed in our mind. That word transform has the same meaning as transfigure. It comes from the word used in [Matthew 17:2](#) – which means metamorphosis. It means to be changed from within. The world wants to change your mind, so it puts pressure on your thoughts from without. The Holy Spirit changes your mind by releasing power from within. If the world controls your thinking, then you are a *conformer* but if the Holy Spirit controls your thinking, you are a *transformer*. The changes that happen take place because of the Word of God. As we meditate and memorize God’s Word, we make it a part of our inner person.

## 3. We yield our will to God.

Your mind controls your body and your will controls your mind. Paul had learned that will power is not enough to please God. WE will fail by relying on our own will-power to get us through. In [Romans 7:15-21](#) – Paul lays out his personal experience when it comes to his will power. The way we can be victorious followers of Christ is to surrender our will to God in disciplined prayer. We must pray about everything and let God have His way in everything.

## II. Our relationship to other believers (12:3-16)

Here Paul makes it clear that each believer is a part of Christ’s body and each one has a spiritual function to perform. Each believer has a gift to be used for the building up of the Body and the perfecting of the other members of the Body. In other words, we belong to each other. We are vital to the health and life of the local church. Here are some essential elements that must be a part of the members in the Body of Christ.

### 1. Honest evaluation.

Each believer must know what their spiritual gifts are and what ministry or ministries they are to have in the local church. Nothing causes more damage in a local church than a believer who overrates themselves and tries to perform ministry for which they are not gifted. Sometimes people underrate themselves and that also becomes a problem in that they don’t think they are capable of doing what God has gifted them to do.

God’s grace is the reason the gifts are present in the first place. They must be accepted and exercised with love and faith. Since every gift is given by God, we must accept and use them to honor His name. We do not take credit for them, but acknowledge that He is the source and giver of the gifts. When individual members of the body of Christ know their gifts, accept them by faith and use them for God’s glory, then God can bless in a wonderful way.

### 2. Faithful cooperation.

Each believer has a different gift. God has given these gifts so that the body can grow in a balanced way. Each believer has to exercise their gift by faith and in love. Look at some of these gifts. Encouragement is just as much a spiritual ministry as teaching and preaching. EVERYONE NEEDS ENCOURAGEMENT. Giving can be a gift – generosity. Showing mercy is a gift, as well as leadership or administration.

It is so sad when one gift is placed at a higher level than other gifts. [I COR 12](#) asks the question – do all work miracles, do all teach, do all have gifts of healing? NO NO NO. For someone to minimize other gifts while emphasizing their own gift is to deny the purpose for which the gifts have been given. These gifts are tools to build with, not toys to play with or weapons to fight with. The purpose for the gifts is to build up the church.

### 3. Loving participation.

Here the emphasis is on the attitudes of those who exercise the spiritual gifts. It is possible to use a spiritual gift in an unspiritual way. Paul makes this same point when he talks about this in [I Cor. 13](#) which is the great love chapter in the Bible. Love enables all the members of the body to function together in a harmonious way.

To serve Christ usually means that there is some opposition from our adversary the Devil. Discouragement is one of those forms of opposition. Paul writes here that followers of Christ should keep their spiritual zeal strong because they are serving the Lord and not men.

Finally Paul says that we must be practical in entering into the feelings of others. Fellowship is more than a handshake and a hearty hug. It is entering into the burdens and blessings of others so we can grow together and glorify God. If we cannot get along together, how can we ever face our enemies?

### **III. Relationship to our enemies (12:17-21)**

#### **1. The Way of the World.**

Anyone who seeks to truly please God is going to have enemies. When Jesus ministered on earth, there were those who opposed Him and made it their business to make life difficult for Him. Some believers have enemies because they lack love and are not faithful in their witness. There is a huge difference between sharing in the offense of the cross and being

#### **Conclusion:**

I trust you can take a step in your faith journey today and this week. I trust you can yield to God your body, your mind and your will. I trust you can also be honest, faithful and loving in your relationship to others in the body of Christ and you can work on loving your enemy.

Next week we will look at our relationship to the state.

an offensive Christian. Returning evil for evil or good for good is the way most people live, but the Christian must live on a higher level. We must return good for evil. The natural inclination is to fight back when someone has done us wrong. Our task is not to protect ourselves when someone hurts us, but to obey God and trust Him with the results.

As God's children we must live on the highest level and return good for evil. Anyone can return good for good and evil for evil. The only way to overcome evil is with good. WATCH CLIP OF AMISH <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WUuXbHRH6dM>

If we return evil for evil, we only add fuel to the fire. Even if our enemy is not converted by our example, we have still known the love of God in our own heart and have grown in His grace.

#### **2. The Christian Way.**

We have to ask God to fill us with love. God *can* and *will* fill us with love if we ask Him to do so. Also, we have to be filled with faith, believing that God can work through our lives to accomplish His will.