

# Fellowship



Fellowship

## Introduction

The Holy Spirit brings us to faith and leads us in lives of sanctification, but we are not the only ones. We are never alone in that. There are always others who also believe in Jesus as their Savior. That's a good thing. That's something for us to be thankful for and to take seriously and not for granted.

Opening Prayer: My prayer is not for me alone, but for all Christians and those who will believe in Jesus, that all of us may be one, Father, just as you and Jesus are one, so that we may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent Jesus and have loved all even as you have loved me. Amen.

**Lesson Aim:** What does God want our relationship with other believers to be like?

## Part One

### Read 1 Corinthians 1:2.

This passage describes what we call the Holy Christian Church, or the Communion of Saints, when it says. "all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

- 1) What is the holy Christian church?
- 2) How is this church holy? Why are its members called "saints"?
- 3) Why do we call this group of people "Christian"?
- 4) Define "church" and "communion."

### Read Romans 10:17 and John 14:26.

- 5) A person becomes part of this church by faith. How does that happen?

### Read 1 Samuel 16:7.

- 6) The holy Christian church is also known as the Invisible Church. Why?

For more explanation on understanding the meaning of the "holy Christian church" and the "communion of saints," look to the questions from the Catechism for this lesson. Those terms are not found in the Bible. The terms themselves were made up by the church to describe and refer to that which the Bible teaches. Part One of this lesson is somewhat of a review from Lesson 10. The doctrine of the holy Christian church is also covered in Year A Lessons 21 and 22.

The important thing to know about the holy Christian church is that by faith, all believers are joined in fellowship with God. There are other forgiven sinners outside of the Wisconsin Synod whom the Holy Spirit has converted through the Means of Grace. There are others who have received the gift of fellowship with God. The one who added them was the Lord. They were passive; he was active.

We are united with God as our Father through faith in Christ. He is also the Father of many more children who are our spiritual brothers and sisters. Those who are in fellowship with him are also in fellowship with one another. God wants us to keep in mind that we stand before him not merely as individual believers, but as believers who are intimately joined together with all other believers here on earth and in heaven. This is why each Sunday we confess in our creeds that we believe in the holy Christian church, the communion (that is, the fellowship) of saints (believers). All true believers the world over are united in fellowship as members of the holy Christian church. Where the Means of Grace are in use, there Christians will be and there the Holy Spirit will be working. The Holy Spirit will operate wherever the gospel is proclaimed, and wherever the gospel of Jesus Christ is being proclaimed, believers will be present.

**KEY POINT 1** - All believers are members of the holy Christian church and communion of saints by faith.

**What I've learned so far:**

## Part Two

Read Hebrews 10:24-25.

1) In Part Two we'll look at how our fellowship with other Christians shows itself in our lives. How do these two verses describe demonstrating Christian fellowship?

Read Ephesians 3:16-19.

2) How does what is described in this passage happen?

Read John 8:31.

3) How does Jesus say that our Christian fellowship will show itself, or how our true discipleship will show itself?

4) What do you think it means to "hold to teachings"?

There are many pleasant things God wants us to do together with other Christians and all people, and these pleasant things feel very natural to us. But God also wants us to always be careful with our beliefs and our fellowship. God wants us to not support or associate with false teaching in any way. For the rest of Part Two we'll look at how our fellowship shows itself in that regard.

Read 1 Peter 3:15.

5) The first step to being careful to not fall into false teaching is to be confident in the truth and believe it. What practical benefit is there in being confident of what you believe?

Read 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1.

6) What answer must be given to each of the five questions Paul raised?

7) Why are Christians the temple of God?

8) What implications does that have for us as Christians?

9) In these verses, Paul is addressing Christians who were joining themselves with unbelievers in a way that united them with evil. What are some ways you have been, or perhaps still are, guilty of doing this too?

10) What can you do to get out of this situation?

### Read Romans 16:17.

11) If we hear someone teaching something that is in any way different from what we have learned from Jesus, what should we do?

We are to avoid the influence of all false teachers as long as they are teaching. If they are willing to listen, go to them and tell them the truth.

If a doctor told you that you had a cancerous tumor in your stomach, you wouldn't say, "Well, the cancer is only in my stomach, so I won't worry about it." That would be foolish, because we all know that if nothing is done to treat the cancer, it will soon spread throughout the rest of the body. That's the same reason why God tells us to avoid any church that adds anything to or subtracts anything from God's Word. Like a cancer, such false teaching won't just stop there. It will keep spreading until it destroys all of God's Word.

Imagine that you're sitting together with a number of other people at a banquet and you know that the chef has mixed some powerful poison into the food you are about to be served. Would you just sit down and eat? No, the food could kill you. Would you just get up and leave the banquet without warning the other people? That would hardly be the loving thing to do. The least you could do is warn them of the danger that the food holds for them. This is exactly what God is telling us to do when he urges us to separate ourselves from a church that adds to or subtracts from his Word. One reason we do this is to make sure that we aren't harmed by what that church serves. The second reason is to warn the people who are still ingesting it of the danger they're in. Some people might say that separating ourselves from other churches is a selfish and unloving thing for us to do. But it is actually loving, even though it's not always easy.

**KEY POINT 1** - Christian fellowship shows itself as Christians seek to encourage all who believe the truth of Christ and teach it to those who do not.

**What I've learned so far:**

## **Part Three**

Study pages 206-212 in the Catechism and answer the following questions in your own words.

1) What should we do when we find people who hold to God's truth?

2) How should we act toward those who do not hold to God's truth?

### Helpful Passages

1 John 1:3—By faith all Christians are united in a bond of fellowship with God and with one another.

Isaiah 55:11—God's Word has the power to create faith wherever it is, whatever the setting. The power to create faith is in God's Word, not upon the leaders of any church.

2 John 10-11—Anyone who welcomes a false teacher supports what they teach and do. God tells us to keep away from, to separate ourselves from, and not to welcome or have anything to do with such people.

**Main point — God wants us to be careful with our faith and thankful for the believers around us by clinging confidently to his pure Word to encourage it and teach it.**

Final considerations:

Multiple Choice

- 1) The Bible teaches that the Christian church is "holy" because \_\_\_\_ .
  - A. there is never anything really sinful or evil which goes on in its midst.
  - B. people who go to church are better than people who don't.
  - C. the Holy Spirit has done his work of sanctification in all true members of the Holy Christian Church.
- 2) According to the Bible, the holy Christian church is \_\_\_\_ .
  - A. the sum total of all those who hold membership in the different church groups in the world today.
  - B. the communion of saints, that is, the sum total of all believers in Christ ever.
  - C. limited to those who claim to be disciples of Christ and who show their sincerity by living God-pleasing lives as members of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.
- 3) If we wish to be faithful followers of Christ and his Word, we will \_\_\_\_ .
  - A. confess our faith publicly and belong only to a church which teaches truth.
  - B. just do our best to love our neighbor and not get in trouble.
  - C. just make sure we always hold membership in a Lutheran church.



True or False

- 4) \_\_\_ When we speak of "saints," we mean those famous Christians whose lives have been especially holy.
- 5) \_\_\_ We believe that there is only one Christian church, because it doesn't really matter what you believe.
- 6) \_\_\_ The Church is called a "communion" because its members receive the Lord's Supper together.
- 7) \_\_\_ The Church is called a "communion" because its members have a common union through faith in Christ.
- 8) \_\_\_ In America today a great many Lutheran churches no longer hold to the truth of the Bible.
- 9) What does the phrase "communion of saints" mean?
- 10) What is the difference between a church and the church?
- 11) Where is the church to be found on earth?
- 12) You're discussing the differences between your church and others with several people at school or at work. In the course of the discussion, you point out various false teachings in some other churches. Suddenly one person says in obvious frustration, "Oh, the people in your church think they're better than other churches because they're the only ones who teach the Bible right!" How do you respond?

**What I've learned:**

Finish writing out your personal creed and bring it to Cat Chat.

**Commit to Memory:**

- The Third Article with Luther's explanation.
  - John 8:31
  - 1 John 1:3