

## WHAT TYPE OF SINS REQUIRE DISFELLOWSHIP?

All sin is sin, but some sins show a more wicked heart than others. A Christian must have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but must reprove them (Eph. 5:11). Sinning willfully (deliberately) shows a very corrupt condition of heart (Heb. 10:26—31). Continuing in sin or sinning until death has no chance of forgiveness (I John 5:16). Therefore, any member's sin which is open and seen by others, which he refuses to repent of even after seeing the truth about it, is worthy of disfellowship (II Thess. 3:6, 14). Certain such open and deliberate sins are listed in 1 Cor. 5:11 as requiring withdrawal of fellowship: (1) fornicator (Rom. 7:3; I Cor. 7:2), (2) a covetous man (A Greedy Man), (3) an idolater, (4) a railer (a slanderer, a man with a foul tongue), (5) a drunkard, (6) an extortioner (a swindler, a cheat, one with the heart of a thief). Titus 3:10 also lists "a heretic" to be rejected. The Revised Version says "a factious man."

### SHOULD FALSE TEACHERS BE WITHDRAWN FROM?

Rom. 16:17 says to mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the apostles' doctrine and avoid them. Division-causers often arise in the church bringing false teaching (Acts 20:29, 30). II John 9-11 shows that anyone going beyond the doctrine of Christ, instead of abiding only within the Scriptures, is without God. He must not be received nor approved lest we become partaker in his evil deeds. Teachers of false doctrines who cause division in the church must be disfellowshipped.

### WON'T DISFELLOWSHIP WEAKEN THE CHURCH?

When sin entered the Jerusalem church, stronger discipline than disfellowship was used. Because the apostles could know their hearts, Annanias and Sapphira were slain before the congregation (Acts 5:1—10). The result was that fear came upon all the church and upon as many as heard these things (verse 11). Believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women (verse 14). Keeping the church pure makes it strong. Outsiders are attracted to a congregation where sin is not tolerated. When Christ's commandments are obeyed, His church grows. Disfellowship done Scripturally by the whole congregation is effective.

### GOD SEEKS AND WANTS OUR FELLOWSHIP

Man's soul thirsteth for God (Psa. 63:1). Man can be happy only in fellowship with His Creator, for in Him "we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). God seeks man's companionship (John 4:23). He made man for fellowship with Himself (Gen. 3:8). For God's pleasure all things were created (Rev. 4:11), but man is made in God's image (Gen. 1:27) and for God's purpose and can find no true happiness apart from God.

Jesus died to restore man to God's fellowship by the forgiveness of His cleansing blood (2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 1:7). But man must come out of sin and be separate and holy for God's fellowship (2 Cor. 6:17; I Pet. 1:16). He must repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of his sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). God thus adds him to the church (Acts 2:47), which is God's family to encourage and discipline him for eternity (I Tim. 3:15).



# DISFELLOWSHIP

## WHAT IS FELLOWSHIP?

Fellowship is "taking part together." Christians have fellowship with God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and with one another (I John 1:3; Phil. 2:1). They share the world's greatest associates in the world's greatest work. But some so-called Christians "say" that they have fellowship with God, but "walk in darkness," and "lie" and "do not the truth" (I John 1:6). Real fellowship is much more than just claiming to have fellowship. It is walking in the light of Bible Truth, as God is in the truth, so that Christ's blood can cleanse us from all sin (I John 1:7). Many think that they have Christ's fellowship, but He never knew them (Mt. 7:21-23).

## WHAT BREAKS FELLOWSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND MAN?



Gen. 3:8 shows that sin broke the fellowship between God and Adam and Eve. Isa. 59:2 says that Israel's sins had separated between them and God and had hid God's face from them that He would not hear. God cannot have fellowship with sinners. Sinful men must be cleansed in Christ's blood so as to again have God's fellowship (Eph. 1:7). Cleansing through Christ depends upon repentance or turning away from sin (Lk. 13:3; Acts 2:38). Those who refuse to repent cannot come to God through Christ. And those who go back into sin and refuse to repent, cannot continue fellowship with God. Sin breaks God's fellowship with man.

## CAN BROKEN FELLOWSHIP BE RESTORED?

Simon the sorcerer was baptized into Christ, but soon thereafter fell into sin. He was instructed to repent and pray for forgiveness (Acts 8:13: 18—21). I John 1:9 promises that when Christians confess their sins to God, He is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse of all unrighteousness. An erring Christian may come back into God's fellowship by repentance, confession, and prayer.



## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF DISFELLOWSHIP?

When erring Christians refuse to repent, God commands His people to disfellowship them so as to bring them to repentance. An adulterer in the church in Corinth was to be delivered to Satan in hopes that he would repent and be saved before it was too late (I Cor. 5:5). Because ungodly members who continue in their sin may think that they have fellowship with God, faithful Christians are to break fellowship with them to remind them that neither God nor God's people can fellowship sin.

## IS DISFELLOWSHIP OPTIONAL?

Christians are commanded in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (by His authority) to withdraw themselves from every brother that walks disorderly and not according to the teachings of the apostles (II Thess. 3:6). Christ's commandments must be obeyed. Paul rebuked the church at Corinth for not putting away an adulterous member (I Cor. 5:1, 2). Instead of mourning, they were "puffed up," refusing to disfellowship him.





### IS REFUSING TO DISFELLOWSHIP WRONG?

It is sinful to refuse to keep any commandment of Christ (1 John 3:4). The command to disfellowship an ungodly member is clearly and strongly stated (2 Thess.3:6). If a church fails to obey this command, a little leaven will leaven the whole lump (1 Cor. 5:6, 7). The sinful member must be purged out lest his sin spread to other members.

### MUST THE WHOLE CHURCH ACT TOGETHER?

1 Cor. 5:4 says that action must be taken "when ye are gathered together." Disfellowship cannot be done privately or secretly. The whole church must act together or its action will fail and the church will be divided. This means that much teaching must prepare a church for disfellowship. Every member must know the purpose, reason, and method of disfellowship. Many classes and sermons must be used to be sure of full understanding in the congregation. The whole church must understand and act together.

### WHAT ABOUT PERSONAL GRIEVANCES?

Jesus said in Matthew 18:15 that private faults between brethren should be settled between the two alone. Disfellowship need not be necessary for personal matters. If private settlement fails, taking witnesses should be tried (Mt. 18:16). Every possible effort should be used to avoid disfellowship. Only when all private and group pleadings fail should the matter be brought before the church (Mt. 18:17). Breaking fellowship is always to be a last resort. It is an action which is necessary because all other efforts have failed. It is like a doctor being forced to cut off a patient's leg to save his life. The doctor will try all possible ways to save the leg without cutting it off, but when all other treatments fail and the patient is going to die, then the leg is cut off as a last resort. Bringing a member to repentance without disfellowship is so much better than by disfellowship.

He Hurt  
My  
Feelings!



### WHAT MUST PRECEDE DISFELLOWSHIP?

Gal. 6:1 says that brethren who are spiritual should restore a brother overtaken in a fault. They should do so in a spirit of meekness, considering themselves lest they also be tempted. The major thing is that the church truly be interested in its fallen brother. Their sincere aim must be to "restore" such a brother. All members in the church are members of Christ's body and are members of one another (1 Cor. 12:12, 20; Rom. 12:5). All Christians should have the same care for one another (1 Cor. 12:25). If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it

(1 Cor. 12:26). It is like the human body made up of many parts. Each organ is important, and the body is concerned when any part is wounded or diseased. The other parts of the body will dress and nourish the weak part so as to restore it. They do this in gentleness with great care. The hands which dress a wound must be clean, and the members which restore a brother must consider themselves. Many methods may be used such as visits, prayers, public and private teaching. But in all efforts the love and interest of the whole church toward regaining and restoring the overtaken brother is most important. And their spirit of meekness and self-examination will do much to impress the wayward brother of their real love.

### CAN DISFELLOWSHIP BE AVOIDED?

Jas. 5:19, 20 says that anyone converting an erring brother has converted a sinner from the error of his way, has saved a soul from death (Hell), and has hidden a multitude of sins. A member who again becomes entangled in the world is in a worse condition than before. He is like a washed pig which returns to wallowing in the mud, or like a dog returning to eat his vomit (II Pet. 2:20—22). Faithful members must remember the value of one erring soul (Mt. 16:26) and strive with great urgency to save it from Hell.

Lost

### WHEN SHOULD DISFELLOWSHIP BEGIN?

The Bible gives no time limit before disfellowship. But sin must be rebuked as soon as it is discovered in the church. Unless we take heed quickly to sin and error, it will lead to departure (Heb. 3:12). We are commanded to exhort one another daily lest any be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Heb. 3:13). The longer sin goes uncorrected, the more difficult it is to correct it. If a member has had time to be taught of his sin and yet continually refuses to repent, disfellowship must be begun. Titus 3:10 says a factious man is to be rejected "after the first and second admonition." To wait longer is to bring more reproach from non-members and to tempt weaker members.

### WHAT ARE THE STEPS OF ACTUAL DISFELLOWSHIP?



In all steps, the church must act together upon the teachings of the Bible. First, there must be public and private teaching against the sin and about the necessity and meaning of disfellowship. All members pray and plead with the guilty one and fully understand the steps to be taken if he will not repent. Second, the disorderly member is publicly warned that if he does not repent within a reasonable time, disfellowship will be necessary. Third, if all efforts to avoid disfellowship fail, announcement must be publicly made that disfellowship has taken place. Writing a letter with the above Scriptures and with the charges of his sin is also advisable. The person is then considered outside the fellowship of the church.

### WHAT IF A MEMBER STILL ATTENDS THE SERVICES?

No one can act as a policeman and forbid a person from attending the church service. But the person must understand that he has no fellowship with God or God's people, and that until he repents, his worship is vain (Isa. 59:2; I John 1:6). He must never be used to lead prayer, lead singing, teach, or any other duty. Nothing is done that could make him think that he has approval while still in his sin.

### TREATMENT OF A DISFELLOWSHIPED PERSON

2 Thess. 3:14, 15 says to note the man and to have no company with him that he may be ashamed. Yet he should not be counted as an enemy but admonished as a brother. To have no company with him means to refuse to eat with him or do any other thing that might suggest approval of his life (1 Cor. 5:11). Hospitality must be refused lest it be misunderstood as bidding him Godspeed (2 John 9-11). Kindness mixed with firmness must be shown him by every member of the church. He must always know that the church prays for his repentance, but the church cannot fellowship him in his sin.

No,  
Not  
To  
Eat!



### WHAT SHOULD THE CHURCH DO WHEN HE DOES REPENT?

The disfellowshipped member at Corinth repented of his sin because of the shame and sorrow of being cut off from the fellowship of the church (2 Cor. 2:6). Paul then commanded the church to forgive him and comfort him lest he be overcome with too great sorrow (verse 7). The church was then to confirm their love to him (verse 8).