

START

"Tis only a little Branch,
A thing so fragile and weak,
But that little Branch hath a message true
To give, could it only speak.

No power indeed have I
The fruit of myself to bear,
But since I'm part of the living Vine,
Its fruitfulness I share.

PRAYER

Acknowledge Andrew Murray

And a little more of him later

John 15 1- 5

- John 15: 1-6
- *I am the true vine, my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear fruit. ... I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from him you can do nothing. If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the blades are gathered, thrown into the fire and burned*

ACTS 2: 42

42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

The only purpose of today is to glorify God in fellowship with him and one another. Specifically :

(1) To point towards our Lord (*The Vine*) and to encourage us in our walk in the light of his word. This is the first priority as our relationships with one another will be impaired if we approach our fellowship from the point of view of anything less than a pure unbroken relationship with God. No getting on with a brother or sister ?

Examine yourself first.

(2) To encourage a deeper understanding of how we are commanded as a body of believers to love, care teach encourage each other.

How to Fellowship

What comes into mind when we use the word fellowship.

Coffee and biscuits. ? Conversation.

But to true spirit filled believers it is much more than that and the “How to “ part is very important and much deeper than coffee and casual conversation. The world can do that, but there has to be a difference in our how to otherwise there is no light in our fellowship. In Acts 2: 42 we read that one of the four things the early church devoted itself to was “fellowship.” Fellowship was a very important part of their reason for meeting together. It was one of their objectives.

They just didn't have fellowship; they devoted themselves to it. This means that fellowship was a priority and one of the objectives for gathering together.

How does the Bible say how to ?

1. Fellowship with God (Having the right relationship with God).
2. Fellowship with each other Caring and sharing in true Bible sense).

Right relationship with God

Fellowship with God :

Two illustrations of what this means :

1. Abiding in the Vine

Illustration :

An illustration of communion or of maintaining a right relationship with the Lord in the sense of fellowship is that of the vine in John 15 .

In this passage we see three areas of relationships:

- (a) the relationship of believers to Jesus (vss. 1-11);
- (b) the relationship of believers to each other (vss. 12-17); and
- (c) the relationship of believers to the world (vss. 18-27).

The first thing this passage demonstrates is the concept of priorities.

The most important of all relationships which must be maintained is our relationship with Jesus Christ.

This is the foundation and source of all our other relationships .

To enforce this truth, the Lord used the analogy of the vine and the branches, one not unfamiliar to the disciples because of their culture. We must appropriate that fellowship by abiding in Christ.

“The word ‘abide’ means :

1. An unbroken connection rather than repose. and
2. The necessity of a constant active relationship between the believer and his Lord, if the resultant life is to be productive.”

It means to remain in fellowship.

It involves renouncing all confidence in our own merit, wisdom, and strength.

It means we look entirely to Christ as the source of our merit, wisdom, and strength.

To abide in Christ is to have :

No interest into which He is not brought,

No life which He cannot share.

On the other hand, the abiding one takes all burdens to Him, and draws all wisdom, life, and strength from Him.

On the other had nothing is allowed in the life which separates from Him.

When we do not abide we lose our fellowship with the Lord, we are severed from fellowship with the vine. We are no longer drawing upon His life as the means of our sustenance and fruitfulness. If we continue in this state, we come under the discipline of the Lord (vs. 6).

Andrew Murrays beautiful Meditation : Have you tried and failed ?

No wonder that Christ said: "A new commandment I give unto you"; "This is my commandment"--the one all-inclusive commandment--"that ye love one another." The branch is not only one with the vine, but with all its other branches; they drink one spirit, they form one body, they bear one fruit. Nothing can be more unnatural than that Christians should not love one another, even as Christ loved them. The life they received from their heavenly Vine is nothing but love. This is the one thing He asks above all others. "Hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples...love one another." As the special sort of vine is known by the fruit it bears, the nature of the heavenly Vine is to be judged of by the love His disciples have to one another.

See that you obey this commandment. Let your "**obey and abide**" be seen in this. **Love your brethren** as the way to abide in the love of your Lord. Let your vow of obedience **begin here.** *Love one another.* Let your relations with the Christians in your own family be **holy, tender, Christlike love.** Let your thoughts of the Christians round you be, before everything, in the spirit of Christ's love. Let your life and **conduct be the sacrifice of love**--give your self up to think of their sins or their needs, to **intercede for them, to help and to serve them.** Be in your church or circle **the embodiment of Christ's love.** The life Christ lives in you is love; let the life in which you live it out be all love.

You write as if all this was so natural and simple and easy. Is it at all possible thus to live and thus to love? My answer is: *Christ commands it: you must obey.* Christ means it: you must obey, or you cannot abide in His love.

But I have tried and failed. I see no prospect of living like Christ. Ah! that is because you have failed to take in the first word of the parable--"I am the true Vine: I give all you need as a branch, I give all I myself have." I pray you, let the sense of past failure and present feebleness drive you to the Vine. He is all love. He loves to give. He gives love. He will teach you to love, even as He loved. (Rpt)

Without God's means, we can't have fellowship with the Lord or with one another.

Known sin grieves the Spirit's person (**Eph. 4:30**) and quenches His power;

it short circuits His ministries in one's life and hampers one's capacity for true fellowship (**1 Thess. 5:19**)

This results in the control of the flesh rather than the Spirit (**1 Cor. 3:3**); **Rom. 8:2-4**

This means we are operating by our resources, using the weapons of the flesh (**2 Cor. 10:3**) **not God's.**

As a result, we become controlled by our desires, our opinions, by our wisdom, by our own methods for meeting our needs, by our everything.

We can all appear to be having fellowship when we go through the motions.

We can appear to be in fellowship by our presence in a worship service, but if the Holy Spirit is not in control, if we are not abiding, if we are not walking in obedience, then, there is no fellowship. This is why differences among carnal people cause divisions, rather than growth and the sharpening of character (**Prov. 27:17**).

2.Fellowship With other Christians:

I have used the words caring and sharing but we shall see the Bible teaches a deeper meaning and indeed responsibility to these words than the world.

Acknowledge J. I. Packer :

We should not ... think of our fellowship with other Christians as a spiritual luxury, an optional addition to the exercises of private devotion. We should recognize rather that such fellowship is a spiritual necessity; for God has made us in such a way that our fellowship with himself is fed by our fellowship with fellow-Christians, and requires to be so fed constantly for its own deepening and enrichment.

(a) Caring for one another

At least part of the answer comes through obedience to the many 'one another' commands of the New Testament.

We are exhorted in various ways to be involved with and caring for one another.

(See the One another commands)

From our communion and fellowship with the body of Christ, comes our fellowship with other believers.

(b) Sharing with one another

In the Bible sense this means :

1. Assembling together as a whole body (**Acts. 2:42**);
2. Assembling in smaller groups (**2 Tim. 2:2**);
3. Meeting together one-on-one (**1 Thess. 5:11**);
4. Sharing and communicating truth together and building up one another (Rom. 1:11-**12**; **Tim. 2:2**; **1 Thess 5:11** ; **Philem. 6**);
5. Sharing together in worship, i.e., the Lord's supper (**1 Cor. 10:16**),
6. The singing of hymns, psalms, and spiritual songs (**Eph. 5:19**); **Col. 3:16**), prayer (1 Cor. 14:16-17),
7. The ministry of the Word (**Acts 20:20**;;

8. Sharing together as partners in the needs, burdens, concerns, joys, and blessings for the purpose of encouragement, comfort, challenge or exhortation, praise, prayer and physical help according to the needs and ability (Phil. 1:5) (Heb. 10:33).

In Hebrews 1:14 we are partners in an enterprise and calling in which we are to work together in a common purpose to obtain common objectives for the glory of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion :

Abiding in the Vine indicates how to fellow ship with God.

The community of the redeemed is a community that understands we belong to the body of Christ and we are related to one another.

Caring the One another commandments

The phrase “one another” speaks of the interrelationships of Christians in the church (and specifically in one’s local church).

All people seek community; but genuine, loving community is only found “in Christ”.

This same Christ, our Lord and Savior, empowers us to live in a loving way that honors Him and ministers to others.

Tried and failed ? Let your sense of failure drive you to Christ. Let me be very plain .
Let me leave you in no doubt today . **He is all you need.**

I pray you, let the sense of past failure and present feebleness drive you to the Vine.
He is all love. He loves to give. He gives love. He will teach you to love, even as He loved. (Rpt)

Lets finish of that poem :

So simple, so deep, so strong
That union with Him shall be:
His life shall forever replace thine own,
And His love shall flow through thee.

For His Spirit's fruit is love,
And love shall thy life become,
And for evermore on His heart of love
Thy spirit shall have her home.

New Testament ‘One Anothers’

You may find more !!

Building loving fellowship one with another (within and between groups)

Love:

Love one another: John 13:34-35; 5:12, 17; Rom. 12: 10; 1 Thess. 4:9; 1 John 3:11,14, 23; 4:7, 11, 12; 2 John 1:5; 1 Peter 1:22

Love one another to fulfill the law: Rom. 13:8

Increase our love one for another: 2 Thess. 1:3

Abound in love for another: 1 Thess. 3:12

Love each other deeply, to cover a multitude of sins: 1 Peter 4:8

Interact with care:

Have fellowship one with another: 1 John 1:7

Forgive one another: Eph. 3:13; 4:32; Col. 3:13

Greet one another with a holy kiss (an embrace in some cultures): Rom. 16:16;

1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Peter 5:14

Wait for one another to break bread: 1 Cor. 11:33

Bear one another's sufferings: 1 Cor. 12:26

Serving one another (within and among groups)

Serve:

Serve one another with the gifts each person has received: 1 Peter 4:10

Serve one another in love: Gal. 5:13

Be kind to each other: 1 Thess. 5:15

Care for one another: 1 Cor. 12:25

Bear the burdens one for another: Gal. 6:2

Wash one another's feet as a sign of humbly serving: John 13:14

Work with one another: 1 Cor. 3:9; 2Cor. 6:1

Teach:

Teach one another: Col. 3:16

Instruct one another: Rom. 5:14

Encourage:

Encourage one another: Col. 3:16; Heb. 10:25

Exhort one another: Heb. 3:13

Speak the truth to one another: Eph. 4:25

Lay down our lives one for another: 1 John 3:16

Spur one another to love and good deeds: Heb. 10:24

Edify:

Edify (strengthen, build up) one another: 1 Thess. 4:18 & 5:1, 11

Edify one another gathering together each one with a hymn, a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or its interpretation: 1 Cor. 14:26

Give spiritual care:

Confess our sins one to another: James 5:16

Pray for one another: James 5:16

Cultivating unity one with another (within and between groups)**Act with humility:**

Honor one another: Rom. 12:10

Be of one mind one with another: 2 Cor. 13:11; Rom. 12:16; 15:5

Do not criticize one another: Rom. 14:13

Do not speak bad one of another: James 4:11; 5:9

Submit to one another: Eph. 5:21

Be clothed with humility toward one another: 1 Peter 5:5

Live in harmony:

Have patience one with another: Eph. 4:2

Live in peace one with another: Matt. 9:50

Receive one another with hospitality: Rom. 15:7; 1 Peter. 4:9

Glorify God together: Rom. 15:6