

HC 55- Fellowship Among The Saints

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: When you hear that we will have “a time of fellowship after worship” do you instantly think of cake and coffee, or cookie and brownies, if you’re a child? If you do, then I must remind you that that is one of the tiniest parts of fellowship or communion of the saints.

Today we want to take some time in God’s Words to hear his instruction regarding Fellowship or Communion of the Saints.

Our headings are:

The Fact: All Saints have gifts to help each other

The Act: All Saints must use their gifts to help each other.

Our goals are: That you will **develop your God-given gifts God so you can use them for the benefit of the saints, and give glory to your Savior.**

55 Q. WHAT DO YOU UNDERSTAND BY “THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS”?

A. First, that **believers one and all**, as members of this community, **share in Christ** and in all his **treasures and gifts**. Second, that each member should consider it his duty to **use his gifts readily and cheerfully** for the **service and enrichment** of the **other** members.

The Fact: All Saints have Gifts to help each other

1. God gives each of his children gifts, every child who was adopted because of Christ’s reconciling work.

If you forget your gifts are from the Father through Jesus Christ, you will become arrogant in using it, or you will want to **take credit when God uses your gifts to accomplish** something good.

If you **help someone move**, you will want to take the credit. If your **children turn out to be good**, you will want praise. But if you understand that you are God’s child, you will **praise him** for **giving you gifts** and for **using you** to do good.

2. God has blessed his church with all kinds of gifts.

Romans 8: 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also **freely give us all things?**

In Romans 8, “all things” doesn’t mean “every single thing.” God doesn’t give his children “every single thing.” Rather, God gives “all **kinds** of things.” **So God gives a diversity of gifts.**

God does this because his church has a diversity of needs. There is not an area of need where God has not given a gift to meet that need.

1Corinthians 12: 4 **There are diversities of gifts**, but the same Spirit. **5** There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. **6** And there **are diversities of activities**, but it is the same God who works all in all. **7** But the **manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:**

1Peter 4:10 As **each one has received a gift**, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

3. All the gifts God has given to you, you must use wisely.

Don’t misuse or ignore those gifts or he may take them away from you.

1Corinthians 12:14 For in fact the body is not one member but many. **15** If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? **16** And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? **17** If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling?

4. Consider some examples of how a Christian might misuse the gifts God has graciously given to him:

a. A father made his young children sit through more than 2 hours of Bible research every night. Poor kids!

b. If you give a lecture to someone who is mourning. That person just wants you to listen or give him a hug. So the one who lectures him on the solution to his problem is not being a blessing. You may have the gift of teaching, but the person’s need is for you to listen. **To talk when you should listen is to abuse the gift of teaching.**

c. All parts of Christ’s body are to be in perfect proportion. Anything abnormally large is dangerous. The head must be big, but not too big, for example. No one should act as if he were too important to the church. **Don’t try to be a husband if you are not. Don’t try to help someone fix his furnace if you are a bookkeeper!** A job might seem easy but it isn’t. You don’t want me to do your brain surgery or recovery might be much longer. Don’t go to your dentist for marriage counseling.

1Corinthians 12:29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?

All have different gifts, and even those gifts are not always equal. **You might teach one-on-one but can't teach in public.**

5. The trouble comes when people want the flamboyant gifts (evangelists and authors) and ignore other needed gifts.

Keep in mind **God has not given all gifts to all men.** If you try to take a gift God has not given to you, you will either fall flat on your face or you will cause harm to the church of Jesus.

1Corinthians 12: 20 But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. **21** And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." **22** No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. **23** And **those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty,** **24** but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, **25** that there should be no schism in the body, **but that the members should have the same care for one another.**

So **accept** whatever gifts God has given to you. Don't be covetous.

The Act: All Saints must use their gifts to help each other

1. Why must all saints use their gifts to help each other?

What is their motivation? You love Jesus and you want to see his church grow. You love your neighbor and you want to see him glorify Jesus. So you bless him with your gifts.

1Corinthians 13:1 **Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love,** I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. **2** And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. **3** **And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.**

2. You must humbly use your gift.

Some are reluctant to use lesser, but necessary gifts, while others can become **boastful of their gifts.** God therefore warns against this type of complacency.

Philippians 2:4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. **5** **Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,** **6** who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, **7** but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

4. What kind of gifts can you use?

Let's get practical.

Romans 12:4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, **5** so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. **6** Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if **prophecy,** let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; **7** **or ministry,** let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; **8** he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

a. Prophesying. This is not referring to foretelling the future. "Prophesying" refers to any announcing of truth—as in teaching the Gospel.

b. Ministry. This gift is specifically referring to the work of the deacons. (Root word: "diaokonia.") He will persevere even when he is tired, and he will find it hard to say "no" to those in desperate straits.

c. Teaching. Teaching is to instruct in truths. This is a distinct gift, but not a different office from prophesying. The teacher will work **from Word to Life** in his teaching. He will always double check the facts he presents as truth. He will be passionate about his work.

d. Exhorting. Exhorting is to encourage and correct. Exhorting includes counseling...and encouraging spiritual growth. The exhorter will want to see actions and to set goals for those he is counseling. The exhorter won't hesitate to rebuke those who are rejecting his exhortation.

e. Giving - Acts of charity must be common to all the members of Christ's church. You are to liberally contribute to the relief of the poor. This word "liberally" is used to mean "without prejudice." This means Christians are to give without care of the person's race, age, looks, or social position. If the person were needy, help him. Giving has to be with joy. **And the giving-one starts with giving his own things.** He is not like those today who are generous with other people's money. He will **motivate others to give.** He will **praise God when his needs are met.** He will **be frugal with how he spends the Lord's money.**

f. Leading. This term usually refers to those who help the pastor in church leadership. It could be deacons or elders. A leader warns, but he **also leads by example.** (He doesn't just talk.) He delegates responsibilities. **He teaches others to fish rather than giving them a fish every day.** A leader holds the congregation together in love and discipline.

g. Showing mercy. This is the one who visits the sick with a smile...who prepares a meal with a pleasant face...This person makes the visit or the assistance more meaningful and joyful.
Vincent: Let the "visitor be a sunbeam penetrating into the sick-chamber, and to the heart of the afflicted."

5. You may have to develop your gifts.

If you have the gift of teaching, you have to get training to develop your teaching skills and doctrinal knowledge. If you desire to be hospitable, learn to cook. If you wish to be a church leader, get the training. God could give you perfect ready-to use-gifts, but he knows that that can make you lazy.

6. You may not demand others use their gifts for you, like one man who demanded his mother-in-law pay for his diabetic tablets – because she had money.

That man died in poverty! You have to do what is good for others...

7. In some parts of the world there are "rice" Christians; that is their sin that affects true fellowship, but in the West we have "tater" Christians, which affects true fellowship.

There is no room for: Dictators, hesitators, agitators, or spectators...And they all affect unity! Unity must become clear in the church.

Conclusion:

God graciously gave his adopted children all the gifts they need to work together in his holy household. As Christians you are members individually and yet of one body. You need others. He expects you will use all those gifts without any confusion, for the good of each member and ultimately for your Redeemer, the Lord Jesus.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. The goal of communion of the saints is the good of the body (the church) and glory of the head (Jesus Christ).

2. Do you find yourself saying: What is yours in mine and what is mine is mine? That is *not* how the body of Christ works. That the way the world works. **You share with each other for the greater good.** Share of your material and spiritual gifts! And the more you give, the more God will provide for you.

4. Do you find yourself acting so big that you don't have time for others? A good Christian child will always put others first. Jesus put you first. Follow his example.

Finally, God equips his children with everything they need. But it is not just these blessings you will receive from the Lord that you should want to be his child. **You should want to be his child because without being his child you will face eternity in hell.** He offers salvation to all who would sincerely come to him and plead for it.