



Fellowship

Two of the most important things in the Christian life are giving the Gospel to the unsaved and encouraging other believers to get back into fellowship with the Lord. Your mental attitude is critical.

The right mental attitude is to first consider your own spiritual condition by confirming you are in fellowship. Use 1 John 1:9 if in doubt. Immediately upon confession of sin, you again have fellowship with God which is the filling of the Holy Spirit also called spirituality. See category on the [Filling of the Holy Spirit](#).

You should also remember that you too have an old sin nature. A part of your love for the Lord Jesus Christ is determined by your attitude toward other believers. Gal. 6:1; John 8:7.

“Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.” (Galatians 6:1, NASB)

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9, NASB)

“But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.”” (John 8:7, NASB)

The wrong attitude is to have the mental attitude of judging others by either their lifestyle or when you hear of them failing or observe them failing. Luke 6:37.

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned.” (Luke 6:37, NASB)

Attitude of Forgetting Past Sins

The attitude of forgetting past sins and failures is illustrated in 2 Corinthians 2. Keep on moving forward in the spiritual life by forgetting what lays behind. 2 Cor. 2:7-8; 2 Cor. 2:10-11; Phil. 3:13-14.

“so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him.” (2 Corinthians 2:7-8, NASB)

“But one whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ, so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.” (2 Corinthians 2:10-11, NASB)

“Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13-14, NASB)

Attitude of Grace - Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

You cannot help another believer get back into fellowship unless you have the mental attitude of grace and unconditional love toward them. Do you have an attitude of grace and unconditional love toward other believers? An attitude of grace is demonstrated in Matthew 18:23-26 with our Lord's illustration of the kingdom of heaven. The parable uses a time when a king wanted to settle accounts with his slaves. At the time of Christ, a talent was a large sum of money equal to 6,000 denarii, the largest unit of Roman currency at that time. The denarius was equal to a typical day's wages for unskilled labor. So if



one denarius was what a man like the unforgiving servant could earn in a day, he would need to work 6,000 days or about 20 years to earn one talent. 10,000 talents would equal 60 million denarii or 60 million days of unskilled labor!

Clearly, the slave could not possibly ever pay off the debt. Everything would to be sold including his family being sold into slavery. The servant begged for mercy and the king “felt compassion.” The slave did not deserve anything, but the king forgave his debt as an act of grace - quite a bit to forgive.

“For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.’” (Matthew 18:23-26, NASB)

Later, the same servant found another believer who owed him a 100 pence. A pence was equal to a denarius, so 100 pence at that time was roughly equivalent to the wages for 100 days of unskilled labor. He started to choke him and demanded payment. Matt. 18:28-30.

“But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’ But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed.” (Matthew 18:28-30, NASB)

When the king heard of this, he summoned the ungrateful slave and handed him over to his torturers until the debt was repaid. Obviously, the debt could never be repaid. Matt. 18:33-35.

“Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you? And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.” (Matthew 18:33-35, NASB)

When we received the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, He paid a debt for each of us that none can ever repay. He received the judgment of all of the sins of mankind on the Cross. You cannot repay the price that He paid for each of us. He’ll never penalize you again for your sins. This is a picture of the servant being saved. We should not feel angry or resentful toward others for an offense, real or imagined. We are commanded to forgive others in Ephesians 4:31-32.

“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” (Ephesians 4:31-32, NASB)

Attitude of Legalism or Grace – Parable of the Prodigal Son

In Luke 15:11-13, a man had two sons, both born-again. They were in God’s family. Both were in fellowship with God and, therefore, both received divine grace resources. The younger son sinned and got out of fellowship. The elder son stayed at home in fellowship. But a peculiar thing happened. The elder son thought that the younger son should get what he deserved when he came back home to the father and do penance.

“And He said, ‘A man had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share



of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them. "And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living." (Luke 15:11-13, NASB)

The younger son confessed his sins and decided to return to his father and seek his forgiveness. He felt that he was not worthy to be his father's son because of his behavior. Was he still a son? Yes. The son's father demonstrates God's attitude when a Christian confesses sin. His father showered him with love. Luke 15:17-19.

"But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men."'" (Luke 15:17-19, NASB)

So what did the father do? Put him in a coal mine immediately? No. Some believers would like to see this happen when they observe another believer sinning. They hope the other fails. Instead, the father provided to his younger son his best robe, his signet ring that allowed him to draw on the father's account for money, and shoes which speaks of service - again serving the Lord. Luke 15:20-22.

"So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' "But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet;" (Luke 15:20-22, NASB)

In Luke 15:23-24, "this son of mine was dead and has come to life again" is the illustration of being out of fellowship with God and then following confession of sin, being restored to fellowship. Now the elder brother has been in fellowship. He has been doing a good job. This is probably the greatest warning to faithful believers. Often the only way that Satan can trip believers up is by getting their eyes on the other son, another believer.

"and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate." (Luke 15:23-24, NASB)

He keeps on asking, what do these things mean? Is he delighted beyond measure that the younger son has come back? No! Luke 15:26.

"And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be." (Luke 15:26, NASB)

He became angry. He got out of fellowship when his old legalism cropped up. He began to complain, grumble, and gossip. How did he know that his brother had "devoured your wealth with prostitutes" when he went away to a far country? He didn't. He then began to malign. Luke 15:13; Luke 15:28-30.

"And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living." (Luke 15:13, NASB)

"But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him. "But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with



prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.'" (Luke 15:28-30, NASB)

It was fitting to kill the fattened calf. The younger son had returned to the father – a picture of the believer getting back into fellowship. Luke 15:31-32.

"And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. 'But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.'" (Luke 15:31-32, NASB)

Be careful here. When another believer gets back into fellowship, you may get out of fellowship and trade places with them.

The Believer's Ministry to Other Believers

In James 5:19, "brethren" are members of the family of God, Christians. "Strays from the truth" means to wander out of fellowship. "And one" is another Christian in fellowship. "Turns him back" means to restore.

"My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back," (James 5:19, NASB)

In James 5:20, "let him know" is the believer in fellowship. "Turns a sinner" refers to restoring a believer from the sin they are indulging in. "Save his soul from death" means deliver a soul from death that is temporal death or being out of fellowship. "Will cover a multitude of sins" means they confess their sins to God the Father, the sin is then covered or cleansed. He is cleansed from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9.

"let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins." (James 5:20, NASB)

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9, NASB)

Conclusions

Check your own attitude first. Consider the source and realize that you also have an old sin nature and you must be in fellowship to help another believer who is out of fellowship. Have an attitude of grace. Remember that Christ forgave you a debt that you could never repay. Don't hold a minor debt of another believer over their head.

Have an attitude of forgetting. Have an attitude of grace over legalism. Don't grudge a believer getting back into fellowship. Don't hold their past against them as did the prodigal son's brother. There is a great ministry in helping others to get back into fellowship.