

Why Who You Fellowship With Is Important

Fellowship. What a great word! It comes from the idea of two people sitting together in a ship. These two men or women would be companions, working or relaxing together, sharing community and conversation. Together they could enjoy the strength of relationship and experience the smooth sailing that camaraderie brings.

But what would happen if one of the men in those close quarters was not a nice guy, but instead rude and arrogant? What if one of the women in that boat was a constant downer, endlessly complaining about her troubled marriage or deviant children? The ride would be rough, to say the least. Fellowship like that could cause you to look for the nearest port of call or even tempt you to jump overboard!

It's important who you fellowship with; that's an obvious truth. The Bible says, "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals'" (1 Cor. 15:33, NASB). But this Scripture can apply to more than the people you hang around with.

What if we considered it in light of the attitudes we fellowship with? If we were to check the passengers that are on board in the cabins of our hearts, whom would we find there? Would it be the stowaways of discouragement and depression? Perhaps we would find pride, bitterness or faultfinding.

Maybe you have never thought about fellowship in this way before, but the attitudes we stow are as important as the company we keep. We fellowship daily with our own thoughts, and the attitudes that develop as a result of them, like friends, affect our behavior. If we are bound to a negative

thought life, are we not fellowshiping with darkness?

The Bible says, “Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?” (2 Cor. 6:14). This Scripture is clearly speaking of our human associations, but it’s interesting to apply the truth to our fellowship with our own attitudes.

If we are listening to the voices of anxiety, we may be fellowshiping with the darkness of fear. How can we launch out into the deep places with God if fear is rowing against us? That fellowship would keep us anchored to the shores of safety and comfort.

Or how could we set sail with negativity as our navigator? We would find ourselves seeing everything through a dense fog and then be surprised when we arrived at the wrong destination. Clearly, not the kind of fellowship we need!

Because we are with ourselves 24/7, we are feeding our spirits all the time. Therefore it is important to know with whom—or what—we are fellowshiping. If faith comes by hearing (see Rom. 10:17), what do our hearts hear us say? Does the inner fellowship of our attitudes increase our faith, or do we discourage ourselves and provoke our own unrest?

Faith does indeed come by hearing, but so do doubt and fear. If I hear a negative report, these two shipmates are all too ready to climb on board and set sail with me. There on the open sea of my soul, I wrestle with the fellowship of darkness.

How much better it would be to voyage with the peace of Christ—to descend into the bottom of the vessel and find Jesus at rest there in spite of the storm around me. How inviting it sounds to raise the sail of hope and embark on a journey, knowing that joy and wisdom will travel with me. This is the fellowship I long for.

Of course there may be times when pirates invade our fellowship. The hostile takeover of our serenity is often a real threat. We must be diligent to carefully watch the compasses of our thought lives so we do not wander into enemy territory. Random thoughts, like pirates of the seas, will try to enter your boat and ride with you, tormenting your mind and heart.

If you had to take inventory of the passengers on your ship, what would you find there? Are you on a five-day cruise with criticism, perhaps? This little cabin boy seems to hitch a ride on many of our vessels. How easy it is to point a finger and judge what we see in others while at the same time excusing ourselves from similar flaws!

Or would your inventory reveal that you have braved the open sea with anger as your co-captain? This is one navigator that will steal your peace and take you in the wrong direction.

Whatever you find in the hold of your ship that causes you to fellowship with darkness, throw it overboard *now*! We are called to fellowship with the light. We do that by inviting Jesus' thoughts into our minds and asking the Holy Spirit to pilot us into the safe waters of the Word of God.

Paul prayed that "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit" would be with us all (2 Cor. 13:14). Those are companions we can safely take anywhere!

PRAYER POWER FOR THE WEEK OF 03/10/2014

This week invite Jesus' thoughts into your mind, recognize the love of God, and enjoy the fellowship of the Holy Spirit each day. Pray with faith for a positive outcome. When you pray for the nations, continue to pray for our own government and ask God to give them wisdom as they make decisions affecting our future and the entire world. Thank the Lord for His continued protection and provision. Remember the persecuted church and

those suffering in war torn countries. 2 Chron7:14; 2 Cor. 13:14.