

Everybody *Doesn't* Get a Trophy

Last week, we discussed spiritual gifts and the vessels we are for receiving God's Holy Spirit. The discussion that we had was enlightening and spirited. An open discussion is one of the benefits of having a fellowship as opposed to being stuck in a pew for 90 minutes with two lines of scripture and a warm and fuzzy story.

Before we get back into spiritual gifts, I'd like to take just a moment to ask a couple of questions for personal self-reflection. Why are you here? What is it you seek? I'm sure we can all talk this over in our minds in our daily conversations with The Almighty, but just as food for thought, ask yourself these questions. Your personal reasons will vary but from a scriptural basis we are commanded to "keep the Sabbath." Please don't think for a moment anyone is being singled out because of these questions. After the week of trials I've had, I'm front row and center.

The Fourth Commandment

Exodus 20:8-11- "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter; your

manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your livestock, nor the stranger within your gates; For *in* six days the LORD made the heaven and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and sanctified it.” (Exodus 31:16, Deuteronomy 5:12)

Fellowship

Aside from the Fourth Commandment, we are not to forget the fellowship. What is a fellowship? Just for clarification, the On-Line Dictionary defines “fellowship” as: “the companionship of individuals in a congenial atmosphere and on equal terms, friendship, a close association of friends or equals sharing similar interests.” We can certainly relate to sharing in the common interests, worshipping God and growing in His grace and knowledge.

1 Peter 3:18- “Rather, be growing in *the* grace and *the* knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and into *the* day of eternity. Amen”

We can find numerous scriptures on the fellowship in God’s Word.

Acts 10:42- “And they steadfastly continued in the teachings of the apostles and in fellowship, and in the breaking of bread and in prayers.”

1 Corinthians 1:9- “God *is* faithful, by Whom you were called into *the* fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

1 John 1:3-4- “That which we have seen and have heard we are reporting to you in order that you also may have fellowship with us; for the fellowship—indeed, our fellowship—*is* with the Father and with His own Son, Jesus Christ. These things we are also writing to you, so that your joy may be completely full.”

1 John 1:6-7- “If we proclaim that we have fellowship with Him, but we are walking in the darkness, we are lying to ourselves, and we are not practicing the Truth. However, if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, *then* we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His own Son, cleanses us from all sin.”

Hebrews 10:22-25- “Let us approach *God* with a true heart, with full conviction of faith, our hearts having been purified from a wicked conscience, and our bodies having been washed with pure water. Let us hold fast without wavering *to* the hope *that* we profess, for He Who promised *is* faithful; And let us be concerned about one another, and *be* stirring up *one another* unto love and good works; Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, even as some *are* accustomed to do; but rather, encouraging *one another*, and all *the* more as you see the day drawing near.”

As this is a fellowship, we have the blessing of an open forum so that we may discuss any items for context and clarification.

Hopefully, the primary reason we are here is that we love God (**Matthew 22:37**).

Okay, back on topic. When I was still full time, I was involved with an annual event held in Orlando, FL called “SWAT Round-up International.” It was a week-long SWAT competition involving SWAT teams from around the world. I actually competed a few times in my younger days and when I didn’t compete, I was a competition Judge. This yearly trek to Orlando lasted for 28 years.

Over the years, it morphed from a training event to become more of a vendor-oriented showcase and lost its original intent. The focus was now on cashing in on the huge prizes, which ballooned into more than a quarter of a million dollars for the first-place team, to include diamond “Superbowl” like rings.

I noticed a decay in the comradery among those in attendance and this topic was discussed among several of the judges who had been around awhile. The level of “whining” and complaining on mistakes or grievances on procedural violations or penalties during the competition was unbelievable. These young folks have a hard time accepting responsibility or holding themselves accountable for their own actions. **Romans 14:12**- “So then, each one of us shall give account of himself to

God.” Failing to accept personal responsibility for actions is not limited just to young people.

Granted there are still a few (very few) old school “war dogs” out there who remember what the original intent was and still live by the code but it is fading with their replacements with the millennial generation. The motive became focused on the self and prizes and not on the learning of tactics as originally intended. I haven’t been back there for a few years now so I can only imagine the present condition.

Back in the 60’s, society decided it would be prudent to develop kids and their **self**-esteem. It started in the classroom with a revision in the grading system and in sports it began with the issue of issuing of participation trophies. Not just trophies but other awards, certificates and items for “achievement” for basically showing up. Essentially it diminished those that actually worked hard and won. The seeds of socialism.

Trophies were once rare things, sterling silver loving cups bought from jewelry stores for truly special occasions. Often engraved with the winner’s name and event. But in the 1960s, they began to be mass-produced, marketed in catalogs to teachers and coaches, and sold in sporting-goods stores. Nowadays, you can occupy a seat on the sidelines and so long as you have a pulse, you’ll get a trophy.

Even worse is the gender crisis that Satan has manifested right before our eyes where men can compete as a woman. It's out of control.

Today, participation trophies and prizes are almost a given, as children are constantly assured that they are winners. One Maryland summer program gives awards every day and the "day" is one hour long. Maybe they stay awake for the hour or if they do fall asleep, they don't hit their heads on the desk?

In Southern California, a regional branch of the American Youth Soccer Organization hands out roughly 3,500 awards each season — each player gets one, while around a third get two. Nationally, A.Y.S.O. local branches typically spend as much as 12 percent of their yearly budgets on trophies! It adds up: trophy and award sales are now an estimated \$3 billion-a-year industry in the United States and Canada. The science is clear. Awards can be powerful motivators, but nonstop recognition does not inspire children to succeed. Instead, it can cause them to underachieve. The thoughts of actually earning something has been obliterated by entitlement. Sound familiar? Why work when I can get paid to stay at home.

God doesn't give trophies. He does give gifts (aside from the breath of life, His Holy Spirit and His only Son Jesus Christ and countless other blessings). As this fellowship is also a "Bible Study", I find it crucial that we share God's Word through scriptures in support of anything we discuss. That way it doesn't become

an editorial of “what I think.” We rely on God’s Word and His Truth. We often share thoughts during the week about what “we” need to do and “should be” doing. Most definitely, *reminders are constantly needed* to reinforce God’s Word. But make sure, when we say “we”, if you don’t have a mouse in your pocket, you’re standing naked in front of a mirror addressing yourself first.

Matthew 7:3-5- “Now why do you look at the sliver that *is* in your brother’s eye, but you do not perceive the beam in your *own* eye? Or how will you say to your brother, ‘Allow *me* to remove the sliver from your eye’; and behold, the beam *is* in your *own* eye? *You* hypocrite, first cast out the beam from your *own* eye, and then you shall see clearly to remove the sliver from your brother’s eye.”

1 Corinthians 12:1-31- “Now brethren, I do not wish you to be ignorant concerning the spiritual *gifts*. You know that you were Gentiles, *and* were carried away with dumb idols, as you yourselves were led away again and again. Therefore, I am letting you know that no one speaking by *the* Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed; and no one can say *that* Jesus *is* Lord, except by *the* Holy Spirit. Now there are differences of gifts, but the same Spirit; And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are differences of operations, but it is the same God Who is working all things in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for *the benefit of all*. For to one, a word of wisdom is

given by the Spirit; and to another, a word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; And to a different one, faith by the same Spirit; and to another, gifts of healing by the same Spirit; And to another, *the* working of miracles; and to another, prophecy; and to another, discerning of spirits; and to a different one, various languages; and to another, *the* interpretation of languages. But the one and the same Spirit is operating in all these things, dividing separately to each one as *God* Himself desires. For even as the body is one and has many members, yet all the members of the one body, though many, are one body; so also *is* Christ. For indeed, by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether bondmen or free—and we were all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body *of Christ* is not one member, but many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” would this then cause it not to be *part* of the body? And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” would this then cause it not to be *part* of the body? If the whole body *were* an eye, where *would* the hearing *be*? If *the* whole *were* hearing, where *would* the smelling *be*? But now has God Himself placed each one of the *members* in the body according to His own will. For if all were one member, where *would* the body *be*? But now *are there* many members, yet *they are* one body. And *the* eye is not able to say to the hand, “I have no need of you.” Or again, the head *is not able to say* to the feet, “I have no need of you.” But much to the contrary, the members of

the body that appear to be weaker are necessary; And those *members* that we regard as less honorable to the body, upon these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable *parts* are treated with greater modesty. But our more presentable *parts* do not have *this* need. Rather, God has tempered the body together, giving more abundant honor to those *members* that are deficient, So that there might not be any division in the body, but *that* the members might have the same concern for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with *him*; and if one member is glorified, all the members rejoice with *him*. Now you are *the* body of Christ, and *you are all* individual members. And God Himself has placed certain *ones* in the church: first, apostles; secondly, prophets; thirdly, teachers; then miracles; then gifts of healings; helps; governments; various languages. *Are* all apostles? *Are* all prophets? *Are* all teachers? *Do* all *perform* miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in *different* languages? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the more *edifying* gifts; and yet I show you a way far surpassing *all these*.”

Our abilities and our purposes are God given. We are all different as individuals but we are all the same in purpose in the glorification of God. We may serve the body in different functions as He wills, but we are of one mind, one body and of one Spirit. We are a new creation in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 4:22-25- “That concerning your former conduct, you put off the old man, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts; And that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that you put on the new man, which according to God is created in righteousness and holiness of the truth. Therefore, let each one put away lies *and* speak the truth with his neighbor because we are members of one another.”

Colossians 3:7-9- “Among whom you also once walked, when you were living in these things. But now, you should also put off all *these* things: wrath, indignation, malice, blasphemy, *and* foul language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, *seeing that* you have put off the old man together with his deeds,”

Jesus left His example for us to emulate. Are we walking in His footsteps?

John 13:15-17- “For I have given you an example, to show that you also should do exactly as I have done to you. Truly, truly I tell you, a servant is not greater than his lord, nor a messenger greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.”

1 Peter 2:21- “For to this you were called because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow in His footsteps.”

When we keep His example in mind and commit to the same actions, we are setting the examples for others among us.

1 Peter 5:1-4- “*The* elders who are among you I exhort, even as a fellow elder, and an eyewitness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that is about to be revealed: Feed the flock of God *that is* among you, exercising oversight not by compulsion, but willingly; not in fondness of dishonest gain, but *with an* eager *attitude*; Not as exercising lordship over your possessions; but *by* being examples to the flock *of God*. And when the Chief Shepherd is manifested, you shall receive an unfading, eternal crown of glory.”

2 Thessalonians 3:9- “*We were* not *obligated to work* because we did not have authority *to receive from you*; rather, *we chose to work* in order that we might personally give you a pattern to imitate.”

We have all been given gifts. As we are all on the same path, maybe just at different mile markers, keep in mind, we all have the same Word and Spirit as those who may be further along on the road. Whether we’ve been baptized into the

Family of God for 10 months or 10 years, we all serve the same Living God and His Son.

1 Corinthians 10:1-4- “Now I do not wish you to be ignorant *of this*, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea. And all were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. And *they* all ate the same spiritual meat. And *they* all drank of the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed *them*. And that Rock was Christ.”

Philippians 3:14-17- “I press toward *the* goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. So then, let as many as *be* perfect be of this mind. And if *in* anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, *in regard* to that which we have attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. Brethren, be imitators together of me, and bear in mind those who walk in this way, as you have us *for* an example.” We have been called and chosen into His service and we have accepted this calling at baptism. Have you identified what your spiritual gift(s) are? Are you using them according to God’s will and purpose? What good fruit are *you* bearing?

1 Timothy 4:9-16- “This saying *is* faithful and worthy of full acceptance. Now it is for this *reason that* we are laboring, and we are personally suffering reproach because we have hope in *the* living God, Who is *the* Savior of all men, especially

of those who are believers. These things command and teach. Do not allow anyone to despise your youth; but be an example to the believers— in word, *in conduct*, in love, in Spirit, in faith *and* in purity. Until I come, devote *yourself* to reading, to encouragement, *and* to doctrine. Do not neglect the *spiritual gift that is in you*, which was given to you by prophecy with *the* laying on of the hands of the elderhood.

Meditate on these things; give yourself wholly to them so that your growth in the faith may be apparent to all. Be diligent with yourself and with the doctrines; continue in them. For in doing this, you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”

These things we know. These things we *are to be doing daily.*

James 1:12- “Blessed *is the* man who endures trials because, after he has been proved, he shall receive a crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”

James 5:9-11- “Do not complain against one another, brethren, so that you may not be condemned. Behold, *the* Judge stands at the door. My brethren, take the prophets who spoke in the name of *the* Lord as an example of endurance *in* afflictions and of steadfastness. Remember, we call those blessed who endure. You

have heard of the endurance of Job, and you have seen the end result of *servicing the* Lord: that the Lord is very compassionate and full of tender mercies.”

God has called us and given us spiritual gifts. He has given you and me the power to become a child of God, to be in His Family, to be in His Kingdom.

Romans 8:14-16- “For as many as are led by *the* Spirit of God, these are the sons of God. Now you have not received a spirit of bondage again unto fear, but you have received the Spirit of sonship, whereby we call out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit itself bears witness conjointly with our own spirit, *testifying* that we are *the* children of God.”

As the first fruits, we have a special calling. We will ultimately become God's very own children, imitating and conforming our lives after Jesus Christ. He has already prepared the way for us by His example and sacrifice. We have a duty to use the gifts we've been given to the best of our ability to serve God and those about us. Reflection of our actions, our motives and conduct will enhance further development of our spiritual gifts.

Revelation 2:10-11- “. Do not fear any of the things that you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast *some* of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you

a crown of life. The one who has an ear, ***let him hear*** what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death.”

2 Timothy 4:7-8- “I have fought a good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith. From this time forward, a crown of righteousness is laid up for me, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day—and not to me only, but also to all who love His appearing.”

When we *unify* ourselves, we *edify* those in our family, we then *glorify* our God by our actions. Our faith and our devotion to God will strengthen us as we grow. We may not be receiving a trophy for finishing the race but we will receive a crown of life and righteousness for using our spiritual gifts as God intends. Amen.

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