

TWO FELLOWSHIPS

Robert F. Turner

In 1st John 1, John describes his fellowship with God as one dependent upon his walking *“in the light”* of God’s truth. He had learned of Christ, firsthand, and then wrote this truth for our benefit; so that we may have the same kind of fellowship he had, i.e., fellowship with God. There is no fellowship with God for those who walk in darkness — error and sin.

But in 3rd John 9-10, John tells us of some of his brethren, evidently folk who had fellowship with God, who had been cast out of the church. Diotrephes had severed fellowship with them, and forbade others to have such fellowship. This was wrong, undoubtedly; but the fact remains that it could and did happen. This is a case where God maintained a fellowship which men refused.

The opposite is true in 1st Corinthians 5. Here, a member of the church in Corinth, whom we conclude to have had fellowship with God at one time, now lived in immorality. According to 1st John 1, and implied here, the man had now severed his fellowship with God. He walked in darkness, but the brethren in Corinth continued to keep fellowship with him. This, too, was wrong — but it did happen. Men maintained a fellowship which God refused.

Thus, two types of fellowship are apparent — that with God, depending wholly upon our walking in truth; and that with men, even brethren, which is subject to man’s approval or disapproval. Saying we should approve only that which God approves (with which I agree) does not change the facts. Brethren sometimes approve that which they should not — or disapprove that which they should accept. God knows the difference; and judges accordingly; but the “party” doesn’t always act as God would have it act.

As we individually obey the gospel we pledge ourselves to serve God. To Him we must individually give account when life is through (Matthew 16:24; Romans 14:4, 12). Following this agreement of allegiance, and subject to its obligations, we join hands with others to work and worship together in a local fellowship, or congregation. God commands this union; the ties of this association are grand and its obligations real; but it remains the means of serving the Master, and must never become our Master.

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word may find himself automatically clicking on something irrelevant to the worship or study happening around him.

Disadvantage: Unfamiliarity with Scripture. If one begins using an electronic Bible early on, then he may never gain awareness of how the books of the Bible are ordered, or if he has been using one longer than he ever used a printed Bible, he may lose that knowledge. Granted, the order of the books is not inspired and not essential to obeying God, but, at some point, that app won’t be at hand and the student will have to pick up a printed Bible.

Disadvantage: Overlooked Context. Reading from a printed Bible, it is easy to glance at the opposite column or page, as well as to flip pages, gathering context and chronology of events. Bibles on screen aren’t so easy with that task, as there is usually some clicking and scrolling involved. In a 6½”x8¼” study Bible, the book of Philippians occupies fewer than five pages, requiring only two page flips. In a pocket-sized 2½”x4” Bible, the same book takes up fewer than seven pages, necessitating three page flips. On a phone, it takes ten swipes to get through the first chapter of that epistle, to say nothing of the next three chapters.

Disadvantage: Lack of Example-Setting. Generally, printed Bibles are immediately recognizable as such. Few books are leather-bound like Bibles are, and those Bibles not leather-bound generally have the word “Bible” printed conspicuously on the spine and cover. Whether used in church or out in the park or a restaurant, observers can see a student of God’s word reading that word. A person using a tablet or phone could be doing literally anything on that device and few would know if studying Scripture was the activity of choice. That doesn’t make the electronic version wrong; it just presents better opportunities with the old-school Bible.

Disadvantage: Internet Connectivity. Bible websites obviously require an internet connection, and, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, even applications usually require the same. The Bible contains 783,137 words in English, so these apps often do not download the inspired text to the device, but depend on a data signal or wi-fi. For a lot of people in a lot of places, that’s rarely a concern, but if home or church are located in a rural setting, that can be a deal-breaker. And traveling abroad can also have a deleterious effect on internet access. Teaching a new prospect in a setting previously unvisited, it would be unwise to rely on the electronic format.

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"WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?"

ACTS 16:30

LEARN THE GOSPEL

John 6:45; Romans 10:17

BELIEVE IN CHRIST

Hebrews 11:6; John 3:16

CONFESS CHRIST

Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 3:19; 17:30

BE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST

Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-6

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

"THE ASSEMBLING OF OURSELVES TOGETHER"

HEBREWS 10:24-25

SUNDAY

Worship @ 10:00 a.m.

Studies @ 11:45 a.m.

WEDNESDAY

Studies & Worship @ 7:00 p.m.

THURSDAY

Men's/Women's Studies
@ 6:30 p.m.

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Fellowship of men with men is an earthly tie which has an acceptable religious significance only when it complements our service to God. It is given divine regulations, but men do not always follow those regulations. One who counts on the outward bond of "church" fellowship alone to guarantee his spiritual redemption, leans on a broken reed. No, I do not depreciate the importance of the church. I seek to emphasize the meaning of the true church, as God's people, who do God's work, in God's way — praised for their allegiance and service to God, rather than for their faithfulness to the "party."

Brethren who are primarily interested in keeping their fellowship with God intact, will be drawn to one another by this common interest, and find a congregational fellowship that forecasts the sweetness of heaven.

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Conclusion: E-Bibles and printed Bibles each have pros and cons. Make an informed decision before settling on one over the other, or don't settle on either, but integrate their use in study.

"WHOLE COUNSEL"

ACTS 20:27

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 6

FEBRUARY 12TH, 2023

ELECTRONIC BIBLES

Bryan Matthew Dockens

With the proliferation of handheld, internet-connected devices, options have increased for how one accesses the Holy Scriptures. In the main, this is a very good development. Even so, it is prudent to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of this technology.

Advantage: Multiple Translations. Instead of having just one version of the Bible, or instead of having to carry many copies of the Bible, the electronic user can access many different translations at his fingertips.

Advantage: Study Aids. Using a Bible app or online Bible usually means interlinears, concordances, and similar features at the ready. That's easier than carrying around a shelf of books.

Advantage: Font Size. An app user can adjust the size of the words on the screen, minimizing the need for reading glasses or inconveniently heavy Bibles with Large or even Giant print.

Disadvantage: Dead Battery. A printed Bible will never drain its battery because it doesn't need one, and it won't need to be plugged in to recharge.

Disadvantage: Distracting Notifications. Unless effort is taken to disable them, most phones and tablets have constant alerts: phone calls, text messages, emails, Facebook and other social media notifications, plus weather and traffic. Even a disciplined and focused student of God's

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