

Chapter 26 – The Church #12

6th – INTER-CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

(Para 14) – *‘All members of each local church are engaged to pray continually for the good and the prosperity of all churches of Christ, wherever located, and upon all occasions to assist all other believers, within the limits of their own areas and callings, in the exercise of their gifts and graces. It follows, therefore, that **churches should seek fellowship one with another**, so far as the providence of God provides opportunity for the enjoyment of such benefits.’* – Ps 122:6... Rom 16:1,2... Eph 6:18... 3 John 8-10

(Para 15) – *‘When difficulties or differences occur in respect of doctrine or church government, and peace, unity and edification are at risk, one church only may be involved, or the churches in general may be concerned. Again, a member or members of a church may be injured by disciplinary proceedings not agreeable to truth and church order. In such cases as these it is according to the mind of Christ that many churches in fellowship together should meet and confer together through their chosen representatives, who are able to give their advice on the matters in dispute to all the churches concerned. It must be understood, however, that the representatives assembled are not entrusted with any church power properly so called, nor have they any jurisdiction over the churches themselves to exercise discipline upon any churches or persons, or to impose their conclusions on the churches or their officers.’* – Acts 15:2,4,6,22,23,25... 2 Cor. 1:24... 1 John 4:1

TRUE FELLOWSHIP requires:

(1st) **Unity in Christ** – Galatians 3:28... Romans 12:5

(2nd) **Help of the Spirit** – John 14:16... Hebrews 4:16

(3rd) **Genuine love** – 1 Corinthians 13:4-7... Romans 12:9

(4th) **Effort!** – Hebrews 6:9-12... 1 Thessalonians 1:3

Questions on Inter-Church Fellowship

'I have often read the passage in John 17 where Jesus prays for unity and wondered HOW He was praying for unity. Did He mean unity in the sense of complete agreement on every single doctrine and belief or did He mean unity in diversity... as in such a commitment to the gospel and united in Christ that the "smaller" doctrinal differences are counted as secondary since agreement to the gospel is primary. I don't mean that they aren't important, but that the gospel is made primary.'

'I had a couple of questions from this past Sunday school lesson... First, I understand that we need to have unity and fellowship with churches around us. So if we had strong unity and fellowship with the churches in our area and other surrounding churches, what would we be doing different from what we are doing now?'

'Is inter-church fellowship something that is between an individual and another church, or a church and another church? or both? From what I gathered on Sunday it sounds like inter-church fellowship could be both, between an individual and a church and a church.'

'Lastly, I wanted to clarify the first quote that you had from Allen Dunn... When reading it, it sounds as if there has to be a similar doctrinal unity in order for churches to have fellowship with one another. I was wondering what was defined as doctrinal unity in this quote?'

'Local churches are communities with a communal commitment to a form of doctrine. Inter-church fellowship, therefore, will be conditioned by the doctrinal unity between the two bodies. Here is where the London Baptist Confession is of benefit. It defines us doctrinally so as to allow for fellowship with other evangelical churches. Yet, it delineates a specific doctrinal pedigree so that we might also enjoy a deeper and more intimate fellowship with those whose commitments are the most consistent with our own.' -- **Allen Dunn**