

**TOGETHERNESS AND RESPECT SOLIDIFY THE CHURCH
LOVE IN THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE CHURCH – PART 3 OF 4
1 CORINTHIANS 16:17-18**

COMPANIONSHIP IN CHRIST

1. A powerful component of **loving** fellowship is companionship.
2. Companionship is the by-product of subtle **actions** of life and **ministry**.
 - **Sitting** with someone waiting for their loved one in surgery
 - Making a **card** for a friend
 - Serving **alongside** someone in ministry
3. The main ingredient of companionship is a sense of **togetherness**.

KEY THOUGHT: Paul was grateful to enjoy the visit by his 3 **friends** from Corinth (1 Cor. 16:17-18a).

I. COMPANIONS IN CHRIST REFRESH US (1 COR. 16:17-18a).

- A. Companionship is the ministry of **presence** (1 Cor. 16:17).
 1. Companionship **encourages** the wounded and hastens **healing** of the sick.
 2. Companionship is **preventive** by keeping us from falling into **sin**, getting hurt, or losing heart.
- B. Companionship helped a weary Paul to find **rest** and refreshment (1 Cor. 16:18a).
 1. Paul used the Greek word *anapauō* for “**refreshed**”.
 2. Jesus used *anapauō* promising “**rest**” to those that believe in Him (Matt. 11:28).
 3. Paul’s three friends **strengthened** Him through the ministry of presence (Prov. 25:25).

KEY THOUGHT: Both Paul and his 3 visitors were all **refreshed** by the time together (2 Cor. 7:13).

II. RECOGNIZING DESERVING SERVANTS IN THE CHURCH PLEASES THE LORD (1 COR. 16:18b).

- A. Recognize faithful, godly workers for **who** they are in the Lord and **how** they serve.
1. Epaphroditus was the type of **selfless** servant that God valued (Phil. 2:29-30).
 2. When the church follows and respects godly, mature **believers**, God's family is strengthened in fellowship and **love**.
- B. **Imitating** the faithful servant of God and giving them our greatest respect pleases God (1 Thess. 5:12-13).
1. **Bless** those who teach and preach for their **diligent** work (1 Tim. 5:17).
 2. God's plan is for the godly to **lead** and the church family to be **accountable** to them (Heb. 13:17).

KEY THOUGHT: Identifying godly leaders and **following** their example **strengthens** the fellowship of the church (1 Cor. 11:1).

FOR FURTHER STUDY AND PERSONAL GROWTH

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SUNDAY: *Companionship among Christians is unique (1 Cor. 16:17-18a)!*

Christian fellowship is one of the sweetest benefits of salvation. A powerful component of loving fellowship is companionship. Companionship is the by-product of subtle actions of life and ministry. Companionship happens when you are sitting with someone waiting for their loved one who is in surgery. A sense of togetherness occurs when a friend makes you a birthday card. Companionship warms your heart when you work with someone in ministry. The main ingredient of companionship is togetherness. There is an unspoken joy of just having a fellow Christian with you during the various events and stages of life. How often do you provide companionship to other Christians? Christian companionship is available as soon as you step forward and begin investing in the lives of others. Praise God for your health and the connection that exists between fellow believers. *May the actions and choices you make bless everyone with the grace of Christian companionship!*

MONDAY: *Companionship is practicing the ministry of presence (1 Cor. 16:17)!*

A Christian friend provides the companionship that refreshes us (1 Cor. 16:17-18a). The mere presence of a Christian friend revitalizes our spirit and can strengthen our resolve. Being present for someone who is struggling can encourage the wounded and hasten healing in the sick. Companionship from a fellow believer can be preventive by keeping us from falling into sin, getting hurt, or losing heart. There is no training needed to practice the ministry of presence. Simply take the step to begin investing time with others. The ministry portion of your time together will begin to sharpen. Learn to pray whenever you are with another believer. Ask the Lord for the strength to begin practicing the ministry of presence. Seek the courage to ask if you can pray with those you are spending time with during the week. *May your new ministry of presence produce the wonderful by-product of companionship!*

TUESDAY: *Companionship revives the discouraged and tired (1 Cor. 16:18a)!*

Paul appears to have been tired and weary when his friends from Corinth arrived. These three friends' presence provided a much needed companionship in Paul's life, companionship that helped the weary Paul find rest and refreshment (1 Cor. 16:18a). The Greek word Paul used for "refreshed" was *anapauō*. When Jesus used *anapauō*, we translate it to mean "rest" to those that believe in Him (Matt. 11:28). A personal relationship with Jesus as your Lord and Savior brings companionship with the Lord through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Companionship with Jesus regenerates the soul and strengthens the spirit of those who call upon His name. Likewise, Paul's three friends strengthened Him through the ministry of presence (Prov. 25:25). When you are depressed or down, you can make the decision to practice the ministry of presence. Praise the Lord for your salvation that brings the Holy Spirit into your life and links you to other believers. *May you be revived and strengthened by fellow believers!*

WEDNESDAY: *Companionship can restore vitality like a week's vacation (2 Cor. 7:13)!*

The four men that enjoyed each others' presence and companionship were probably all refreshed by the experience (2 Cor. 7:13). Many can attest that time relaxing with good companions can feel like several days of vacation. Stress and concerns can melt away as you are enraptured with

the conversation and bond that companions enjoy. Could you use some recreational time? Who can you invest some time with to become refreshed? One of those could be the Lord Himself. Maybe a half day of prayer and Bible reading at the beach or in the mountains. Possibly time sitting in the backyard or in a park. Even time at your favorite coffee house as you read scripture and ponder how to apply it to your life. Pray for the strength of character to craft a plan for some time quietly with the Lord. ***May you be faithful to your plan to be with the Lord and enjoy His companionship in your life!***

THURSDAY: ***Recognizing the faithful, godly servants in the church pleases God (1 Cor. 16:18b)!*** We too often fail to recognize faithful, godly workers for who they are in the Lord and how they serve (1 Cor. 16:18b). When we highlight how God has used His faithful saints to minister to others, it helps everyone find someone to imitate. Epaphroditus was the type of selfless servant that God values (Phil. 2:29-30). He worked so hard that he almost died from the strain he placed on himself. When the church follows and respects godly, mature believers, God's family is strengthened in fellowship and love. You can recognize a faithful servant of God with a smile, a thank you, or a note in the mail. Offering words of encouragement or support are also greatly appreciated as we diligently press forward for the Lord. Pray for some godly servants in the days ahead. ***May the Lord provide you with plenty of faithful servants to encourage and support!***

FRIDAY: ***Imitating the faithful servant of God strengthens our walk with Christ (1 Thess. 5:12-13)!*** Imitating the faithful servant of God and giving them our greatest respect pleases God. The Bible is clear that imitation of these saints is one way you can learn to walk circumspect before the Lord. Bless those who teach and preach for their diligent work (1 Tim. 5:17). Those that handle the Word of God with excellence should be afforded recognition and thanks from the saints in the church. God's plan is for the godly to lead and the church family to be accountable to them (Heb. 13:17). These leaders serve the church on behalf of Christ and must give the Lord an account for their faithfulness. The church is responsible to help its leaders do the work of the ministry with joy and conviction. Pray for the leaders in your church. Lift them regularly before the Lord, asking for strength and stamina in the work that they do for the kingdom. ***May the faithfulness of your leaders bring a great blessing in your life!***

SATURDAY: ***Following the example of godly leaders strengthens fellowship in the church (1 Cor. 11:1)!*** Paul said that the Corinthians should follow his example as he follows the example of Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). When Christians read the accounts of Jesus' actions and His words in scripture, it is difficult to truly visualize they can behave in that manner. Obviously, it is beyond us to be able to live without sin. Even the accounts about the servants of God in the Bible appear to be beyond our reach with their examples. However, those that live among us who live with grace and godliness help us learn to live in a manner worthy of the call God has placed on our lives (Eph. 4:1). Identify those that you feel would be good for you to imitate. Spend some time with them especially in a ministry setting. Invite them to your home for a meal or help them with a ministry function. Ask the Lord to protect those that you are seeking to imitate. Pray for their ministries and personal life. ***May your life with Christ be blessed as you strive to follow the example of godly leaders!***