



Benchmarks for Real Fellowship

Lesson 4 • Philemon 4-7

Real fellowship in Christ breaks through barriers to refreshing relationships with one another.

*But what are the **BENCHMARKS** for real fellowship?*

Benchmarks for Real Fellowship

Benchmark #1 Real Fellowship Is **RADIATING** Fellowship!

"I thank my God always, making mention of you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and of the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints;" Philemon 4-5

1. Radiating fellowship is the **OVERFLOW** of a growing relationship with Christ. (vv. 5, 6a)

Three Ways the Holy Spirit Reveals This Truth

- The inspired **CIRCUMSTANCES** of the letter.

*Philemon was written at **same time** and to the **same location** as Colossians (plus one to the Ephesians)!*

Colossians: Growing Relationship with Christ!

Philemon: Real Fellowship with Other Believers!

Ephesians: Outstanding Membership in the Local Church!

- The inspired **CHIASM** of the sentence

*The chiasmic (Greek letter X) structure places **faith in Christ** at the **center** and **love for all the saints** all around it!*



*Colossians 1:4 "since we heard of **your faith in Christ Jesus** and of **your love for all the saints**;"*

*Ephesians 1:15 "Therefore I also, after I heard of **your faith in the Lord Jesus** and **your love for all the saints**,"*

*Galatians 5:6 "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but **faith working through love**."*

- The inspired **CHOICE** of the words: *The "fellowship of your faith" (v. 6)*

Is Your Fellowship Real, Shallow, or Fake?

REAL FELLOWSHIP	SHALLOW FELLOWSHIP	FAKE FELLOWSHIP
<i>Flows from your own relationship with Christ</i>	<i>Relies on other's relationship with Christ</i>	<i>Possesses no relationship with Christ</i>

2. Radiating flows **OUTWARD** to others who need it. (v. 5b)

Is Your Fellowship Flowing Outward?

- Love for **SAINTS** to refresh them.
 - Love for **SEEKERS/REPENTERS** to receive them.
 - Love for **SINNERS** to reconcile them with God.

All due to your love for the **SAVIOR** to relish Him!

Benchmark #2 Real Fellowship Is RADICAL Fellowship!

"and I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake." (v. 6)

What does "the fellowship of your faith" mean?

"sharing" ESV, "participation" CSB, "partnership" NIV

- The *partnership* we show by *sharing fellowship* with other believers that *springs* from our common faith in Christ!

What does "effective" mean?

Verb: Galatians 2:8; 3:5; 5:6; Noun: 1 Corinthians 16:9; Hebrews 4:12

"So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out** your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is **at work in you**, both to will and to **work** for His good pleasure." Philippians 2:12-13

- Paul is praying that Philemon's fellowship would prove to be *radically effective* with Onesimus: they would both *work out* with one another what God has already powerfully *worked in* both of them by grace through faith!

What does "through the knowledge of every good thing" mean?

- A *deeper understanding* of the many blessings of being "in Christ" through *personal experience* as you *share these blessings* with other believers - especially those who *don't deserve it!*

What is "every good thing which is in you"?

- All the *blessings* every believer has in their heart as a *result of their relationship* with Christ to *share* with others!

What does "for Christ's sake" mean?

Literally: "into/toward Christ"

How we fellowship with other believers reflects on how God is seen and whether Christ is glorified in us!

Real Fellowship Is Radical Fellowship Because...

We become **more like** Christ and will **draw others** to Christ
as we grow in our **understanding** through the **experience** of every good thing in us
by **actively sharing** every good thing in us
with those who **need** every good thing from us
whether that be love, forgiveness, reconciliation, acceptance or any other good thing
all for **the fame** of Christ's name!

< Relationship
< Fellowship
< Breakthrough
< Radical
< REAL

1. Radical fellowship **RELATES** to others the same way God relates to us in Christ!

It's radical because only Christians can do it and so few Christians choose to do it.

2. Radical fellowship **DRAWS** on divine resources to break thru barriers to meet the deepest needs of hearts!

It's radical because it acknowledges every good thing that is already in us and applies it to our difficult relationships with others for Christ's glory.

3. Radical fellowship **LIVES** on the other side of barriers for the glory of Christ!

It's radical because only Christians can do it and few choose to do it, but those who do will become more like Christ and draw others to Christ.

Benchmark #3 Real Fellowship REFRESHING Fellowship!

"For I have come to have much joy and comfort in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, brother." (v. 7)

How Do People React after Relating with You?

Are you **refreshing** the saints? Or **depressing** the saints? Or **oppressing** the saints?

Real Fellowship is Refreshing Because It Results in...

1. Greater **JOY**: *Rejoicing over the love shared with others!*
2. Greater **ENCOURAGEMENT**: *Rest from the love shared with others!*

3. Greater **THANKSGIVING**: *Recognition to the Lord for the love shared with others!*
4. Greater **PRAYER**: *Requests to the Lord for the love shared with others to grow!*
5. Greater **TESTIMONY**: *Respect from those with whom the love was shared!*

***Real fellowship in Christ radiates out to others and radically breaks through barriers
to refreshing relationships with one another!***

*Philemon "was a man whose faith in Christ and whose love to the brethren all men knew, and the story of them had reached even Rome, where Paul was in prison. His house must have been an oasis in a desert for, as Paul had it, he had refreshed the hearts of God's people. It is a lovely thing to go down in history as a man in whose house God's people were rested and refreshed.
– William Barclay*

Is Your Fellowship with Others Real? *Is it a Radiating, Radical, and Refreshing?*

What Kind of a Brother or Sister Are You? *Refreshing? Depressing? Oppressing?*