

Fellowship Forum

January 28th in Edmonds, WA

Nine brothers and sisters in Christ gathered in Edmonds on January 28th, including brethren from Bellevue, Shoreline, Redmond, Port Orchard, and Edmonds. We are blessed of the Lord to be able to gather together in Jesus' name.

1. What does the Bible say is sound doctrine?

What does the Bible say? What is important? What is emphasized? Concerns expressed were about religious systems and systems of theology that promote extra-biblical terms and themes that unnecessarily divide Christians. The intent of the discussion was not anti-scholarship or anti-intellectual but opposed to “knowledge” that puffs up instead of edifies.

The Letter to Titus was referred to several times.

“Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the **truth which accords with godliness...**” Titus 1:1

The truth of God's word, the teaching, the doctrine cannot be separated from the godliness our Lord Jesus intends to produce in us (See also 1 Timothy 6:3). Instructions to Titus about elders show the connection between behavior and sound doctrine.

“For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you— if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast **the faithful word** as he has been taught, that he may be able, by **sound doctrine**, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

“For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain. One of them, a prophet of their own, said, “Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.” This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth. To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. **They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him,** being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.” Titus 1:5-16

The commandments and wisdom of Titus 2 were discussed as examples of what is sound doctrine.

“But as for you, **speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine:** that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things— that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.

“Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.

“Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, **teaching us** that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might

redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

“Speak these things, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no one despise you.” Titus 2

The Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth. Our tendency is to camp on one side of an issue or give up on puzzling things. Our calling is to set our minds on things above.

Other scriptures referenced: 1 Timothy 6, 2 Timothy 2, Matthew 4:4, Acts 15.

2. What does the Bible teach that could help Calvinists and Arminians to believe the best about each other? Or, to attain the unity of the faith?

This topic could apply to any strongly held doctrinal positions.

“But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.” 2 Timothy 2:23-26

Many of the scriptures of the last topic apply to this discussion.

It is one thing for brothers to wrestle with the truths of scripture in good faith and it is another to be driven by a militant crusade.

Among brothers who differ, there is the principle of trusting Jesus for how He still uses us in spite of our differences.

“Now John answered and said, “Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow with us.”

“But Jesus said to him, “Do not forbid him, for he who is not against us is on our side.” Luke 9:49-50

Are we devoted to teachers or movements or to the Lord Jesus and His Body?

“Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos,” or “I am of Cephas,” or “I am of Christ.” Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?” 1 Corinthians 1:10-13

For someone who professes Christ and bears the fruit of Jesus in his life, we believe the best about him in the sense that he was bought with a price. We are called to love one another so that by this, all will know that we are Jesus’ disciples.

We ought to pray together.

“I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting...” 1 Timothy 2:8

Other scriptures referenced were John 13:35, 1 Corinthians 13, John 17, 2 Corinthians 5:16.

3. What does baptism represent and mean, according to the Bible?

We discussed different meanings of baptism. A sense of awe was expressed as to the depths of meaning represented by the symbol of baptism .

First there was John’s baptism.

“Now John himself was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were **baptized** by him in the Jordan, **confessing their sins**.

“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! **Who warned you to flee from the wrath**

to come? Therefore **bear fruits worthy of repentance**, and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, **but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.** His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather **His wheat into the barn**; but He will burn up the **chaff with unquenchable fire.**” Matthew 3:4-14

And Jesus was baptized by John.

“Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, “I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?”

“But Jesus answered and said to him, “**Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.**” Then he allowed Him.

“When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and **He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.** And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.””
Matthew 3:17

The Trinity was present in the portrayal of Jesus’ baptism. The Spirit of God descended, alighting upon the Son as the Father expressed His pleasure.

Perhaps Jesus’ baptism is a foreshadowing of His death for us on the cross as was Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac. “God will provide the lamb.” Maybe Jesus’ baptism was for repentance on our behalf and in some sense the beginning of the substitutionary atonement.

Jesus said:

“I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But **I have a baptism to be baptized with**, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!” Luke 12:49-50

The resurrected Jesus spoke in Galilee to the eleven:

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. **Go** therefore and make disciples of all the nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.” Matthew 28:18-20

And in Jerusalem:

“And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; **for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.**” Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power **when the Holy Spirit has come upon you**; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”” Acts 1:4-8

On that day of Pentecost:

“Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you **be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.** 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”” Acts 2:38-39

On the third journey of evangelism and church planting, a distinction was made between John's baptism and believer's baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus:

“And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, "Did you receive the **Holy Spirit** when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into **John's baptism.**" Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that **they should believe on Him who would come after him**, that is, on Christ Jesus." When they heard this, **they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.** And when Paul had laid hands on them, the **Holy Spirit** came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.” Acts 19:1-7

Paul writes:

“In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, **buried with Him in baptism**, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.” Colossians 2:11-15

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as **were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?** Therefore we were **buried with Him through baptism into death**, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.” Romans 6:1-7

And Peter:

“For **Christ also suffered once for sins**, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us—**baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God)**, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.” 1 Peter 3:18-22

The depths of the meaning represented by the symbol of water baptism was discussed: the suffering and death of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The related topics of fire and judgment were referenced.

The meaning of the Greek word for “baptism” can be expressed by the English term, “whelmed”: to engulf, submerge, or bury. When we are baptized into Christ in what ways are we “whelmed” in Him? We are whelmed in His death, His life, His sufferings, His Holy Spirit.

Romans 6, 7, and 8 express these wonders in Jesus Christ by His Holy Spirit.

4. What does the Bible say about worship?

God is Spirit and we must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Worship is so much more than just singing. Worship is offering our lives as living sacrifices.

“Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and

those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” John 4:21-24

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you **present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.** 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Romans 12:1-2

In Exodus 33:14, God told Moses, “**My Presence** will go with you, and I will give you rest.”

The Hebrew word and the Greek word often translated as “worship” both rooted in words meaning “prostrate”. Our hearts are drawn by the Holy Spirit to be prostrate before our God.

The English word, “worship” comes from an Old English word, “worthship”. Our Lord Jesus is worthy of worship.

Worship is a matter of the heart.

“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” 1 Peter 5:6

Submission to the Lord is demonstrated in Psalms and Revelation.

The focus of worship is not on the act of prostration but on the object of worship: Jesus.

“Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. For He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture, And the sheep of His hand.” Psalm 95:6-7

All music worships something. Music is calling attention. Jesus is the Truth. The proper response to the Truth is sincerity.

The “therefore” of Romans 12:1 refers to the previous eleven chapters. The rest of Romans expounds upon our call to be living sacrifices to the Lord: obedience and love. John 14:21, “He who has my commandments and keeps them, He it is who loves me.” A person prostrate before another denotes a servant-master relationship. Obeying God = loving God = prostrating ourselves = holy sacrificing our bodies = worship in spirit, all the while bearing in mind His mercies.

Without the first eleven chapters of Romans we would be white-washed tombs filled with dead men’s bones in attempting to live out the rest of Romans.

Looking at every New Testament use of the words, “baptism” or “worship” gives understanding way beyond what many of us have been trained to associate with those words.

God calls us to approach Him and worship Him on His terms and not insist on our own presumptuous ways, “strange fire”. (Leviticus 10)

In John 4, Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that true worshippers “will” worship the Father in spirit and in truth. This will happen, by the Spirit of God. This is a normal response to Jesus:

“Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, “Do you believe in the Son of God?” He answered and said, “Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?” And Jesus said to him, “You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you.” Then he said, “**Lord, I believe!**” **And he worshiped Him.**” John 9:35-38

5. Is Fellowship Forum biblical?

Questions that could reasonably be asked about this series of quarterly gatherings include the following: When we gather for Fellowship Forum are we here to “vote” on what the truth is, like at the “Jesus Seminars”? Are we trying to dialogue and philosophize toward a consensus about the truth? Does this format prevent us from teaching the word of God with authority? Is this an ecumenical gathering trying to achieve some lowest common denominator version of Christianity? Should not every

ministry and gathering be under the authority and direction of a local assembly and its elders? Is Fellowship Forum a parachurch organization? Are the people involved all talk and no action?

Fellowship Forum began in January 2010 after an online discussion about legalism versus freedom versus holiness versus licentiousness. One of the participants suggested that the brethren get together face-to-face to discuss important things in the light of the Bible.

It seemed that most Christians have only known sitting as a captive audience while one man preaches. It seemed radically New Testament for brothers to meet as brothers with the freedom to discuss what the Bible says about various topics.

Jesus says,

“But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Matthew 23: 8-12

The apostle Paul taught and spoke and discussed in ways that were represented by multiple Greek words, for example, *dialegomai* or *euangelizo* or *didasko*.

Jesus says,

“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.” Matthew 18:20

We are not a church or a parachurch, but we are part of the church. We each participate in our local assemblies and are under the authority of Jesus Christ and our local assemblies. We gather together as brothers to build up one another in the faith.

Acts 15 is an important example of gatherings of brothers in Christ to discuss biblical truth. The Lord spoke into that gathering through the word and the Spirit.

When brothers gather we follow the pattern of Acts 17:11 Bereans and search the scriptures see if what is said is true.

As was discussed in topic 1 about sound doctrine, our intent is to be about truth in accordance with holy living and not vain philosophy. In topic 4, about worship, we examined our calling to be living sacrifices, devoted to obedience and action.

<http://fellowshipforum.us>