“Fellowship”
1 John 1: 3-7

Introduction: “What a fellowship, what a joy divine, leaning on the everlasting arms...”
A. What is this fellowship?
B. What does it mean to “fellowship” someone?
C. We need to consider the word’s 1) basic meaning 2) biblical usage and 3) blatant misuse.

Discussion:
I. The Basic Meaning Of “Fellowship”
A. English
1. “Fellow” - “Originally, a person who shares; partner or accomplice.”
2. “-ship” - “The quality, condition, or state of, as in fellowship, friendship”
B. Greek
1. “Koinonia” - “(a) communion, fellowship, sharing in common.. (b) that which is the outcome of fellowship, a contribution” (KJV: Fellowship, Contribution, communion, distribution, communicate, communication)
2. “Koinonos” - “Denotes ‘a partaker’ or ‘partner’” (KJV: Fellowship, partaker, partner, companion)
3. “Koinoneo” - “to have fellowship” (KJV: Fellowship, distributing, partaker, communicate)
4. “Sun-koinoneo” - “To have fellowship with or in” (KJV: Fellowship with, communicate with, partaker of, partaker with, companion)
5. “Metoche” - “partnership” (KJV: Fellowship)

II. The Biblical Usage Of “Fellowship”
A. Spiritual union of all faithful brethren with the Godhead. (1 John 1:3; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 2:1)
1. Because all partaker of the same characteristic(s) - light. (1 John 1:5-7).
2. Union so close that each is said to be in the other (cf. John 15:4; 1 John 2:24; Rom. 8:7)
3. Union established at baptism: into Christ (Gal. 3:26,27); into church (1 Cor. 12:13).
4. Union maintained by walking light. (1 John 1:7-9)
B. Spiritual union of brethren in local congregation.
1. Local church is not called specifically called a “fellowship” in N.T., but the idea in descriptions.
   a. Members “joined together” - hence, “joint participation” - fellowship (Eph. 4:16; Acts 9:26)
   b. Members received and expelled from this partnership/fellowship. (Rom. 14:1; 1 Cor. 5:13)
      (1) Possible to be wrongfully received or retained into this fellowship. (1 Cor. 5)
      (2) Possible to be wrongfully rejected or expelled from this fellowship. (3 John 9-10).
C. To share in the things of another - either directly or as an accomplice.
1. The sufferings of Christ. (Phil. 3:10).
2. The unfruitful works of darkness, rather than reproving them. (Eph. 5:11)
3. The sins of others. (2 John 9-11; 1 Tim. 5:22).
D. Certain acts that signal a recognition of the state fellowship with another.
1. Eating at the Lord's table, Israelite altar, or Idol's table. (1 Cor. 10:14-22)
2. Making certain contributions to another. (Acts 2:42; Rom. 15:26; Phil. 4:15)
3. Giving the “right hand of fellowship” (Gal. 2:9).
4. What about attending services of group cannot fellowship? That depends!
5. What about using in our services members of churches we could not fellowship?
6. J. W. McGarvey is a good example of fellowshipping error while teaching the truth.¹

III. The Blatant Misuse of “Fellowship”
A. Making Biblical fellowship synonymous with social fellowship.
1. “Fellowships” - meals, games, social gatherings etc. - Not Bible fellowship.
2. “Baptism” means washing or dipping but a swimming party not Bible baptism.
B. Making “withholding fellowship” the same as “withdrawing fellowship” or “church discipline.”
1. In church discipline, spiritual fellowship is withdrawn by the local church, but so is social fellowship by its members (cf. 1 Cor. 5).
2. A Local church cannot withdraw from a denomination or its members, but can withhold - not use members or announce activities, etc. in way to signal fellowship.

¹ Search For The Ancient Order, Vol. 2, p. 442
3. A Local church cannot withdraw from members of another congregation, but can decline fellowship (use in services, announce meetings, etc.)

Conclusion:

A. Biblical Fellowship is primarily our partnership with God and brethren.
B. Biblical Fellowship is expressed in various acts of spiritual service.
C. Biblical Fellowship is not same a social fellowship. (cf. 1 Cor. 11:22ff)