

## CHRIST FELLOWSHIP'S HISTORY

Christ Fellowship is not affiliated with a particular denomination, as that word generally refers to groups of churches that are coordinated or governed by a central authority. Instead, the Fellowship Bible Churches share a common heritage.

During the social tumult of the late 1960s when all forms of authority were being questioned, Gene Getz, a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, faced difficult questions from his students. They asked whether the local church was meeting the needs of God's people and if it was still relevant. Therefore, Getz laid aside his lesson plans and began a fresh study of the New Testament church with his students.

As a result of this study, he wrote a book entitled *Sharpening the Focus of the Church* which outlines supracultural principles of church renewal. In effect, he argued that the local church's biblical functions (Bible teaching, fellowship and outreach) should take forms suited to the needs of people in their particular culture without compromising biblical principles. These principles would work in any culture in any part of the world at any time in history. He distinguishes between what churches view as traditional and what is actually biblically based, and that there is a difference between function and form. In other words, the biblical function of Bible teaching can take on several different forms and be presented in several different ways as long as it remains true to the Word of God.

In 1972, Getz was challenged to lead a group of families to launch the first Fellowship Bible Church (FBC) in Richardson, Texas. The theory of the principles in *Sharpening the Focus of the Church* sounded great in the classroom, but could a church actually implement these ideas? Getz agreed to help the families launch this first church.

The original FBC church leaders allowed freedom in determining the form of the biblical functions. Instead of Sunday School classes, what we now call Life Groups took shape in local homes. Soft seating replaced pews, and a coffee break at the midpoint of the Sunday service was used to socialize and make visitors feel welcome. Using these and other innovative methods, FBC grew quickly and within four years had planted four new churches in the Dallas Metroplex.

Meanwhile, a great number of other pastors and lay leaders read Getz's book, and as a result, Fellowship Bible Churches started forming in cities ranging from Dallas, Texas to Warsaw, Poland!

Even though there are approximately 350 Fellowship Bible Churches around the world, Getz never desired to begin a denomination. His philosophy is that each church is to be independent and establish their individual governing board of elders as was done in the New Testament:

*Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust (Acts 14:23).*

See also Christ Fellowship's View papers on elders, particularly "CF View: Elders."

Even so, some Fellowship Church pastors meet together for encouragement, edification and accountability.

Our Senior Pastor Bruce B. Miller and his parents were involved in the original Fellowship Church in Richardson. Bruce then went on to serve under Getz for 15 years at Fellowship Bible Church North until God led Bruce and his wife, Tamara, to establish McKinney Fellowship Bible Church in 1997 (which we now call Christ Fellowship).

Christ Fellowship is two generations removed from the original Fellowship Bible Church:

1. Fellowship Bible Church, Richardson, Texas
2. Fellowship Bible Church North, Plano, Texas (now Chase Oaks Church)
3. Christ Fellowship

Christ Fellowship still embodies the same elements of strong Bible teaching, authentic community and evangelism. Further refining the original concepts, our mission is to be people helping people find and follow Christ. Our heart is all about Jesus:

- All welcome – people of grace
- All real – people who are authentic
- All Bible – people guided by the Word
- All in – people who hold nothing back
- All together – people who unite to make a difference

Christ Fellowship has been carefully shaped to fit our unique culture. Our four practices are:

1. Engage God individually
2. Connect in a group
3. Worship in a gathering
4. Impact others personally

Since we believe in freedom in form, we are continually refining our methods to reach our unique culture without compromising biblical truth. That is why sometimes you will see changes happening in our church, i.e., Facebook presence, online internet campus, Video Café, blogs, etc.

Christ Fellowship generally dislikes labels because they are prone to misinterpretation. But we say that Christ Fellowship is incarnational because we are here to find and follow

Jesus and to help others do the same. We are Christ-centered, Bible-based and Spirit-empowered. Our church also works hard to be a missional church, reaching out locally and globally to people with the love and Gospel of Jesus Christ. See Christ Fellowship's brochure "What We Believe" for further details on our biblical convictions.

Of course, those descriptive words must be lived out in obedience to God. In the final analysis, what we do defines who we are. Jesus said, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock" (Matthew 7:24).

*Christ Fellowship's views on this subject are guided by the authoritative Word of God.  
Not all biblical references in the Word of God relating to each principle are listed.  
Biblical references quoted are from the New International Version (NIV) 2011 unless otherwise noted.*