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that time was "Peace." As distinct from some personal "enemy" or worldly man in authority who opposed Christians, a disfellowshipped or disassociated person who is trying to promote or justify his apostate thinking or is continuing in his ungodly conduct is certainly not one to whom to wish "Peace." (1 Tim. 2:1, 2) And we all know from our experience over the years that a simple "Hello" to someone can be the first step that develops into a conversation and maybe even a friendship. Would we want to take that first step with a disfellowshipped person?

²⁴ "But what if he seems to be repentant and needs encouragement?" someone might wonder. There is a provision for handling such situations. The overseers in the congregation serve as spiritual shepherds and protectors of the flock. (Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:2) If a disfellowshipped or disassociated person inquires, or gives evidence of wanting to come back into God's favor, the elders can speak to him. They will kindly explain what he needs to do and might give him some appropriate admonition. They can deal with him on the basis of facts about his past sin and his attitude. Others in the congregation lack such information. So if someone felt that the disfellowshipped or disassociated person 'is repentant,' might that be a judgment based on impression rather than accurate information? If the overseers were convinced that the person was repentant and was producing the fruits of repentance,* he would be reinstated into the congregation. After that occurs, the rest of the congregation can warmly welcome him at the meetings, display forgiveness, comfort him and confirm their love for him, as Paul urged the Corinthians to do with the man reinstated at Corinth.—2 Cor. 2:5-8.

* For a discussion of repentance, see *The Watchtower* of September 1, 1981.

NOT SHARING IN WICKED WORKS

²⁵ All faithful Christians need to take to heart the serious truth that God inspired John to write: "He that says a greeting to [an expelled sinner who is promoting an erroneous teaching or carrying on ungodly conduct] is a sharer in his wicked works."—2 John 11.

²⁶ Many of Christendom's commentators take exception to 2 John 11. They claim that it is 'unchristian counsel, contrary to the spirit of our Lord,' or that it encourages intolerance. Yet such sentiments emanate from religious organizations that do not apply God's command to "remove the wicked man from among yourselves," that seldom if ever expel even notorious wrongdoers from their churches. (1 Cor. 5:13) Their "tolerance" is unscriptural, unchristian.—Matt. 7:21-23; 25:24-30; John 8:44.

²⁷ But it is not wrong to be loyal to the righteous and just God of the Bible. He tells us that he will accept 'in his holy mountain' only those who walk faultlessly, practice righteousness and speak truth. (Ps. 15:1-5) If, though, a Christian were to throw in his lot with a wrongdoer who has been rejected by God and disfellowshipped, or has disassociated himself, that would be as much as saying 'I do not want a place in God's holy mountain either.' If the elders saw him heading in that direction by regularly keeping company with a disfellowshipped person, they would lovingly and patiently try to help him to regain God's view. (Matt. 18:18; Gal. 6:1) They would admonish him and, if necessary, 'reprove him with severity.' They want to help him remain 'in God's holy mountain.' But if he will not cease to fellowship with the expelled person, he thus has made himself 'a sharer (supporting or participating) in the wicked works' and must be

^{25, 26.} What does God counsel about becoming a "sharer" with a disfellowshipped person?

^{27.} How might a Christian become such a "sharer," and with what result?