

Relations amongst Brothers and Sisters

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
for brethren to dwell together in unity!

(Psalm 133:1)

The biblical texts transcripts in this booklet are in the New King James Version.
January, 2026.
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Relations amongst Brothers and Sisters

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (Col 3:12-17)

It is to be expected that the world reject and neglect this word. The problem is that even at the church, the observance of many of these commandments seem to be a burden for some.

Look at the following texts: Joh 13:14; Rom 12:10; 15:14; Gal 5:13; 6:2; Eph 5:21; Col 3:13,16; 1Th 5:11; Jas 4:11; 5:16.

It is a high standard, however, possible in the Lord. It is appropriate then, before considering the requirements for the relationship in the church, know the nature of this relation. It is necessary, first, to know and believe in all that God has done for us and in us (Gal 2:20), and then fulfill what He requires of us. This way, "His commandments are not burdensome" (1Joh 5:3).

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensom. (1Jn 5:3)



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The nature of our relation

Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. (1Co 10:17)

The bond that unites the church making it "one unique body", "one unique bread" (1Co 10:17) is spiritual (2Co 5:16). Similarly, the principles that determine the relationships in the church are not carnal, on the contrary, appeal to the new nature we receive: A heavenly nature (Joh 3:6, 1Co 15:45-49, 2Co 5:17, Jam 1:18, 1Pe 1:23). This is foolishness to the world, but for us it is God's power and wisdom (1Co 1:21-24).

1. We are member of one another

We were called to become "partakers of Christ" (Heb 3:14).

We are members of his body, that is, of Himself (1Co 6:17; 12:12-13, Eph 1:22-23, 5:30). We are in Christ. In consequence of our union with Christ we are members of one another (Eph 4:25, Rom 12:5). We can not partake of Christ without partaking of others who are united to Christ (1Co 10:16-17; 11:29, 12:25).



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2. We are Brothers and Sisters

We are children of the same Father (Joh 1:12-13, Rom 8:16-17, Gal 3:26-28, 4:6-7, Eph 1:5, 1Jn 3:1). We have a different nature from the world (1Jn 3:10, 4:5-6, Joh 8:38-44; 3:6; Col 1:13). Those who are born from God resemble Jesus Christ, his son, forming with him a unique and large family (Rom 8:28-29, Eph 1:3-5, 3:15), having his joy in imitating the works of the Father (Eph 5:1) as Jesus, the older brother did (Joh 5:19; 15:10).

The basis of love

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. (1Jn 4:7)

Above all things "... LOVE ..." Why? Because LOVE "does not seek its own" (1Co 13:5). The practice of love reveals the knowledge of God (1Jn 4:7,8,11,21). Everything we do have no value unless it is motivated in love (1Co 13:1-3, 16:14). Without love there is no holiness (1Th 3:12-13). Love is the commandment that distinguishes the disciples of Jesus (Joh 13:34-35, Eph 5:1-2, 1Jn 3:16). The exercise of love eliminates conflicts (1Co 10:31-33; 1Co 13; Gal 5:13-14).

Solving conflicts

Through our weaknesses, both ours as our brothers', conflicts arise among us affecting our fellowship. Let's look at some situations that generate conflicts and the solutions from the Lord for each case:

1. If you sin

There must be confession and restitution:

- The confession must be clear and complete. Confessing is not asking for forgiveness. It is to say with our mouth what we have done. We acknowledge sin and not explain or justifying it.
- The confession must be done in humility and repentance. As deep as our sin should be as well our shame, our pain. Must be such breakthrough that leads us to turn away from sin.
- The confession must be done with restitution where necessary and possible (Luk 19:8; Lev 6:2-5). We must repay what was stolen, clarify the lie, restore the honor of whom it was taken, accept the consequences of our sin.
- The confession must be done without delay. The more we delay, the more it will cost us to confess, moreover, leading us to a hypocritical life (Mat 5:23-26; Psa 32:3; Eph 4:26).
- The confession must be done covering the entire area offended accordingly to the ministry we exercise: a person, group, or congregation which we have sinned against.
- We must confess our faults to one another (Jas 5:16; 1Jo 1:5-9). Even when we have not sinned against someone specifically, we must confess to each other for greater deliverance, to walk in the light, and even to receive help in counsel and prayer.

Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. (Jas 5:16)

2. If your brother or sister sins – Mat 18:15-18

We shold remember that each member of the body is responsible for his brethren (1Cor 12:25). All of us, through love, we shold care for one another (1Th 5:11,14).

- a) What **should** we do when a brethren sin (Lev 19:16-18)?
 - . If someone is caught in a fault (Gal 6:1);
 - . If someone deviates from the truth (Jas 5:19-20);
 - . If anyone sees his brother committing a sin (1Jn 5:16).
- b) What we **should not** do (Lev 19:16-18):
 - . Silence and ignore the issue (v.17; Eze 3:18-21);
 - . Silence and hold a grudge and resentment (v.18);
 - . Tell others to go talk to him (Pro 25:9);
 - . Murmur against the brethren (v.16);
 - . Opine without really knowing what happened.

In short, when we see, we become responsible. We should always speak directly to our brother or sister and guide him/her to repent and confess his/her sin. Help in his/her restoration, guiding him/her so that he/she does not fall into error again. Communicate faith and grace to his/her heart. (Pro 27:6; 28:23; Gal 6:1-2).

3. If your brother or sister sins against you – Pro 25:9

- . Firstly, you must forgive your brethren (Mat 6:12,14-15; Mark 11:25-26; Eph 4:32; Col 3:13). This is an inner deliverance.
- . In love, go and rebuke him for his restoration. Not because you want to demand justice done to you, but because you want the well-being of your brother. What you will address is not the fact that he has sinned against you, however, that he has sinned and needs help (Mat 18:15-22).
- . We must have wisdom and discernment when we rebuke someone, taking into account their weaknesses (Col 3:13-15; 1Co 13:7; Gal 6:1-2).

Differences or Opinions - Rom 14

In this section comes the things that are secondary and there are no clear commandments (uses and customs issues):

- . To have a well defined opinion (v.5);
- . Not to impose our opinion (v.22);
- . Do not judge and despise the brother (v.10);
- . Do not argue (v.1);
- . Not making them stumble, that is, not to do, before the brethren, what in their opinion is not correct, eg, drinking, eating pork, etc (v.13).

Some practical advices

- . Fellowship is something reciprocal, depends on both parties. We can be friends of those who are not of Christ, but we can only have true fellowship with those who have the same Spirit we have.
- . The initiative must be ours. We should love and not expect to be loved.
- . We should not always be with the stronger ones. The weaker ones need us.
- . When we get together should not be just to talk trivialities. We must share experiences and talk things that edify.

Clarifying doubts

1. In case of slander, with whom to fix it?

- . Should correct with the victim and the people who we commented with, even if involving unbelievers.

2. What to do when the amount to be restitute is too high?

- . You should confess, willing to bear the consequences, whatever they may be. You can also seek help from fellow believers. Always seek guidance from the leadership and/or elders.

3. How to restitute the offended if is dead or we lost contact?

- . In the first case there is nothing to do but to accept God's forgiveness. At the second one should be ready to fix it in the moment you be with the offended. Should seek to find him.

- 4. How do it with brethren who do not gather with us?**
 - . Nothing changes, they are brethren, members of the same body.
- 5. What to do if an unbeliever informs me that a brother has sinned and asks secrecy?**
 - . We ought to obey God rather than men. Tell who told you that you will have to confront the one who sinned even without mentioning the source. Is important to ascertain the veracity of the information.

Conclusion

Fellowship is something that will gradually grow. To the extent that we know each other we grow in love. The goal of Jesus is that we are like the Father and the Son are (Joh 17:20-21).

Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ. (2Th 3:5)