

Fellowship as a Covenant

Shared Life, Devotion, Joy

Fellowship is Commitment, Not Convenience

**They were devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Reverential awe came over everyone, and many wonders and miraculous signs came about by the apostles. All who believed were together and held everything in common, and they began selling their property and possessions and distributing the proceeds to everyone, as anyone had need. Every day they continued to gather together by common consent in the temple courts, breaking bread from house to house, sharing their food with glad and humble hearts, praising God and having the good will of all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number every day those who were being saved.
(Acts 2:42-47)**

Phil@UsefulEngines.com

<https://tinyurl.com/Call2Unity>

The King's Perspective

A mission from our King... (Matt. 22:37-40; 28:19-20)

1. *Love the Lord with all your heart (Worship – Matt. 4:10).*
2. *Love your neighbor as yourself (Service - Eph. 4:12)*
3. *Go and make disciples (Evangelism – Acts 1:8).*
4. *Baptize them (Fellowship; Covenant Unity – Eph. 4:1-6)*
5. *Teach them to obey (Discipleship – Col. 1:28)*

“We proclaim Him by instructing and teaching all people with all wisdom so that we may present every person mature in Christ.”

Colossians 1:28

Broken Fellowship Covenants

Covenant vs. Convenience

Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1–9)

Violation: Jealousy and unrepentance lead to murder.

Fellowship Breakdown: Instead of protecting his brother, Cain becomes his brother's destroyer.

Lesson: Anger and envy, left unchecked, dissolve trust and desecrate the image of family and covenant.

“Am I my brother’s keeper?” – Cain (Genesis 4:9)

<u>Faithful Fellowship</u>	<u>Broken Fellowship</u>
Devotion to teaching & prayer	Disregard for spiritual leadership
Mutual generosity & care	Greed, deception, or jealousy
Humility & submission	Pride, control, or self-centeredness
Christ-centered unity	Factionalism and party spirit
Joyful praise and awe	Complaint, rebellion, idolatry

Crisis in the Church (Mid-3rd Century)

A Schism on what to do with the Lapsed?

Cyprian's Model	Modern Application
Balance between truth and mercy	Churches can restore fallen members without compromising doctrine
Unity is essential, even amid tension	Avoid schism through dialogue, consensus, and mutual humility
Discipline must aim at restoration	Church correction is not punitive but redemptive
Spiritual authority should be trusted	God uses shepherds to protect and restore the flock

In 251 AD, Cyprian convened a **council of African bishops**.

Three-Tiered Approach to the Lapsed

Immediate restoration for those who had resisted or suffered torture.

Conditional restoration for the lapsed after a period of penance.

Permanent exclusion for those unrepentant or defiant.

Emphasis on Unity

Cyprian taught that a schism was as serious a sin as heresy: *"He can no longer have God for his Father who has not the Church for his mother."*

The Cane Ridge Revival (August 1801)

From Division to Covenant Fellowship

Challenge	Restorative Practice
Doctrinal Division	Focus on core gospel truths and apostolic simplicity
Sectarian Identity	Declare themselves “Christians only, not the <i>only</i> Christians”
Leadership Conflicts	Emphasize shared authority through elders
Tradition vs. Scripture	Hold the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice

How They Overcame Division

Public confession that “**we are not the only Christians**”

Focus on shared essentials rather than divisive specifics

Commitment to **Scripture over tradition**

Emphasis on **shared Lordship of Christ**, baptism, and table fellowship

How now shall we Live?

(1)

The Recipe

Live in Unity (Ephesians 4:1–6)

“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”

One body, one Spirit, one hope—fellowship is about **oneness** in calling and identity.

Point: Covenant fellowship honors the calling of each believer without competition.

Live in Holiness (4:17–32)

Put off the “old self,” live differently from the world. Speak truth, resolve anger quickly, build up others.

Point: Holiness protects fellowship—sin and unrepentance fracture community.

Live in Love (5:1–7)

“Walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us...”

Imitate God’s sacrificial love. Avoid impurity and greed.

Point: Love is the ethic of covenant commitment, not personal gain.

Live in the Light (5:8–14)

Expose darkness, bear fruit in truth and goodness.

Point: Transparent relationships are key to covenant fellowship.

How now shall we Live?

(2)

The Recipe

Live Wisely (5:15–21)

“Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise...”

Be filled with the Spirit, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Point: Wisdom and Spirit-dependence protect fellowship from folly.

How to be Right with God...

“If anyone says ‘I love God’ and yet hates his fellow Christian, he is a liar because the one who does not love his fellow Christian whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And the commandment we have from Him is this: that the one who loves God should love his fellow Christian too. Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been fathered by God, and everyone who loves the Father loves the child fathered by Him. By this we know that we love the children of God: whenever we love God and obey His commandments. For this is the love of God: that we keep His commandments. And His commandments do not weigh us down, because everyone who has been fathered by God overcomes the world.”

1 John 4:20 – 5:4