

Pulpit Version: Pillar 3 — Fellowship

The Church Is a Fellowship: Shared Life Forms Us Into Family

Introduction: Fellowship Is a Pillar in a Believer's Life

- **Opening thought:** Today we are speaking about fellowship as one of the pillars in the life of a believer.
- A pillar is not decorative; it carries weight. It supports the structure.
- In the same way, fellowship is not a nice extra for Christians who enjoy people. It is one of the ways God holds us, forms us, matures us, protects us, corrects us, encourages us, and sends us.
- **Preacher prompt:** "If fellowship is missing, something in the structure of our spiritual life begins to weaken."
- **Key text — Acts 2:42:** "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."
- Notice that fellowship is listed alongside teaching, the breaking of bread, and prayer.
- The early church did not treat fellowship as casual socialising after the service. They devoted themselves to it.
- Fellowship was part of their spiritual rhythm.
- **Big idea:** Christian fellowship is shared life in Christ.
- It is not merely being friendly; it is becoming family.
- It is knowing and being known, carrying and being carried, encouraging and being encouraged, serving and being served, forgiving and being forgiven.
- **Line to repeat:** "You cannot experience family at a distance."

1. Fellowship Is Not Optional: It Is Part of the Believer's Life

- When the New Testament describes the Christian life, it almost never imagines an isolated believer.
- Salvation brings us to Christ, and Christ brings us into His body.
- **Romans 12:4–5:** "For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another."
- That means I do not belong to Jesus on my own terms while remaining disconnected from His people. In Christ, we belong to one another.
- **1 Corinthians 12:26–27:** "If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."
- Fellowship is not a programme we attend; it is the practical expression of who we are.
- If one suffers, we cannot say, "That has nothing to do with me." If one rejoices, we do not stand back in jealousy. We rejoice together.
- **Hebrews 10:24–25:** "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together... but encouraging one another."
- Gathering is important, but the verse goes further: we are to consider one another.
- Biblical fellowship is deliberate spiritual care.

- **Preacher prompt:** “Who are you intentionally stirring up toward love and good works?”
- This confronts a modern temptation: we can reduce church to a place we attend, content we consume, or a service we evaluate.
- But the church is not just a gathering; it is a fellowship.
- Rows matter because they help us worship together and receive the Word together.
- But rows do not automatically create family. Circles do.
- **Transition:** “So let’s go back to Acts and ask: what did this actually look like?”

2. How the Early Church Practised Fellowship in Acts

- **Acts 2:42–47:** “And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”
- This is one of the clearest pictures of early-church fellowship.
- They were not just attending the same meeting. They were sharing life.
- **First, they were Word-centred.**
- Fellowship was not built merely around personality, hobbies, or social comfort.
- It was shaped by the apostles’ teaching.
- **Colossians 3:16:** “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom.”
- Healthy community is not just people together; it is people together under the Word of Christ.
- **Second, they shared life publicly and personally.**
- **Acts 2:46:** “And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts.”
- Temple courts and dinner tables both mattered.
- The church needs both: rows where we worship together and circles where we know one another.
- **Third, they broke bread together.**
- Fellowship often grows around ordinary tables.
- Hospitality creates space for conversations that do not happen in a rushed doorway.
- **Romans 12:13:** “Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.”
- **1 Peter 4:9:** “Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.”
- **Fourth, they prayed together.**
- Acts 2:42 says they devoted themselves to “the prayers.”
- **Acts 4:24, 29–31:** “And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God... ‘And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness...’ And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.”
- Prayer turned sympathy into spiritual partnership.
- **Fifth, they met needs with generosity.**

- **Acts 4:32–35:** “Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.”
- **Galatians 6:2:** “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”
- Fellowship means burdens become shared responsibilities of love.
- **Sixth, their shared life became a witness.**
- **John 13:34–35:** “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”
- **Acts 2:47:** “Praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”
- Their fellowship did not turn inward into a clique; it made the gospel visible.

3. What Healthy Fellowship Looks Like Today

- Healthy fellowship today is not a copy-and-paste of first-century Jerusalem.
- But the same Spirit-shaped priorities should be visible among us:
 - Scripture
 - Prayer
 - Meals
 - Generosity
 - Humility
 - Honesty
 - Reconciliation
 - Mission

Healthy fellowship is humble.

1 Peter 3:8 says, “Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.” **Philippians 2:3–4** says we should do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than ourselves.

Fellowship becomes unsafe when pride, comparison, entitlement, or offence control the room. It becomes life-giving when humility makes room for others.

Healthy fellowship is consistent.

Deep community is built through ordinary faithfulness over time. **Hebrews 10:25** tells us not to neglect meeting together. **Acts 2:46** says the early believers met “day by day.” This does not mean every Christian must attend every event, but it does mean fellowship cannot be treated as a convenience. We cannot be known if we are always absent, rushed, or distant.

Healthy fellowship is honest and wise.

James 5:16 says, “Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.”

Ephesians 4:15 calls us to speak the truth in love.

We do not need to pretend that everything is fine, but we also do not use vulnerability carelessly.

Christian openness is not gossip, performance, or public exposure. It is truthful, loving, trustworthy, and aimed at healing and growth.

Healthy fellowship carries burdens rather than spreading them. Galatians 6:2 tells us to bear one another's burdens. Romans 12:15 says, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep." But Proverbs 16:28 warns that gossip separates close friends. A burden shared with you is not content to be passed on; it is a call to love, pray, protect, and help.

Healthy fellowship pursues peace.

Ephesians 4:2–3 calls us to humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another in love, and eagerness to maintain the unity of the Spirit. Colossians 3:13 says we must forgive one another as the Lord has forgiven us. Fellowship is not the absence of conflict; it is the presence of Christlike reconciliation.

Healthy fellowship is missional.

It does not become an inward-looking club. 1 Peter 4:10 says each believer should use whatever gift they have received to serve others. Our fellowship should strengthen the body and make the love of Jesus visible to those outside the church.

4. Three Practical Application Points

Application 1: Move from a row to a circle

Do not only attend church; enter into fellowship. Join a Life Group, a ministry team, a prayer circle, a mentoring relationship, or a table where people can know you. Rows are important, but if rows are all we have, we may remain unknown. Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 says two are better than one, because if one falls, the other can lift him up. Move close enough to be lifted and to lift someone else.

Application 2: Practise table fellowship and burden-bearing

Invite someone for a simple meal, coffee, or conversation. Ask, "How can I pray for you?" Then pray before you leave. If someone shares a burden, follow up. Offer practical help where you can: a meal, transport, childcare, a visit, a message, a phone call. Romans 12:13 calls us to pursue hospitality, and 1 Thessalonians 5:14 calls us to encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, and be patient with everyone.

Application 3: Protect unity through humility, honesty, and forgiveness

Choose to be a safe person in the body of Christ. Listen well. Keep confidences. Refuse gossip. Speak truth in love. If there is conflict, go to the person rather than around the person. Matthew 18:15 teaches us to go privately when a brother or sister sins against us. Proverbs 15:1 says a gentle answer turns away wrath. Colossians 3:13 calls us to forgive as the Lord has forgiven us.

Conclusion: A Church Where No One Walks Alone

Christian fellowship is not an optional extra to church life. It is part of how God forms us into His family. We grow as we gather around His Word, share the table, pray, carry burdens, forgive, serve generously, and live on mission together.

Imagine a church where no one has to walk alone. A church where people are truly known and deeply loved. A church where newcomers are welcomed, burdens are carried, meals are shared, prayers are prayed, conflicts are healed, and gifts are used. That kind of fellowship makes Jesus visible.

So this week, take one step. Move from a row to a circle. Invite someone to your table. Pray with someone. Follow up with someone. Join a group. Serve the body. Seek peace. Because fellowship is not merely something we attend; it is shared life in Christ, and shared life forms us into family.

Notice that fellowship was not an optional extra. The believers devoted themselves to it. Their shared life was shaped by four commitments.

1. Daily time with God and His Word
2. Prayer
3. Fellowship
4. Giving