

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

Share Genuine Fellowship
Acts 2:42; 4:32-35; Philippians 1:1-11

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the Worship Time that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader: Provide copies of "*Blest Be the Tie*" by using hymnals (most older hymnals will have this song) or by making multiple copies of the words found on the last page of this session after the "**Worship Time**".

Bible Study Leader: Provide sheets of paper and pens for participants. Have a white board or large pieces of paper available.

Worship Time Leader: Decide on music to be used. If you want to use "*In This Very Room*" to close the worship time, you may need to spend extra time finding words and music.

Ask an adult to share a one-minute testimony of how someone in the fellowship group has helped them.

Ask a teen to make the introductory comments and read the words of the poem which is given. If you do not have a teen in your group, you may ask one of the adults to participate or you may do the introduction yourself.

Prepare Romans 15:5-6 to be read together as a benediction.

Music Sources:

“**Blest Be the Tie**” (#256, *Baptist Hymnal*, 1975)

“**This Is My Commandment**” (#241, *Marantha! Music Praise*, Extended 3rd Edition)

“**Bind Us Together**” (#63, *MMP*)

“**Surely the Presence of the Lord Is in This Place**” (#285, *MMP*)

“**I’m So Glad I’m a Part of the Family of God**” (#386, *BH*, 1991).

“**In This Very Room**” (*The Celebration Hymnal* by Word Music or download from CCLI)

1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

Share Genuine Fellowship

Focal Text

Acts 2:42; 4:32-35; Philippians 1:1-11

Main Idea

A New Testament church shares with one another in genuine, deepening fellowship.

Question to Explore

How can the fellowship in your church be made stronger?

Gathering together:

Begin the meeting of the church by singing together “**Blest Be the Tie**” (#256, *BH*, 1975), or have the words recited or read by a capable reader. (If read, it should be enunciated with enthusiasm and each word pronounced distinctly). Make copies of the words if hymnals are not available. Or, if you have one, write the words on a “white board”.

Blest Be The Tie

Verse 1

Blessed be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love
The fellowship of kindred minds
Foreshadows that above

Verse 2

Before our Father's throne
We pour our fervent prayers
Our fears our hopes our aims are one
Our comforts and our cares

Verse 3

We share our mutual woes
Our mutual burdens bear
And often for each other flows

The sympathizing tear

Verse 4

When for a while we part
This thought will soothe our pain
In Christ we still are joined in heart
And we shall meet again

Verse 5

This glorious hope revives
Our courage on the way
While each in expectation lives
And longs to see that day

Verse 6

From sorrow toil and pain
And sin we shall be free
And perfect love and friendship reign
Through all eternity

Written by John Fawcett, 1782. Public Domain

Ask that the people continue to look at the words of the hymn.

First thoughts:

Propose the following questions, giving time for responses.

1. What do you think the poem/song "**Blest Be the Tie**" is about? (It is about the fellowship of people within a community, known as a church)
2. What does verse 1 mention as the two ingredients of such a fellowship? (Love and kindred minds). The leader may explain what "kindred minds" means.
3. Verse two mentions five things members of such a fellowship hold in common. What are they? (Our fears, our hopes, our aims, our comforts and our cares).
4. If time permits, ask group to reflect on verse 3 about the depth of feelings experienced in a Christian fellowship.
5. What common experience is verse 5 about? (Death). Can this experience separate the spirits of believers and disrupt the fellowship?

Closing the Gathering Time:

This old hymn speaks of a reality that is very important to people today. Sociologists indicate that young adults are seeking meaningful relationships. They will be attracted to religious faith when that faith experience speaks to their need for relationships. Doctrine, beautiful buildings, church programs or well-equipped staff do not impress young adults as much as small groups that provide friendship and support for life's journey.

Middle adults and older adults may not express their need for relationship as fervently as do young adults, but the need is there. Many families live far away from their family of origin. Adult children miss their parents and older parents long for a more close connection with their adult children and grandchildren.

Isn't it amazing that today's need is so beautifully met in the context of Christian fellowship? With the inclusive nature of the home church, relationship needs can be met in the context of Bible study and worship. Enjoying one another and caring for needs in time of sickness, grief and celebration add to the pleasure of regular meeting times.

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

Share Genuine Fellowship

Focal Text

Acts 2:42; 4:32-35; Philippians 1:1-11

Background

Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37; Philippians

Main Idea

A New Testament church shares with one another in genuine, deepening fellowship.

Question to Explore

How can the fellowship in your church be made stronger?

Teaching Aim

To help the group compare their fellowship with that of the New Testament church and identify ways in which their fellowship can be made stronger.

Introduction to your personal study:

It seems that everything from my car to my coffeemaker comes with a maintenance manual. Most of these manuals call for routine, periodic maintenance. The manufacture knows that optimum performance requires such maintenance, whether it is routine cleaning, lubricating or changing a filter. Relationships, too, are enhanced with routine maintenance. Regular, intentional steps to build our relationship with fellow believers produces better fellowship within the church body. How smoothly are things running in our church? Could we use an “oil change or tune up?”

Focusing on the Meaning:

The Fellowship of the Believers

Acts 2:42. God gave the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and a unique family of God was born. In fact, Pentecost is sometimes known as the birthday of the church. Over 3000 new believers came together sharing their new lives in Christ. As a body of believers, they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Unity in Mind and Spirit

What was their fellowship like? These new believers formed a community based on their shared experience of new birth. They also shared a hunger for the Word of God, and in a new way, for community. And they were filled with amazement at all God was doing (2:43). Luke records that all the believers were together and had everything in common. Yet these believers were most recently described as "God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven" (2:5). Only God could unite such a diverse group into this new church. The Holy Spirit enabled these believers to put aside their differences and unite in a spirit of generosity and common concern (2:44-45). They met together daily in the temple courts and ate together in their homes with glad and sincere hearts, praising God (2:46). The Jerusalem fellowship also enjoyed the favour of the community at large. What's more, God continued to add to their number daily those who were being saved (2:47). For the first time in history God poured forth His Spirit. Such life-giving power produced thousands of new believers, who supernaturally formed a community bathed in love and selflessness.

Caring for One Another

Acts 4:32-35. This love and selflessness extended beyond worship and physical unity to include personal property. These believers were so unified in heart and mind that they freely shared their possessions. Their love for God and each other surpassed their need for personal ownership. Apparently such sharing was voluntary, prompted by the needs of their fellow believers, as in the example of Joseph, also called Barnabas in 4:36-37. Others continued to own property but used that property for the good of the group. Mary, John Mark's mother, opened her home as a meeting place for prayer (Acts 12:12). In either case, there was no needy person among them.

Growing In Love

Philippians 1:1-11. The church at Philippi clearly held a treasured place in Paul's heart. On his second missionary journey, recorded in Acts 16, Paul had a vision of a man from Macedonia saying "Come over and help us." In response Paul and his companions sailed to Philippi, the leading city of the Roman colony of Macedonia. On the Sabbath, they preached to some women who met for prayer and God opened Lydia's heart to Paul's message. Lydia and her household were saved, as was a slave girl, which resulted in a riot and Paul's imprisonment. Following an earthquake that opened the doors of the jail, Paul's jailer and his family came to salvation. Philippi became known as the birthplace of European Christianity.

Paul, once again imprisoned, writes to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi (Philippians 1:1). The term “saints” meant those who are set apart from or different. This difference comes from a relationship with Jesus. In another letter, Paul urges believers not to conform to the pattern of the world, but to be transformed by the renewal of our minds (Romans 12:2). On behalf of himself and Timothy, slaves of Christ, Paul writes with joy, confidently encouraging these believers whose relationship with Christ sets them apart. Paul also includes the “overseers,” possibly administrative leaders; and “deacons,” or those who served, in his greeting (Philippians 1:1). These two roles provided some administrative structure for the early churches, however no record remains as to exactly how they functioned.

Paul begins his letter with his customary greeting: “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:2). Paul combines the typical Greek greeting “grace” with the standard Hebrew greeting “peace” into one providing a picture of the unity of Christ. Through grace we can know God as Father and enjoy the peace that reconciliation with God and each other brings. Paul uses this greeting to begin many of his letters (See Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 2:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:2; Philemon 3).

Every remembrance of this church brings Paul joy and gratitude for each member of that body (Philippians 1:3-4). This community of believers at Philippi had partnered with Paul and Timothy to spread the gospel. Their mutual affection and respect grew from their shared ministry, and from God’s grace in the midst of the challenges of that ministry (1:5,7-8).

Paul is confident God will be faithful to complete the good work He began in the Philippian believers (1:6) until the day of Christ Jesus. Our faith is not stagnant. God wants us to grow deeper in love for Him and each other. Paul prays that the Philippians’ love will increase in full knowledge and depth of insight (1:9). Paul emphasized the importance of discerning what is best in order to be pure and blameless, filled with the fruit of righteousness (1:10-11). The best life is that lived by the power of Holy Spirit and under direction of His love.

Fruit of Unity

Acts 2:42, Acts 4:32, and Philippians 1:5 all use forms of the Greek word “koinonia.” The root word koinos means “house.” This Greek word, often translated “fellowship” in English, conveys a sense of intimacy. Just as the word “marriage” conveys much more than two people who share the same address, koinonia means much more than simply a group of people who happen to share the same religious beliefs. There is a spiritual intimacy among individual members who are bound together by the Holy Spirit.

Koinonia is also Paul’s favourite word to describe a believer’s relationship with the risen Lord (See 1 Corinthians 1:9). Because of our life-changing encounter with the God of the Universe, we are new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). God gives us the

capacity as His new creations to relate to Him and to each other at a much deeper level than we ever could before.

God in His wisdom allows us to partner with Him and with each other to spread His life-giving message. Such unity of spirit between believers as depicted between Paul and the Philippians is necessary for the gospel to reach our world. A key element in true fellowship envisioned by God then is the resulting spread of the gospel. While we may bask in the love of fellow believers, we miss a crucial piece of our experience in Christ if we fail to share the life-saving message of Jesus.

Teaching the Passage:

God's Holy Spirit produces genuine fellowship among believers through the bonds of common devotion to God, shared experiences, and unity of purpose. We come together to praise and worship God, to encourage each other and to grow in our understanding of the faith. We go out to share the good news of Christ as partners of the gospel.

Paul prayed that the Philippian believers could discern the best. As we go out to serve, we may need to take a hard look at our lifestyles. We may yearn to say, "Here am I, send me." But business, material ties and the demands of ownership can prohibit such a response. Some questions to ask ourselves are:

- ✓ Am I too busy to serve God? Do the activities I am involved in help or hinder me in spreading the good news?
- ✓ Do I hold material things loosely? Is there any possession dearer to me than my desire to share in God's fellowship?
- ✓ Are my finances in such order that I could easily sell off any assets and pay all my debts should God call me to make a move?
- ✓ Do I have a current passport for myself and all my family members?

For Personal Reflection:

1. **What have I learned from this study?**

2. **What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?**

3. **What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?**

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

Share Genuine Fellowship

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc. Children who stay with their parents in the Youth/Adult study should have the material on worship as suggested in **The Children's Corner** at the beginning of this **Unit** of studies. (Ask your leader who downloads the studies for those suggestions).

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

Acts 2:42; 4:32-35; Philippians 1:1-11

Background

Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37; Philippians

Main Idea

A New Testament church shares with one another in genuine, deepening fellowship.

Question to Explore

How can the fellowship in your church be made stronger?

Teaching Aim

To help the group compare their fellowship with that of the New Testament church and identify ways in which their fellowship can be made stronger.

Connect with Life:

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time by singing "***This Is My Commandment***" (#241, MMP) or "***Bind Us Together***" (#63, MMP)

Hand out study sheets or blank sheets of paper and pens to each youth and adult. Ask each one to write the various Scripture sources of the lesson. (Just the sources of Scripture – not the Scripture itself).

As appropriate during the lesson, the leader or participants will read the verses of the focal text. Make sure that the person asked to read does not have a problem reading and can locate the text easily.

1. Ask: How often do you change the oil in you car? Then ask: What would happen if you ignored the manufacture's instructions regarding routine maintenance? Ask members to list other things that require routine maintenance. If no one else does so suggest relationships.

Ask: What do we do as a church to maintain and strengthen our relationships? Say: Today we are going to look at the place of fellowship in the early church.

Guide the Study:

2. Have someone read Acts 2:42-47. Share the background information on "The Fellowship" from the **Study Guide**.

3. Discuss the characteristics of the fellowship from Acts 2:43. Point out that these were Jews from every nation under heaven. Ask for suggestions as to what differences these believers may have had.

Ask: "What differences do members of our church bring"? Point out how the spirit of generosity and mutual concern depicted in Acts 2:44-45 helped the new believers overcome their differences.

4. Discuss Acts 2:46-47. Note the daily meeting of the believers and their acceptance by the community at large. Point out the resulting growth of the body.

5. Have a volunteer read Acts 4:32-34. Discuss how the early church met one another's needs. Ask: "How do members of our society meet their needs?"

Then ask: "What responsibility do we have to meet each other's needs?"

Ask: "What can we do to foster an atmosphere where people feel free to share specific needs in our church?"

6. Ask a volunteer to read Philippians 1:1-2.

Introduce the Book of Philippians using the background material from the Study Guide. Emphasize Paul's deep love for this body of believers expressed in his letter.

7. Have someone read Philippians 1:3-5.

Discuss the need for partnership in reaching our world with the good news of Jesus.

Ask a volunteer in advance or share yourself the story of how your church came to be. Talk about those individuals who were instrumental in the birth of your fellowship.

8. Some churches cooperate financially to support missionaries. Discuss the role your church plays in reaching the world for Christ. What happens to the tithes that are given to your church by the members? Do you have a planned percentage of the church's finances that you designate to support evangelism and church growth around the world? Would such a plan help your church to accomplish your highest priorities?

9: Read Philippians 1:6-8.

Discuss how relationships are made to grow. Ask a married or engaged person to share how his/her relationship has grown from the first time the couple met. Emphasize how sharing the gospel together results in a super-natural intimacy.

10. Ask a volunteer to read Philippians 1:9-11.

Discuss the need for knowledge and discernment. Share that most of us don't have trouble rejecting what is clearly bad, the difficulty comes in selecting among several good options.

Ask: What good choices are you faced with this week? Emphasize our dependency on the Holy Spirit for discernment to choose what is best.

11. Say: Each of these passages we looked at today uses a form of the word we have translated "fellowship". It comes from the Greek root word for home. Share the information regarding use of the term fellowship from the "**Teacher Preparation**".

Discuss the wonder that the God of the entire universe desires such an intimate relationship with us. Talk about how believers become a "family of God."

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to go away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

12. Say: God has brought each of us together to worship Him and to grow in our faith. Ask: What can we do to strengthen our fellowship? Record the responses.

Ask: How are we doing at reaching others? Ask members to think of one person they know who needs to know Christ. Ask for suggestions of ways to minister to these people. Record the suggestions.

13. Pray, thanking God for your fellowship. Ask Him to show you opportunities to share Jesus with others, particularly those mentioned. Pray that your fellowship will grow in full knowledge and depth of insight and more in love with God and each other.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! TakeTen

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

Share Genuine Fellowship

Acts 2:42; 4:32-35; Philippians 1:1-11

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Question and Questions:

How can we, as teens, relate better to older people in the church? Discuss this for a few minutes.

As a group, make a list of questions you might ask an older person that would help you understand and appreciate him/her better. Remember, older adults are as individual as teens.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Share Genuine Fellowship***
Acts 2:42; 4:32-35; Philippians 1:1-11**Beginning the Service:**

Regroup by singing “I’m So Glad I’m a Part of the Family of God” (#386, *BH*, 1991).

Offering:

Begin the worship experience today by asking one or two of the younger children to gather the offering. Ask a child to pray, thanking God that we can give an offering to Jesus.

Ministry Moment:

Pray for a relevant mission need in your own country or elsewhere in the world. Also, pray for your own church to develop a caring heart for each other and other people outside of your church.

Expressing Thanks:

Ask an adult to share a one-minute testimony of how someone from your church family or another church ministered to them in a time of need.

Have a teen say: Real fellowship in our church will only be possible if problems or difficulties between us are broken down, just like we could tear down an old-fashioned rock wall. Robert Frost once wrote a poem about a rock wall. He called it “**Mending Wall**”. Here are some of the words:

**“Something there is that doesn’t love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.**

**Before I built a wall I’d ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offence.
Something there is that doesn’t love a wall,
That wants it down.”**

Sing together “*Surely the Presence of the Lord Is in This Place*” (#285, MMP)

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God’s call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

The Fellowship of the Redeemed

Introduction

The first experience of Christian fellowship a man remembers was in a group of three other soldiers. They met regularly for prayer and sharing of personal experiences. The man received acceptance, which had been an infrequent experience up to that time. When he returned to his home town after the war ended, he looked for another group of people with whom he could continue the practice of fellowship he had experienced in the islands of the Pacific Ocean.

The group that he joined was a local church. He experienced God’s call to service in that church. It was that church that licensed and ordained him to the ministry. He found places and opportunities of service in that church. It was in the fellowship of the young people of the church that he experienced his first efforts of leadership. When he thinks of some churches to which he has belonged he thinks of the disunity in it, or he recalls a particular person who dominated everyone else in the church. But it was the fellowship he experienced in the church that always comes to mind when he thinks on the subject. Later, it was easy to move from place to place because there was the fellowship needed to keep him centered on the call of God to the ministry. There was always a place of service and worship, and in finding these he found fellowship wherever he traveled. It is the memory of those times of genuine fellowship that fills the heart with a warm feeling of gladness.

I. The Early New Testament churches were gatherings for Christian Fellowship.

Scripture portrays the early churches in the New Testament as groups composed of people who, among other things, experienced genuine fellowship. The church born on the day of Pentecost experienced great growth on the day of its birth. And they gave themselves to four distinct practices: the apostles’ teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of bread and to prayer. “Fellowship” in this instance was more than what was done when the new Christians got together: it was what the church was called, The Fellowship. The church *was* a fellowship and of course they *practiced* fellowship.

Today, evangelical churches come in every shape and form. For instance, one church located near Dallas, Texas has buildings covering most of 160 acres (73 hectares) of land and records more than 15,000 people attending worship every weekend. Another church has existed for 65 years with less than 50 persons. Yet that little church is known around the world for their many ministries. Our church is small and meets in a home. People are finding wonderful fellowship opportunities in all these churches. Church fellowship does not depend on the size of the church, or its form of worship, or where it may meet.

II. Genuine Christian Fellowship is a product of a church.

Other groups call themselves by the name, such as the “Fellowship of Christian Athletes,” or “The North American Baptist Fellowship.” College fraternities and sororities are fellowships of students who pledge themselves to one another in honor and respect. Men and women in our city form groups of like-minded people we call civic clubs. But the church has the priority on the use of the name: the church is the first fellowship.

We sing of the “fellowship of kindred minds,” and claim that it is like the fellowship above. It is fellowship that is the tie that binds; it is fellowship of which we sing when we sing, “There’s a sweet, sweet spirit in this place,” and “Where charity and love prevail.” In fact, it is the songs that reflect upon fellowship that we sing most often, and most fervently, because we find true soul mates in the fellowship of believers.

III. How Christian Fellowship is portrayed in Scripture

The Bible describes a Christian fellowship thus: “All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need “ (Acts 4:32-25). This was the church born on Pentecost, and they gave one man a name that described his “modus operandi,” his method of operation – They called him “Barnabas” which means Son of Encouragement. Fellowship to this man meant a genuine sharing with those who had nothing, a portion of his bounty. To have fellowship with Barnabas was to be really encouraged.

The church at Philippi gave cause for the Apostle Paul to be genuinely thankful to God for their fellowship. He said he always prayed with joy because of their “partnership in the gospel” (NIV). “Partnership” and “fellowship” are translations of the Greek “koinonia.” This church had sent Paul help on numerous occasions, and they often prayed for him. And Paul called this fellowship, or partnership. When we have genuine fellowship we are partnering with other Christians in some part of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

IV. Christian Fellowship is something that is done with other people

Genuine Christian fellowship can only be shared: it is not something you can do alone. It has been observed that: "You can't be human alone." Allowing a paraphrase, it could be safely said, "You can't be Christian alone." We truly do need one another in order for the Spirit to bear fruit in our life. The Bible says in Galatians 5:22 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."

These are human qualities that can best be known as they are practiced in interpersonal relationships. We need fellowship in order for these qualities to be practiced. The Bible adds, "those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires (cf. Galatians 5:19-21). This catalogue of the sinful nature includes hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambitions, dissension, factions, and envy. These are the practices that disrupt fellowship, that in fact, make fellowship impossible.

Call to Commitment:

Maybe "fellowship" has become shop-worn, and does not convey the heavy load of meaning with which it is invested in the Bible. Perhaps that is why we talk of "Sharing Genuine Fellowship." Genuine fellowship, that is, Biblical fellowship, is only possible for those who have crucified the sinful nature – those who have experienced this life-changing experience.

Concluding the Service:

Sing together the chorus "**In This Very Room**".

Prayer time: Take time to share needs and pray sentence prayers for each other. Covenant together to spend time in genuine prayer for the group this week.

Benediction: Copy Romans 15: 5-6 (RSV or NIV) on sheets of paper or on a poster (also in #732, BH, 1991). Read this together as a group.

Dismiss to fellowship or share a meal together.

“Blest Be The Tie”

Make multiple copies for the congregation for the **“Gathering Time”**.

Verse 1

Blessed be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love
The fellowship of kindred minds
Foreshadows that above

Verse 2

Before our Father's throne
We pour our fervent prayers
Our fears our hopes our aims are one
Our comforts and our cares

Verse 3

We share our mutual woes
Our mutual burdens bear
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear

Verse 4

When for a while we part
This thought will soothe our pain
In Christ we still are joined in heart
And we shall meet again

Verse 5

This glorious hope revives
Our courage on the way
While each in expectation lives
And longs to see that day

Verse 6

From sorrow toil and pain
And sin we shall be free
And perfect love and friendship reign
Through all eternity

Written by John Fawcett, 1782. Public Domain