

UNITY IN THE SPIRIT WITHIN COVENANT COMMUNITY

By Lisa Sharafinski

Mother of God Prayer Meeting
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What does it mean to be covenanted to one another?

- A. **Covenant Communities are places where people are trying to live out the normal Christian life.** It makes our baptismal commitment more concrete within a specific body of people. Rather than saying "I am committed to all 1.8 billion believers," it is more personal and real to say, "I'll come to a prayer meeting and work out relationships with this specific body of people."
- B. **The Lord wants us to "put out into the deep,"** to go deeper with one another in terms of unity and commitment. We must ask the Holy Spirit, "How are you calling me to go deeper in my life with the Lord and his people?"

Practices within the Covenant Community

A. To love and support one another

1. It is a shared life which intimately unites us. The life of God in each one of us bonds us together. Not just a commitment to an ideal while we remain aloof from each other. Our model is the Holy Trinity. They have a unity based on a common life. Jesus could not serve his Father's will apart from loving us. We cannot love and obey Jesus apart from each other. We cannot cut ourselves off from the other branches on the vine ([Jn 15:1-2](#)). The same sap flows into all the branches. Jesus wants to make wine with us. You can't make wine with just one grape.
2. To cherish this life of God in each brother or sister. "So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way we do so no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation: the old has gone; the new has come!" ([2 Cor 5:16-17](#)). Paul and the other Pharisees once saw Jesus from just a human perspective, oblivious to the life of God that was in him. This was a big mistake. In the same way, we can hold views of each other which are based on purely human considerations ("he's so awkward," or "she's so stylish"). But now, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, we can see each other as God sees us. Example: On my wedding day wearing a big elaborate white I dress allowed everyone to see me for at least one day the way God sees me all the time. Perhaps we can practice looking at each other in this way.
3. I am to be my brother's keeper, caring deeply about his holiness ([1 Cor 8:9-13](#)). It's no longer about me and others but its about Christ and his Body. We can no longer dismiss or embrace people based on the way they meet our needs. In the perspective of Christ's New Creation, I cannot be indifferent because we are parts of the same body and in being indifferent to him I am being indifferent to myself (the true way of viewing reality). Example: How

could a hand not care if the knee is bleeding? The hand will put a bandage on it. Or if the hand is hurt, the legs will walk to get the bandage. In the same way we will begin to want to help our brothers and sisters grow in holiness-to befriend them, pray for them, encourage them.

4. To have brotherly affection for each other, to delight in each other. [Rom 12:10](#): "be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves." Only a mind renewed by the Holy Spirit could possibly do this. On our own it is impossible. But in the power of the Holy Spirit we can begin to have a new joy at the gifts of others free of jealousy and competition. Example: My good friend Mary has many talents and I am grateful for her gifts and rejoice that they can be used to build up the Kingdom. We can put off judgments and sizing each other up. We ask, "Is this person inferior or superior to me or about the same?" The answer to this question often determines the way we relate. We put people in boxes, thinking we know all about them but each person is a mystery with hidden depths.
5. To uphold one another, not to be a party to tearing down, gossip, complaints, judgments. [Eph. 4:31-32](#). Instead, loyalty, forgiveness, kindness, is to be our basic attitude, since it brings to others what we ourselves have received from God. Outsiders will be amazed if they see this really happening. Again, this is not an earthly regard but a respect for others in the Body. [Jn 15:12-13](#).
6. To place others ahead of myself, even to laying down my life for others in the Body ([Jn 15:12-13](#)). Jesus only asks us to do what he himself has done.
7. To give and receive correction. When we know and love each other we want the best for each other. "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourselves or you also may be tempted" ([Gal 6:1](#)). Be careful to be prompted by the Spirit in this vs. just a critical eye. Look at the words Paul uses: spiritual, gently, watch yourself.
8. To encourage, support and build up others. Let's tread lightly on correction but be heavy with encouraging and supporting others. "Carry each other's burdens" ([Gal 6:2](#)). Does your brother have a weakness, anxiety, fear, emotional immaturity, stubbornness? We should not be ashamed to call him brother-Christ isn't. "By one sacrifice, he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy" ([Heb 10:14](#)). The power of his death and resurrection has made perfect in the eyes of heaven all those who are in Christ. Our holiness is still a work in progress and it pleases God that the strong should help the weak in this area. Also, don't be so sure who the strong and who the weak are.

B. To Be Deeply United with One Another

1. To be of one mind ([Phil 2:2](#)). Not external conformity or even uniformity of thought, but having the same Lord. The mind of Christ governs his Body. This unity transcends common ideas but joins us on a higher plane to a common purpose. Example: Sacrament of marriage-man and woman consent but Christ unites them on a higher plane than mutual consent. Even if they change their mind the union cannot be dissolved. Similarly, our unity is based

on what we have become in Christ and not on common ideas or even common goals, that can and do change.

2. Therefore, since we are united in Christ, we can not allow any division among us. [1 Cor 3](#):1-4. Satan would deceive us into thinking a brother or sister is our adversary, but the truth is that Satan is our only adversary and we can stand together against him. So when we have differences we first hold firm to our unity in Christ and then work out our difference with the help of the Holy Spirit.
3. We begin to lay down our competitive mentality. Instead of advancing my own intentions, I die to myself. In this way love will triumph. Through death to self I proclaim that my real interests are Christ's and I have no goal which is separate from him or my brother and sister (his Body in this world). In Christ, conflict with someone can lead to a very deep experience of unity. Example: in household my sisters and I would often disagree on ways of relating (bossy, sarcastic, non-communicative), ways of thinking (rigid, worldly, overly critical), or even ways of cleaning the house (some were meticulous and some were oblivious). But we could come together in Christ to find unity and reconciliation and in many cases close trust and friendship.

How is this possible?

1. **We are to look beyond just natural attraction.** We would not all be associated if we were together on merely a worldly basis. But the lesser basis of common personality and background, etc., is all secondary and passing away. Example of my husband and my good friend. Their personalities didn't attract me but over time their love for Jesus and their strength of character did.
2. **God has poured his love into our hearts.** We can love each other only based on the love we receive from him. "Be merciful just as your Father is merciful" ([Lk 6](#):36). Our mercy towards others has its basis in God's mercy to us.
3. **We can stand in faith on the completed work of Christ**-draw on the power of his blood, cross and name to confront our flesh. Let the mind of Christ govern us, rather than human ways of thinking. Example: David's attitude toward Goliath different from that of his brothers. We can rely on God's attributes, look to him for inner strength and not our own resources.
4. **We can examine our conscience in the light of the Holy Spirit** to see areas where we are bound up, repent and be delivered.

Discussion Questions

1. Read [2 Corinthians 5](#):16-17. What does it mean to regard someone from a worldly point of view? How should we now regard others? Why is it difficult?
2. In your experience, how does caring about a person's holiness change the way you relate to that person? Describe a situation where this change has occurred or needs to occur.

3. Find several scriptures that discuss the importance of our unity and the avoidance of any division. (Hint: try Paul's epistles). In light of our natures, how do we "not allow any division among us?" Why is this so important to God?
4. Focus in on one or two relationships you have in the body of Christ that need to change. Perhaps there is unresolved conflict, neglect or superficiality. This week ask the Holy Spirit to help you do what it takes to bring the relationship into deeper, truer unity in Christ.