THE QUESTION

Did early Christians stay away from communion until they made peace with a brother?

Asked by a THF member on June 28, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 11 numbered quotations · the 22 early Christian passages and 71 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/did-early-christians-stay-away-from-communion-until-they-made-peace-with-a

The short answer *From the text: says what the passages say*

Yes. The early writers applied Jesus' words about leaving your gift at the altar to Christian worship. The Didache says a believer in conflict with another should not join the Lord's Day gathering until reconciled, and others warn that God does not accept the prayer, thanksgiving or offering of someone who keeps a quarrel.

LIBRARY ONLY	This study was written only from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed at the back, with a link to read it.
HOW IT WAS MADE	Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith's library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.
SHARING WITH AN AI?	Every quotation here comes from The Historic Faith's library. If you paste this study into an AI, anything it adds beyond these pages comes from that AI, not from us.

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POINT 1 OF 8

Do not gather until you are reconciled

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

The Didache describes the Lord's Day meal and sets two conditions: confess your sins first, and do not come while you are in conflict with a fellow believer. Both are meant to keep the church's offering pure.

1

"But on every Lord's Day, gather together, break bread, and give thanks after you have confessed your sins, so that your sacrifice may be pure."

later in the same passage

"But let no one who is in conflict with a fellow believer come together with you until they are reconciled, so that your sacrifice may not be defiled."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Didache,** *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 14 (c. 50–120 AD) **Source 2, page 6** Read it in the library ›

THF's updated English

POINT 2 OF 8

Jesus' altar command applies to the church

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Irenaeus speaks of the church's pure offering and says the Lord wants it offered with simplicity and innocence. He quotes Jesus' command to leave the gift and first be reconciled as the rule for that offering.

2

"For through the gift, both honor and affection are shown towards the King; and the Lord, wishing us to offer it with simplicity and innocence, expressed Himself this way: "Therefore, when you offer your gift on the altar and remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift before the altar and go your way; first be reconciled with your brother, and then return and offer your gift.""

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book IV* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 8, page 7** Read it in the library ›

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POINT 3 OF 8

Unresolved quarrels block prayer and thanksgiving

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

The Apostolic Constitutions says the gift Jesus spoke of is our prayer and thanksgiving. It applies the rule both ways: whether you hold something against your brother or he against you. It also urges making peace quickly, before anger hardens into hatred.

3 “If, therefore, you have anything against your brother, or he has anything against you, neither will your prayers be heard nor will your thanksgivings be accepted, because of that hidden anger.”

later in the same passage

“That is, be quickly reconciled, lest your anger continue so long that it turns into settled hatred and produces sin.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** **Source 19, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
(c. 250–380 AD)
THF's updated English

POINT 4 OF 8

A deacon warned the church before prayer

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

The same church order tells the deacon to call out a warning before the bishop prays. The goal is that anyone holding a quarrel will be stirred in conscience, pray, and make peace with his brother.

4 “Therefore, O bishop, when you are about to pray after the readings, the psalm singing, and the instruction from the Scriptures, let the deacon stand near you and say with a loud voice: “Let no one have a quarrel with another. Let no one come in hypocrisy.””

later in the same passage

“Then, if any dispute is found among any of you, they may be troubled in conscience, pray to God, and be reconciled to their brothers.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** **Source 20, page 8** **Read it in the library ›**
(c. 250–380 AD)
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POINT 5 OF 8

Tertullian: settle the quarrel before the altar

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Tertullian calls this one of the chief commands about prayer. He asks how anyone can come to the peace of God without peace. Elsewhere he says the gift cannot be finished until a person turns from anger and seeks to win back his brother.

5 “And the chief of those precepts is this: we must not go up to God's altar before we settle whatever discord or offense we have taken on with our brothers.”

later in the same passage

“For what kind of deed is it to approach the peace of God without peace?”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On Prayer* 11 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 11, page 7** Read it in the library ›

THF's updated English

6 “No one who is at variance with his brother in his mind will finish offering his dutiful gift at the altar, unless he first returns to patience, with the intention of reconciling his brother”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On Patience* 12 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 12, page 7** Read it in the library ›

THF's updated English

POINT 6 OF 8

Cyprian: God sends the quarreler back

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Cyprian says Christ calls a person in conflict back from the altar. He must first be reconciled and then return in peace. Cyprian points to Cain, whose offering God did not accept.

7 “He also calls back from the altar a person who comes to the sacrifice while in conflict, and commands him first to be reconciled with his brother, and then to return in peace and offer his gift to God.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Treatises* (c. 248–258 AD) **Source 16, page 7** Read it in the library ›

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8 “So God does not receive the sacrifice of a person who is in disagreement, but commands him to go back from the altar and first be reconciled to his brother, so that God also may be appeased by the prayers of a peacemaker.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Treatises* (c. 248–258 AD) **Source 17, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 7 OF 8

God looks at the heart, not the gift

Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say

Cyprian uses Abel and Cain as the pattern. God looked at their hearts. Those who bring a gift to the altar should come with fear of God, a simple heart and peace with others.

9 “For even in the sacrifices that Abel and Cain first offered, God looked not at their gifts, but at their hearts.”

later in the same passage

“By this he also taught others that, when they bring their gift to the altar, they should come with the fear of God, with a simple heart, with the law of righteousness, and with the peace of concord.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Cyprian,** *Treatises* (c. 248–258 AD) **Source 18, page 7** Read it in the library ›
THF's updated English

POINT 8 OF 8

The kiss of peace came before communion

Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words

Justin describes the order of worship: after the prayers, believers greet one another with a kiss, and then the bread and cup are brought. Tertullian asks what kind of sacrifice it is when people leave without peace. The greeting showed that peace among believers belonged to the service.

10 “After finishing the prayers, we greet one another with a kiss. Then, bread and a cup of wine mixed with water are brought to the leader of the brethren.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Justin Martyr,** *First Apology* (c. 130–165 AD) **Source 6, page 7** Read it in the library ›
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11 “What prayer is complete if it is separated from the holy kiss? Whom does peace hinder when he is rendering service to his Lord? What kind of sacrifice is that from which men depart without peace?”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *On Prayer* 18 **Source 13, page 7** **Read it in the library ›**
(c. 196–220 AD)
THF's updated English

THE LIMITS

What these passages don’t tell us

- Most of these passages speak of the gathering, the altar, prayer or the offering rather than saying in plain words not to receive the bread and cup.
- They do not say what a believer should do if the other person refuses to make peace.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

The Sources

The 22 early Christian passages and 71 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–22, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 23–25, in Bible order), then 68 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are in THF’s updated English unless marked “1885 English” (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). “… [continues online]” marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *22 passages from 13 writers*

Didache, *c. 50–120 AD · sources 1–2*

1 *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 15 (1885 English; on point 1) “18:15-17 but to every one that acts amiss against another, let no one speak, nor let him hear anything from you until he repents… [continues online] **read ›**

2 *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* 14 (1885 English) **Quote 1, page 2** “let no one that is at variance with his fellow come together with you, until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be profaned… [continues online] **read ›**

Hermas, *c. 90–150 AD · sources 3–4*

3 *Shepherd* (1885 English) “Lord dwells in men that love peace, because He loved peace… [continues online] **read ›**

4 *Shepherd* (1885 English; on point 4) “are those that have rents? These are they who are at discord in their hearts one with another, and are not at peace among themselves: they indeed keep peace before… [continues online] **read ›**

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Polycarp, *c. 100–155 AD · source 5*

5 *Epistle to the Philippians* under a debt of sin. If then we ask the Lord to forgive us, we ought also to forgive; for we are before the eyes of our Lord and God… [continues online] **read ›**

Justin Martyr, *c. 130–165 AD · source 6*

6 *First Apology* **Quote 10, page 5** "who has been convinced and agreed to our teaching, bring them to the place where those called brethren are assembled, so that we may offer heartfelt prayers together for ourselves… [continues online] **read ›**

Tatian, *c. 150–180 AD · source 7*

7 *Diatessaron* 8 (on point 2) "5:23 If you are now offering your gift at the altar… [continues online] **read ›**

Irenaeus, *c. 175–202 AD · source 8*

8 *Against Heresies: Book IV* **Quote 2, page 2** "when you offer your gift on the altar and remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift before the altar and go your way; first be reconciled… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Alexandria, *c. 190–215 AD · sources 9–10*

9 *Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?* 39 (1885 English) "also the Lord commands us each day to forgive the repenting brethren… [continues online] **read ›**

10 *Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?* 40 (1885 English) "you may be found at the end to have previously in this world been reconciled to the adversary… [continues online] **read ›**

Tertullian, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 11–13*

11 *On Prayer* 11 (1885 English) **Quote 5, page 4** "which precepts the chief is, that we go not up unto God's altar before we compose whatever of discord or offense we have contracted with our brethren… [continues online] **read ›**

12 *On Patience* 12 **Quote 6, page 4** "one who is at variance with his brother in his mind will… [continues online] **read ›**

13 *On Prayer* 18 (1885 English) **Quote 11, page 6** "when is peace more to be concluded with brethren than when, at the time of some religious observance, our prayer ascends with more acceptability… [continues online] **read ›**

Early Liturgies, *c. 200–400 AD · source 14*

14 *Divine Liturgy of St. James* 1 (1885 English) "turn our thoughts to holiness, that with a pure conscience we may bring to You a peace-offering, the sacrifice of praise… [continues online] **read ›**

Origen, *c. 215–254 AD · source 15*

15 *Commentary on Matthew* 13 (1885 English) "your brother sin against you, go, show him his fault between you and him alone… [continues online] **read ›**

Cyprian, *c. 248–258 AD · sources 16–18*

16 *Treatises* (1885 English) **Quote 7, page 4** "He calls back from the altar one who comes to the sacrifice in strife, and bids him first agree with his brother, and then return with peace and offer his… [continues online] **read ›**

17 *Treatises* **Quote 8, page 5** "God does not receive the sacrifice of a person who is in disagreement, but commands him to go back from the altar and first… [continues online] **read ›**

18 *Treatises* (1885 English) **Quote 9, page 5** "peaceable and righteous in sacrificing in innocence to God, taught others also, when they bring their gift to the altar, thus to come with the fear of God, with a… [continues online] **read ›**

Apostolic Constitutions, *c. 250–380 AD · sources 19–21*

19 *Apostolic Constitutions* **Quote 3, page 3** "be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift to God… [continues online] **read ›**

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20 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) **Quote 4, page 3** "if, upon coming into any one's house, we are to say, Peace be to this house, Matthew 10:12 like sons of peace bestowing peace on those who are… [continues online] **read ›**

21 *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) "the Church does not receive an heathen or a publican to communion, before they every one repent of their former impieties… [continues online] **read ›**

Clement of Rome · *source 22*

22 *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (on point 7) "has your face fallen? If you offer rightly but do not divide rightly, have you not sinned? Be at peace: your offering returns to you, and you shall possess it… [continues online] **read ›**

THE BIBLE *3 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

23 **Matthew 5:22** But I tell you that everyone who is angry with his brother without a cause will be liable to judgment. Whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' will be liable to the council. Whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the fire of hell. **read ›**

24 **Matthew 5:23** "If therefore you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has anything against you, **read ›**

25 **Ephesians 4:26** Be angry, and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, **read ›**

ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *68 verses, by reference*

Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.

Genesis 4:3

Exodus 2:14

Isaiah 1:18

Ezekiel 18:23

Hosea 6:6

Matthew 4:10 · 5:17 · 5:21 · 5:25 · 5:45 · 6:12 · 6:14 · 6:16 · 7:1 · 7:2 · 9:13 · 10:12 · 10:18 · 13:21 · 18:15 · 18:17 · 18:21 · 18:22 · 19:9 · 19:24 · 22:38 · 24:11 · 25:19 · 26:3 · 26:63

Luke 6:37 · 11:13 · 11:41 · 15:3 · 15:10 · 15:11 · 16:13

John 5:16 · 9:31

Acts 9:2 · 19:9 · 23:4

Romans 12:17 · 14:10 · 14:12 · 16:16

1 Corinthians 3:9 · 4:5 · 5:11 · 8:13 · 10:1 · 16:20

2 Corinthians 5:10 · 8:21 · 13:12

Galatians 6:1

Ephesians 2:17 · 4:31

1 Thessalonians 5:26

1 Timothy 3:4

2 Timothy 2:19

Hebrews 5:1 · 10:25 · 13:10

James 2:13 · 5:14

1 Peter 3:9

1 John 5:16

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Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

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THE END OF THIS STUDY