

WHEELERSBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

Life Application Sunday School Class

Building Up One Another - Session 1

November 16, 2003

Did you realize that there are nearly 40 New Testament commands that use the words "one another"? The sheer number alone speaks to the emphasis and importance of this subject in the life of a healthy church. Over the next 13 weeks or so, we are going to consider 12 of these commandments. Some of this material is coming from "Building Up One Another" by Gene Getz.

Christianity is all about relationship. First and foundational is our relationship to God. If we are truly saved, then we have been reconciled to God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are no longer alienated from God, but are now his children if we have repented from our sins and placed our full faith and trust in Christ and His work of redemption through His life, death, and resurrection. But Biblical Christianity is not limited to our reconciliation to God. The fact that God is our Father means that we have been adopted into a new family, and we now have spiritual brothers and sisters. And our relationship with them is intimately connected to our relationship with our Father, for they are His children also. In addition, God saves us for a reason. That reason includes our mission, of knowing Him and making Him known. This mission is a team effort, which means that our relationship and fellowship with others is critical to the mission and fulfillment of the purpose of our salvation. God desires for His glory to be expressed in the earth, and that expression is most glorious and fully expressed through the whole community of believers, not just individuals. This is why the life of the New Testament church is just that – the life of the church, not just individuals.

Much of this dynamic has been lost or quenched in the American church. Much of the America culture is based on rugged individualism. This American thinking manifests itself in ideas such as "I don't need the church to worship the Lord. I can sit at home and get my sermon on TV", or, "I feel closest to the Lord in the woods. I can spend Sunday morning with Jesus in my boat by myself on the lake". On the contrary, New Testament believers were devoted to "the apostle's teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, and prayer." ACTS 2:42 I think we would all agree that the breaking of bread and fellowship were corporate activities, and I think if you look at the demonstration of this principle throughout the book of Acts, the receiving of teaching and prayer was also generally in a corporate setting.

Before we become overly critical of those who chose not to regularly participate in the gathering of the church, we need to consider if we are truly obeying and fulfilling the intended purpose of our gathering together. Again, to be painfully honest, I think we would all admit that most of our relationships within our local churches are casual, and could not really be classified as true "fellowship". Biblical fellowship is a sharing together of everything; tangible things such as material provision as well as emotional and spiritual support. It is intended to be a close relationship with others that have the same love, passion, and goal of knowing Christ and making Him known to others. You can come and sit in pews and chairs on Sunday and never develop those kinds of relationships. But I trust you are here today because you do desire to increase in your ability to have true fellowship and better express the oneness that Christ prayed His body would have.

So let's jump into our discussion today by considering a passage from the book of Ephesians.

READ Ephesians 4:11-16 and answer the following questions:

11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. 14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

1. Why has God given the church leadership gifts? What is the function of pastors and teachers?
2. What is the goal of building up the church?
3. Describe the picture of a mature church.

In a familiar passage in Galatians 5:16-26, Paul admonishes these believers to walk in the fruit of the Spirit, and put off the acts of the sinful nature. If you think about it, the expression of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, meekness, goodness, self-control, and faithfulness all happens in the context of relationships with others. In other words, the development of spirituality and maturity happens as we relate to others in love and not selfishness.

The Apostle John in the book of I John teaches us that if we love God, it will be evidenced by our love for one another, and that an evidence that we have the true love of God in our lives is our love for one another. Jesus said this is how the world would know that we are His disciples, by our love for one another. In the gospel of Mark, chapter 12:28-34, Jesus said that the greatest commands were first to love God completely, and the you neighbor as yourself. The apostle James said that true faith will express itself in actions of love towards other believers. Finally, Paul stated in Ephesians 3:16-19 that the fullness of the Spirit is expressed in walking in love towards one another.

So pursuing deep, loving relationships with other believers is not a peripheral issue, nor is it optional. It is the essence of the expression of our relationship with Christ, and cannot be separated from it. With that understanding, we are going to examine 12 of the one another commands given in the New Testament with the goal of understanding what God calls us to, and then putting into practice. Let's survey each passage:

1. Members of One Another (Rom 12:5)
2. Devoted to One Another (Rom 12:10a)
3. Honoring One Another (Rom 12:10b)
4. Be of the Same Mind with One Another (Rom 12:16;15:5)
5. Accept One Another (Rom 15:7)
6. Admonish One Another (Rom 15:14)
7. Greeting One Another (Rom 16:16; I Cor 16:20; II Cor 13:12; I Thes 5:26; I Pet 5:14)
8. Serve One Another (Gal 5:13)
9. Carrying One Another's Burdens (Gal 6:2)
10. Bear with One Another (Eph 4:2; Col 3:13)
11. Submit to One Another (Eph 5:21; I Peter 5:5)
12. Encouraging One Another (I Thes 4:18; 5:11,14)

What are some practical things we are going to have to do to obey these commands?

1. We will need to spend time with one another.
2. We will have to get to know one another.
3. We must begin to care for one another in a deeper way.

What will need to change for this to become a practical reality in our lives?

We will need to reorder our priorities and schedules. We can begin by praying and asking God how he wants us to change to make these commands a priority.

Our ultimate goal is not just to be social, and to have a strong community to meet needs. Our ultimate goal is to be an expression of the glory of God and His love for us, and to draw others that God has called into fellowship with Him and His church. If our goal is selfish or self-serving, we likely won't get very far. The very nature of true Christian love is self-sacrificing. There will be many times the Lord will call you to love others with nothing in return.

What are some practical ways we can begin to implement these commandments?

1. Make a prayer list of others, and pray regularly for them and their spiritual growth.
2. Schedule a time to get together with someone that you don't know well.
3. Look for needs within the local church, and meet them.
4. Consider calling with a word of encouragement, or writing a note of encouragement this week to someone that may seem to need that, or someone that has been a blessing in your life.

NEXT WEEK WE WILL CONSIDER WHAT IT MEANS TO BE "MEMBERS OF ONE ANOTHER" FROM ROMANS 12:5