

MEMBERS TOGETHER

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Today we have celebrated communion. What does communion mean? Communion is another word for *fellowship* or sharing. Fellowship with whom? It involves identifying with Christ and with one another and it goes far beyond a commemorative meal.

Identifying with Christ is not simply a theological proposition, but a practical consideration. It is not merely theoretical, it is vitally practical.

There are theological and theoretical considerations, but there is also a practical one. Beginning with belief, our identification is *fulfilled* by our behavior. Who you are informs what you do.

Theologically, I may say, “I have identified with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. Christ died, I died. Christ was buried, I was buried. Christ arose, I arose.

Theoretically, I may posit: I am in Christ and He is in me. I am His and He is mine.

Practically, it boils down to this: We are members together of His body.

Members...Together...Connected to one another

Romans 12:5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

This plays out in many wonderful ways. That is, our behavior begins to change from caring mostly, if not entirely, about Number One, to thinking about others, especially those in the family of God.

As we continue to set our minds on the things of Christ — as we learn more and more of what He values and how He thinks, and pursue a close relationship with Him — the things we value and the ways we think begin to shift, and we become gradually more like Him. For when our thinking shifts, our behavior follows.

Proverbs 23:7 As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.

Because God has loved me, I recognize that He also loves others. If I love Him and He loves them, logic tells me that I, too, will love them. The more intimately acquainted I become with Christ, the more I will love what He loves.

The Scripture addresses this subject head on, based on our “one another” connection. Let’s look at some of these “one another” mandates.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

1 John 4:10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

In fact, we are urged not to do this casually, but *enthusiastically*.

¹ Peter 1:22 *Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart.*

By this, we let the world know about Jesus.

John 13:34 *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.* ³⁵ *By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*

If we love one another, we will serve one another.

Galatians 5:13 *For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*

This satisfies everything that God would otherwise require of us.

Romans 13:8 *Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.*

Here are a few practical examples of how this may be done.

Romans 16:16 *Greet one another with a holy kiss.*

Romans 12:10 *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;* ¹¹ *not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;* ¹² *rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;* ¹³ *distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.*

BLESS AND DO NOT CURSE

Considering our connection to one another has clearly positive effects.

Romans 12:14 *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.* ¹⁵ *Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.* ¹⁶ *Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.*

Jesus Himself gave us example of this.

John 13:14 *If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.* ¹⁵ *For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.*

However, to keep it on the positive side, there are some things we must avoid.

Romans 14:13 *Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.*

Have you made this resolution? Why not do it right now?

This kind of loving requires patience. People, including yourself, do not change overnight. And, truly, some simply will never change. But, don't let that discourage you.

Romans 15:1 We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves.² Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification...⁵ Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus,⁶ that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Accept others as they are —just as you yourself were accepted by God — focusing on *whose* they are.

Romans 15:7 Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.

Accepting them is only the beginning of loving them; we must learn to care for them continually.

1 Corinthians 12:25 there should be no schism in the body, but the members should have the same care for one another.²⁶ And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

This is going to require humility, a trait unnatural to us all. But with God's help we commit ourselves to practicing what is spiritual, however unnatural it may seem.

Galatians 5:26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Philippians 2:3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

James 5:16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

1 Peter 5:5 Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud,
But gives grace to the humble."

MAKE PEACE

Jesus blessed the "peacemakers."

Some seem to be persuaded that ignorance is bliss, but Jesus did not bless the ignorant. Evolutionists may suggest that you imitate a monkey who "sees no evil, hears no evil, and speaks no evil," but the Bible suggests you imitate Jesus Christ. He was not blind or deaf or dumb, but He loved people truly, even at their worst.

Mark 9:50 Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.

If you are unwilling to admit and deal with your own sins, you will find yourself unable to truly love others in spite of theirs.

Romans 14:19 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

BE AN ENCOURAGER

It may be impossible to love someone without finding some way to encourage them.

Romans 15:14 Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to encourage one another.

Encouragement means giving courage to another. Finding courage results in comfort.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

Ephesians 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, ²⁰ giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ submitting to one another in the fear of God.

Encouragement results from mutual sharing.

Galatians 6:2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Hospitality, as an expression of love, is a great means of mutual encouragement.

Hebrews 10:24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵ not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

1 Peter 4:9 Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.

DO NOT LIE

Can you love someone and lie to them at the same time? In case you hesitate to answer, the answer is "No."

Colossians 3:9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, ¹⁰ and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him

The reason that lying and loving are strictly incompatible (even when telling the truth is difficult) is that lying ignores our connection to one another and does damage to that connection — in the spirit, even if it remains an unconscious secret.

Ephesians 4:25 Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.

Lying is not only telling a falsehood; it includes a critical attitude that demeans another person.

James 4:11 Do not speak evil of one another, brethren.

James 5:9 Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!

Making changes in the area of habits of speech leads to some very positive results, not only for the others in your life, but also for you.

¹ John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

FORGIVE OTHERS

Christ's example in this area is clear.

Ephesians 4:32 And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

Colossians 3:12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; ¹³ bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

IN SUMMATION

What is the sum of this "one another" business? If you cannot remember the whole list I have presented today, just commit to memory these three verses of Scripture and you will have the whole package.

Ephesians 4:1 Walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, ² with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, ³ endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

May God bless your pursuit of a "one another" ministry and lifestyle.