

It Is Written

A weekly publication of the
Junction Highway church of Christ in Kerrville, TX.

Vol. 7

February 2, 2025

No. 5

“ ___ ONE ANOTHER ”

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I am confident many disciples can fill in the blank of the title; we should be well familiar with the words and commands of our Lord and the New Testament writers to know a few words and phrases that might fit and be proper. All those words, phrases, and commands have been given to disciples of Jesus Christ that they might know how they should live and behave before the world, with the aim of showing to them what our Lord expects of us and demands of all. Of course, we sometimes ‘forget’ those commands, or simply fail to follow through on what we should be doing.

Consider just a few before we get to the heart of this brief study:

“...have peace with one another” (Mark 9:50).

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34, 35) This command is repeated in John 15:12, 17; Rom. 13:8; 1st Thess. 4:9; 1st Pet. 1:22; 4:8; 1st John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12; and 2nd John 1:5). [Do you get that He wants us to love one another?]

“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.” (Rom. 12:10)

“Be of the same mind toward one another.” (Rom. 12:16)

“Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.” (Rom. 15:7)

“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.” (Eph. 4:32)

We could list several more, but it should be obvious by now that the commands are all about building, maintaining, and strengthening our relationship with one another. God’s desire is that we behave as people who love God and love one another, and are most interested in helping one another endure the trials of this earthly life, overcome every temptation, and shine as examples for the world to see that we always have in mind what God has done for us, and grateful for how God has blessed us abundantly.

Being the imperfect people we are, though, we sometimes do not do the “one another” commands, or at least not as often as we should, and that is a shame. Really, it is more than a shame because we sometimes replace the positive things we should be doing to and for “one another” with some things we definitely should not be doing to “one another.” *Let us consider a few of those things we should strive to avoid doing to “one another.”*

Criticize. Jesus said it would be love by which the world would know we are His disciples — not our criticism of one another. Yet, brethren still find it is something they ‘have’ to do, it seems. Whether it is the clothes they wear, their hairstyle, hair color, the song they just led, the sermon they just preached, the class material used, and on and on some will go. Oh, they most certainly “have good intentions” and are “only trying to help,” but it seldom has the intended result. [If they actually did intend good.]

On this one, God’s word is plain: “let us not judge one another anymore” (Rom. 14:13). In the context, Paul was speaking about the differing views of whether to eat meat, where brethren were condemning [judging] those who disagreed. His instruction was clear: It is not our place [on matters of

liberty] to make criticisms about another servant of Christ, for we shall all stand before Christ to give account for self. We should be only concerned with self, and let the true Judge be the one who judges. Criticism, however good the intentions, is not the way to build, maintain, and strengthen brotherly relationships.

Think about this: If the only time you have a conversation with a brother in Christ is to tell him how he could have done better on his prayer or his song-leading or his sermon, or if the only time you have a conversation with a sister in Christ is to tell her how she isn't controlling her kids to your satisfaction, how her makeup is "a little too much," or how she could help her husband dress better, then you really don't have a relationship with them at all; you are merely the resident critic of the local church!

Bite and Devour. Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians to address the inequities of the Jewish disciples who were not treating their Gentile brethren as true equals, demanding they be circumcised in addition to the requirements of the gospel. This obviously would create strife and contentions among the brethren of the two parties, and to them Paul warned, "But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!" (Gal. 5:15). His warning was clear that their contentions would not build, maintain, or strengthen their relationship, but rather be the cause of its destruction!

As would be the case in the situation with the Galatians, Corinth, and any church, what was needed was humility and love. Whatever the cause for contentions among brethren today, humility would cause us to first stop and consider that we might be wrong before making a firm stand and causing hard feelings; love would cause us to treat them as we would want to be treated, "esteem others better than [self]," and cause one to "look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Phlp. 2:3, 4). The fact is, we don't always have to have "our" way, and we don't always have to say something. Sometimes [more often than not], we should submit to one another and say little more than gracious words for "necessary edification" (Eph. 4:29).

Envy. To these same brethren of Galatia, Paul outlined the works of the flesh and contrasted those with the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:19-23), and then reminded them they, as disciples, had "crucified the flesh with its passions and desires," and should be walking according to the Spirit (v. 24). If there were any doubts about how they should then be living, Paul warned, "Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another" (v. 25). Envy should not be an emotion directed at another — and how much more so when it is our own brethren!

Envy, by definition, is "a feeling of discontent or covetousness with regard to another's advantages, success, possessions, etc." In the Scriptures, James makes it clear envy is not something any disciple should ever exhibit, for it "does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic" (Jas. 3:15, 16). Covetousness, as we well know, is not an acceptable feeling to have in one's mind (Col. 3:5), and for what should be obvious reasons: It demonstrates a clear lack of love for the one to whom it is directed (cf. 1st Cor. 13:4).

Speak Evil. James is also clear on this: "Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?" (Jas. 4:11, 12). James spends time on the need to refrain from judging, but the core problem here is the 'speaking evil' of another brother or sister. The word used here literally means a slanderer — one who makes malicious, false, and defamatory statements about another.

Such speaking should never come from the mouth of a disciple, no matter who it is directed at. Disciples should be always "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15), rather than lies and hatred.

No, we are not perfect; but can we do better? Absolutely — and we must! These are the things we should never do to one another, so let us then strive to instead do the things that honor the name we wear and edifies our fellow believers.