

**ONE
ANOTHER**
— SAYINGS OF —
JESUS



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LEADER NOTE

This section is about introducing the overall topic and giving an overview of the concepts we'll discuss. Highlight the topics that will be covered in the series, but be careful not to go into great detail, because you'll do that over the next 5 weeks. This is simply an introduction to the main elements of the series. Emphasize that "One Another" is a multi-week study. There are 59 one another passages; we're going to take a look at 10 of them. "Bear With One Another and Comfort One Another" is only the first week, but each "one another" command is a big part of understanding that meaningful relationships don't just happen. They take time and effort, and God calls us to develop close relationships and build community with one another.

BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

—Galatians 6:2

COMFORT ONE ANOTHER

Therefore comfort one another with these words.

—1 Thessalonians 4:18

CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

—Hebrews 10:24-25

FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER

Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

—Colossians 3:13

GREET ONE ANOTHER

Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

—Romans 16:16

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

—John 13:34

PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

—James 5:16

PREFER ONE ANOTHER

Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

—Romans 12:10

SERVE ONE ANOTHER

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

—Galatians 5:13

SHOW HOSPITALITY TO ONE ANOTHER

Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

—1 Peter 4:9



**BEAR ONE
ANOTHER'S
BURDENS &
COMFORT ONE
ANOTHER**

SESSION 1

BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS

LEADER NOTE

This section is about bearing one another's burdens, which isn't a common phrase in everyday conversation. Make it your aim to practically apply Paul's words to the Galatians. Be honest about what hang-ups adults have in living this out. We often judge rather than seeking to restore. We think we will be taken advantage of. We think we have enough troubles of our own without taking on someone else's. We wonder what's in it for us. Don't dance around the truth, but challenge group members to see God commands us to live together in this way.

KEY VERSES

GALATIANS 6:1-10, 14

¹ Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³ For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴ But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. ⁵ For each will have to bear his own load. ⁶ Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches. ⁷ Do not be deceived: God is not mocked,

for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. ⁹ And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. ¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

¹⁴ But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

What principles about bearing one another's burdens do you find in these verses?

What makes this difficult to do on a daily basis?

Life has a way of dealing us crushing blows. Those blows can come in the form of moral collapse, sickness, suffering, financial, marital, or emotional troubles. Whatever the source, we are to be sensitive and sympathetic as we seek to help each other through those blows. Paul called it bearing one another's burdens, and it involves spiritual restoration, gentleness, personal and corporate responsibility, the sharing of resources, endurance, good works, and surrender to God.

When has someone bore a burden alongside with you? How did they do it?

Whether in attitude or in action, Paul referred to boasting throughout this passage (V. 1 “spirit of gentleness”, “keep watch on yourself”; V. 3 “thinks he is something”; V. 4 “reason to boast”; V. 7 “God is not mocked”; V. 8 “the one who sows to his own flesh”; V.14 “far be it from me to boast except”). Why was Paul so concerned about boasting as he exhorted the Galatian believers to bear one another’s burdens? Would you say that boasting and bearing one another’s burdens are mutually exclusive behaviors? Explain.

What is the relationship between reaping and sowing in regard to bearing one another’s burdens?

How does the fact that you reap later than you sow encourage you to not grow weary in doing good for other people? When have you seen this play out in your own life?

COMFORT ONE ANOTHER

Bearing one another’s burdens and comforting one another are two sides of the same coin. When we bear with, we offer comfort. When we comfort, we bear with one another.

KEY VERSES

2 Corinthians 1:3-12, 20

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ⁵ For as we share abundantly in Christ’s sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. ⁶ If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. ⁷ Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

⁸ For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength

that we despaired of life itself. ⁹ Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. ¹⁰ He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. ¹¹ You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

¹²For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you.

²⁰For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.

How many times does the word “comfort” appear in this passage? In what ways do we all need comfort?

From these verses, where should we find comfort?

Which of the following sources of comfort have you received lately: God's presence, the presence of other people, Christ's sufferings, the suffering of other people, prayer, the grace of God, or the promises of God? How so?

Comfort is reflexive. When God and other people comfort us, it's not solely for our benefit. God doesn't comfort us so we can only sit back and receive comfort. He comforts us so we can comfort others in the same way. His presence, His purposes, His promises, and His people are all meant to work together because trouble and tribulation are real. They are also the reasons why we can comfort one another.

YOUR NEXT STEP IN BEARING ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS AND COMFORTING ONE ANOTHER

LEADER NOTE

This lesson both encourages and challenges us in our struggles. Whether needing comfort or currently receiving comfort, each person has a next step to take. Use this time to help learners personally apply Biblical truths to their lives and commit to bear with one another and comfort one another in the Lord.

Sometimes we're afraid to take the initiative in bearing with and comforting one another because we're not sure how it will be received. As we seek to do this well, we must apply the principles given by Paul in these verses.

Which principle for bearing with one another's burdens stands out to you most as something you need to work on: desiring and working toward the spiritual restoration of fallen believers, gentleness, taking responsibility for your own load, accepting corporate responsibility to help carry the load of other people, sharing resources, enduring, doing good, or surrendering to God?

What is a burden you need someone else to bear with you? What is a burden you can bear for someone else? How do you need to act in light of this?

People look for comfort in numerous places—food, entertainment, possessions, achievement, and escape are just some examples. **What would it look like for you to truly find comfort in the Lord and His people, instead?**

COMMENTARY

GALATIANS 6:1-10

6:1. Rather than exhibit destructive attitudes and actions (see Gal. 5:26), Christians are to help one another. Paul again addressed the Galatian believers as brothers, signaling a new topic but also emphasizing their spiritual kinship and his warm feeling for them. He gave the example of someone who was caught in a wrongdoing. Whatever the nature of the person's sin, spiritual believers are to restore the individual. The word "spiritual" refers to Christians who follow the Spirit's leadership—who exhibit the fruit of the Spirit. The Greek term rendered "restore" means "to make one what he or she ought to be," "to bring one back into the right way." Paul switched to the singular as he issued a caution. He urged any believer engaged in restoration to have a "gentle" spirit rather than a harsh, judgmental attitude. The word gentle has the idea of strength under control (see on 5:22); the restorer is to be firm but kind. Someday that Christian might need gentle restoration, for none of us is immune to temptation and sin. Rather, the believer is to keep a careful eye on self to avoid sinning. An awareness of vulnerability would help the restorer have a gentle, humble spirit.

6:2. Paul exhorted believers to carry one another's burdens. The word "burdens" refers to loads too heavy to bear alone. It could indicate oppressive loads in general but well may have referred specifically to moral faults referenced in verse 1. The guilt and shame from such sins would be heavy loads. Believers, however, also struggle with other loads that threaten to overpower them. Helping shoulder others' heavy loads would fulfill the law of Christ.

6:3-5. Paul warned against pride or arrogance—an overblown estimate of self (see 5:26). Believers are not to consider themselves to be superior to others. Elevating themselves and putting others down would prevent them from restoring erring believers and helping shoulder others' loads. Also, such pride is self-deception; arrogant people have lost touch with reality. Instead of helping erring believers, some Christians evidently were

using others' moral failures to make themselves feel smugly superior. Paul directed them to "evaluate" themselves, not others. Each believer is to examine his own work. The Greek word rendered examine was used of testing metals to assure their purity. If a person's work could pass the test of his or her objective examination, the individual had grounds for pride in personal accomplishment. The person would avoid an inflated ego at another's expense. The Greek word for "load" differs from the term for "burden" (v. 2). The word for load could refer to a ship's cargo (see Acts 27:10), the law's heavy burden (see Matt. 23:4), a soldier's pack, or a traveler's backpack. Paul seems to have meant that while some burdens are too heavy to be carried alone, each person has responsibilities he or she must fulfill.

6:6. At first glance, this verse seems to be an abrupt transition to a new subject. One suggestion is that Paul was encouraging believers to participate with their teachers in restoring straying Christians (see vv. 1-5), thus furthering what was morally good. Most interpreters, however, have taken Paul's admonition as promoting material support for teachers. Pagan religious teachers commonly received no pay, so the Galatian believers could have taken Paul's words in verse 5 to mean Christian teachers are to support themselves. Evidently some believers were devoting most of their time to teaching the message (the Gospel and its implications for Christian living) and needed financial assistance. Believers benefiting from such teaching are to share their material goods with the teachers.

6:7. Paul warned believers not to be deceived (literally, to "stop being led astray"), for no one can "thumb a nose" at God (God is not mocked) without experiencing devastating results. Whatever seeds a person sows will yield a harvest in kind (see Job 4:8). The person can expect that exact harvest, not something else. Paul well may have referred to the material support of teachers he encouraged in verse 6, but he likely had a broader application in mind.

6:8. Believers could choose to sow to their flesh. They could devote themselves and their goods to self-indulgence that the old self (the flesh) desired. If they did so, their harvest would be corruption—moral and spiritual ruin. Today, people thumb their noses at God when they view salvation as liberty to sin freely, presuming on God’s forgiveness. Such an approach calls into serious question the genuineness of their commitment to Christ. If, however, believers sow to the Spirit—that is, invest themselves and their goods in the sphere the Spirit governs—the Spirit will produce the harvest of eternal life. Paul’s use of the future tense (“will reap”) suggests he had in mind the final harvest of endless life with God.

6:9. One important aspect of sowing to the Spirit is persistently doing good. The phrase may refer specifically to supporting Christian teachers but likely is broader to include good deeds in general. The Greek term for “get tired” has the idea of becoming physically fatigued and of becoming faint-hearted. Christians could become discouraged and disillusioned in doing good and could be tempted to quit. Believers who persevere in well-doing, however, will reap a harvest at the proper time (or “season”)—refined character, spiritual growth, and fulfillment in this life and endless life with God in the next.

6:10. Because determined well-doing will result in a sure, Spirit-produced harvest, believers are to grasp every opportunity to work for the good of all. The Greek word for “opportunity” is the same term rendered “due time” in verse 9. Paul may have extended the agricultural metaphor: taking advantage of the season of sowing good deeds is essential if believers are to enjoy the season of harvest. Christians are to do good for unbelievers and for believers, but they have a special obligation toward members of the household of faith. Believers are to seize every opportunity to help one another in the family of faith.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-12

1:3-4. Paul began describing his hardships on a positive, exuberant note. The formula praise be to ... God derived from the Old Testament (Ps. 41:13), but Paul modified it to express distinctively Christian praise. Not only is God praised, but

he is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. This modification demonstrates that Paul saw Christianity as one with Old Testament religion, but not precisely the same. Christ had become the center of true belief. New Testament believers relate to God as the one who sent Christ.

Paul added that the Father has compassion and all comfort. This praise also derives from the Old Testament (Isa. 51:12; 66:13). Compassion denotes God’s mercy and his concern for the plight of those who suffer. Comfort is what God gives to those who suffer. These terms were appropriate because Paul was about to describe his own troubles in suffering for the Gospel.

Paul suffered and was comforted partly so he could bring comfort to others in any trouble. His suffering in ministry was an act of service to the Corinthians. Having suffered and been comforted, Paul could comfort others with the comfort he had received from God. Paul’s use of the first person suggests that he thought primarily about himself and his company in this passage, but the principle applies to all believers. God permits his servants to suffer, and then comforts them so they may in turn comfort others.

1:5. Paul explained how he knew this principle to be true. Christians are so intimately joined with Christ that experiences flow from Christ, to believers, through believers, and to others. The sufferings of Christ extend from Christ to his followers. Believers fill up ... Christ’s afflictions because the church is his body (see Col. 1:24; cf. Phil. 3:10). This was plain enough from the hardships in Paul’s own ministry. Yet, just as Christ received joy and glory in his resurrection, and sent the Holy Spirit of comfort, comfort also overflows to believers through Christ. In union with Christ, we face the hardships of sin and death, but we also receive compassionate encouragement from God.

1:6. Because the Corinthians benefited when the apostles were distressed, Paul’s experiences had been the Corinthians’ comfort. As he ministered at great personal cost, he brought comfort and salvation to those who heard his message. At the same time, when the apostles were comforted

by Christ, they received the encouragement they needed to bring the Corinthians comfort.

Further, the comfort believers received from Paul's suffering produce[d] ... patient endurance in the midst of their own sufferings. Christians must remain faithful to Christ, no matter how difficult circumstances become. Endurance (hypomone) describes how believers must continue in faithful service to the end. Yet, endurance will not last unless it is patient. Patience is the ability to wait for Christ to return and end all suffering. Comfort enables believers to find energy, which in turn makes them patient as they endure suffering.

1:7. The Corinthians faced trials, disappointments, and conflicts. But Paul believed they had saving faith in Christ and that they would endure. He hoped this because he knew the Corinthians share[d] in the apostles' comfort as well as their sufferings. So long as Christ comforted the Corinthians, they would be able to endure their suffering to the end.

1:8-9a. Paul continued to assure the Corinthians of his affection for them, in spite of his delayed visit, and he explained the delay. He did not want them to be uninformed. . . about the hardships he suffered. Whatever they had heard, Paul had actually been in great hardship while ministering in the Roman province of Asia (modern-day Turkey).

Paul's description of his sufferings revealed the depth of his heart and appealed to the Corinthians for sympathy. He had been under great pressure, and the problems had been beyond his ability to endure. We cannot be sure what hardships Paul had in mind, but we know he endured: riots, vicious attacks, imprisonment, and physical illness. The problems had been so great that Paul had despaired even of life, losing hope that he would survive. In his discouragement, he had felt the sentence of death in his heart, almost succumbing to defeat.

1:9b-11. Still, Paul could see a brighter side. He reflected on past events in two ways: First, God had permitted this suffering so Paul and other apostles might not rely on [them]selves but on God. Paul recognized the temptation to be self-reliant.

Only when circumstances had exceeded his own ability had Paul learned to rely on God.

Paul described God as the one who raises the dead. He alluded to the fact that God the Father raised Christ from the dead as the firstfruits of a great resurrection. But he drew upon this truth because his sufferings in the past had brought him to feel that a sentence of death had been placed upon him. Through his trials Paul had realized that God's power to raise the dead had significance beyond Christ's resurrection and the general bodily resurrection of the last day. God was able day by day to make the power of Christ's resurrection evident in believers' lives (Phil. 3:10).

Paul next praised God's past actions. God had delivered Paul and those with him from deadly peril. This declaration follows the Old Testament form of a traditional thanksgiving hymn (Ps. 40:1-3). Paul expressed confidence that God would deliver him in the future. Paul stated that he and other apostles had put their hope in the belief that God would continue to deliver. Hope in this sense is the emotional strength to persevere in difficulty because of a heightened expectation of better things in the future.

Finally, Paul acknowledged the purpose behind his sufferings and deliverances: God's glory. Paul drew the Corinthians into his perspective by acknowledging that they would surely help him in the future by offering their prayers to God. As a result, many would give thanks to God for God's response to their prayers. Many believers would be grateful for the gracious favor God would grant when he answered the prayers of many. The Corinthians were to have a right attitude toward Paul's absence by remembering that their sympathetic prayers helped him in his suffering and glorified God.



**CONSIDER
ONE ANOTHER
& FORGIVE
ONE ANOTHER**

SESSION 2

LEADER NOTE

This section is a way to briefly review last week before getting into today's lesson. Please be careful to keep it brief. We don't need to re-teach last week's lesson; we want to help learners see how this lesson is related to the one before it.

BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS & COMFORT ONE ANOTHER

In last week's session, we explored two of Jesus' "one another" commands that go hand in hand—bear one another's burdens and comfort one another. When we bear with, we offer comfort. When we comfort, we bear with one another. Both commands instruct us to come alongside and help each other. That's a wonderful truth, too, because life is hard. Whether experiencing the pain of moral collapse, sickness, suffering, financial, marital, or emotional troubles, we need to know the love of God and His people in practical ways.

Name one takeaway from last week that stayed with you throughout the week.

Did you have an opportunity to bear someone's burden or comfort them? How did it go?

Today, we'll explore two more practical ways we can demonstrate the love of Christ to other people. They, too, go hand in hand. When we consider each other and seek to encourage one another for the glory of God in our lives and in the church, we will be compelled to forgive each other.

Read Hebrews 10:24-25 and Colossians 3:13 together:

HEBREWS 10:24-25: 24

²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

COLOSSIANS 3:13

¹³ Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER

LEADER NOTE:

Keep in mind that group members come with various past experiences, relationship struggles, and hang-ups that impact the way they view their role as encouragers. For some, this first step of consideration will be a big one, since many of us have learned to consider ourselves first and foremost. Be sensitive to the needs of group members, and at the same time, let the Word of God do its work. Just as we learned last week that God expects us to love, we must recognize that means He also expects us to consider Him and other people, no matter what.



KEY VERSE

HEBREWS 10:24A

²⁴ And let us consider...

Which would you say you consider most often—how you want to respond to people or how Jesus wants you to respond to people? Why?

What are some practical steps you can take to consider Jesus each day? How do you imagine such practices would impact your relationships with other people?

Every day we should consider and remember the faithfulness of Jesus and the hope we have in Him. When we do, we are encouraged to move forward and endure, and we are also compelled to consider how we can encourage others to do the same.

KEY VERSE

HEBREWS 10:24B

²⁴ ...How to stir up one another to love and good works.

Who is someone in your life who has stirred you up to love and good works? How did they do that?

Has there ever been a time in your life when you were disconnected from the church (in your attendance and/or level of participation)? If so, how did that impact you?

We've all wondered, "What's the point?" from time to time. We've also all likely said, "I'm fine" when we were anything but fine. It's part of the human condition, and the reason why the writer of Hebrews wrote, "Stir up one another to love and good works." In writing those words, he implied we need stirring! We're tempted sometimes to disconnect from the body of Christ, and when we do, we miss out on the stimulation that God miraculously and graciously provides through other imperfect people who follow Him and also need stirring.

KEY VERSE

HEBREWS 10:25A

²⁵ ...Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another.

Have you ever considered it an act of neglect to not meet regularly with other believers? In what ways is it an act of neglect?

Many people think attending church is only necessary as much as it benefits them personally. But this is not the model of Christian community we find in the Bible or in other parts of the world today where believers face persecution. We are not to assemble with an inward focus, but an upward focus! We are to gather together to worship Jesus, to consider Him, and to encourage and stir up one another to love and good works.

KEY VERSE

HEBREWS 10:25B

²⁵...All the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Do you live with the same urgency the New Testament writers had? Why or why not? Who would you encourage today if you thought Jesus might be returning tomorrow? What would you encourage them to do?

The reason we encourage each other isn't so that we can have self-esteem and feel good about ourselves. The reason we encourage each other is so that we will have spiritual endurance to do the will of God, receive His promises, and on that Day hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER

KEY VERSE

Colossians 3:8-11

⁸ But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is

being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. ¹¹ Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

From this passage, what are some signs of an unforgiving heart?

Which of the following statements speaks to you the most about forgiveness right now, and why?

- "If you jump at the chance to say something bad about someone, that is a sign you are holding a grudge."
- "Unforgiveness is like dragging a heavy chain. It puts you in an emotional prison."
- "The moment you experience the love of Jesus Christ, you forfeit the right to choose whom you will love."

KEY VERSE

Colossians 3:12-13

¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

From this passage, what are some steps to forgiving one another?

Many people would say forgiveness is the most difficult "one another" command to put into practice. Why must we forgive? Why is it so hard to do so?

Here's the bottom line—if you don't forgive people, you will fail to carry out all of the other "one another" commands and will live in direct opposition to Jesus' example. People will disappoint you. You will disappoint people. Forgiveness, maybe more than any of the other "one another" commands, demonstrates our gratitude and depth of understanding about the grace of God in our lives. Even if people don't ask for your forgiveness, you must give it, because Jesus has forgiven you.

KEY VERSE

Matthew 6:9-15

⁹ Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. ¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread, ¹² and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. ¹⁴ For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Based on this passage, how would you describe the urgency of Jesus' command to forgive one another?

What is the relationship between prayer and forgiveness?

Forgiveness is the whole reason Jesus came to earth. It is the very essence of His character and purpose. So we must not consider what others deserve; we must consider, instead, what we deserved but what Jesus forgave. **If God is willing to forgive those who have sinned against Him (including us), how can we store up bitterness toward others?**

YOUR NEXT STEP TOWARD CONSIDERING & FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER

LEADER NOTE

This lesson confronts our perspectives on our roles as members of Christ's church. Each person has a next step to take. Use this time to help learners personally apply Biblical truths to their lives and commit to love each other better through consideration and forgiveness.

Choose one or more of the following ideas to consider Jesus more often this week:

- Write Hebrews 10:19-23 on a card or sticky note and put it on your bathroom mirror or some other prominent place where you will read it daily.
- Memorize Hebrews 3:13.
- Write down the names of one or two people you want to encourage every day this week to do the will of God. Text them, call them, meet with them for lunch...consider ways you can take initiative to reach out and encourage them in some way each day.
- Write a prayer of gratefulness to God for His forgiveness of you.

What is a situation where you need some stirring up? What is a situation where you need to forgive someone? Confess that need to another believer, and pray together about it.

Do you tend to be the person who offers exhortation and encouragement, or the person who more often voices the negative? Just because encouragement isn't your spiritual gift, you don't get a pass! This week, in a situation where you'd typically stay quiet or say something negative, take the initiative to be an encourager, instead.

COMMENTARY

HEBREWS 10:24-25

This exhortation calls us to responsibility to one another. The appeal to consider demands concentrated attention. The goal of this attention was to spur one another on toward love and good deeds. As Christians we have a corporate responsibility. We must help others who stumble and falter. We must concentrate on the needs of others and not on our individual salvation only. To spur other believers forward in the Christian life, followers of Christ must meet together. Some of the readers of Hebrews were neglecting to meet together for worship, and this limited their ability to give and receive encouragement toward good works. Christians who meet together with the aim of promoting godliness and love for one another can be remarkably successful in their ventures.

COLOSSIANS 3:8-13

3:8. The words but now contrasted believers' old lifestyles to their new life in Christ. Paul listed five elements believers were to put away (lay aside, as soiled clothing). Three sins pertain to attitudes and two concern speech. Thus Paul emphasized that sinful attitudes and words are as serious as sinful acts. The Greek term translated "anger" is the same word Paul used in 3:6 for God's wrath. When it refers to a human attitude, it has the sense of a continuing, seething resentment toward others. The word rendered here as "wrath" also can be understood as "rage"—a sudden, heated outburst of temper that dies down quickly. The term rendered malice conveys the idea of ill will that awaits an opportunity to inflict intentional harm. These attitudes have no place in believers' lives. Paul

urged believers to get rid of two kinds of speech. The Greek term translated “slander” means “speaking critically of another person with the intent to hurt.” The Greek term rendered “filthy language” has the sense of obscene and abusive speech.

3:9-10. Paul stressed that truthfulness was to be a mark of believers’ lifestyle. The phrase “do not lie” can have the force of “stop lying.” The Colossian believers’ relationships with one another and their witness to unbelievers required truth and honesty. Lying, dishonesty, and deceit had characterized their pagan lifestyles; but because they had put off the old self (nature), they were to shed these practices (habitual actions) as they would discard old, ragged, filthy clothing. At conversion, believers had put on (as new, clean clothing) the new self (nature). In Greek, the tense of the verbs translated “put off” (3:9) and “put on” (3:10) convey once-for-all action. When believers placed their faith in Christ, He gave them a new nature governed by His grace. The new self is (continually) being renewed (transformed in quality) in knowledge. Christ works in believers to facilitate a process of renewal—of their continuing to gain new insights into and understanding of God’s will. False teachers in Colossae offered secret knowledge they claimed was necessary for people to be fully Christian. Paul countered that Christ in believers was progressively supplying them with the knowledge they needed. He was nurturing them in the process of spiritual growth.

3:11-12. The phrase “in Christ” refers to God’s new people. The phrase “there is not” has the force of “there cannot be.” It expresses the impossibility of humanly devised barriers among God’s new people. Christ is all and in all. He is the sphere in which all believers live, and He is all that ultimately matters. Also, He lives in each Christian, who represents Him to all other believers. Thus faith and love remove earthly categories in God’s new people. The result is His people’s oneness. New people in Christ were to put on certain virtues as they would don new clothes. Paul addressed them

with three descriptive terms. They were God’s chosen ones.

Through faith in Christ, they had taken their place among God’s people. Believers were holy—set aside for God’s service and for moral purity. They also were loved; they lived in God’s love. Paul listed five attributes of believers as new people in Christ. The phrase “heartfelt compassion” conveys the idea of feeling so deeply with others who are hurting that a person shares their pain. The Greek word translated “kindness” has the idea of goodness, of considering others’ good to be as important as a person’s own. Humility is a healthy view of oneself in which a person thinks neither too highly nor too negatively of self. It also involves willingness to forgo rights and privileges to help others. Gentleness has the sense of strength that is controlled and channeled constructively. Patience literally is “longsuffering.”

3:13. Paul added two character qualities to his list. The Greek term rendered “accepting” means “putting up with.” Believers were to endure offenses patiently. Forgiving has the sense of pardoning others as a gift of grace. If a believer had a complaint (grievance) against another Christian, the offended person was to take the initiative to forgive the offender as (in the same manner) the Lord graciously had forgiven the one offended. Christians were to take the initiative to forgive others because of their personal experience of Christ’s forgiveness.

MATTHEW 6:9-15

6:9. By commanding His disciples to pray like this rather than simply “pray this,” Jesus demonstrated that this prayer was offered as a model rather than a mantra to be recited. Your name be honored as holy suggests that Jesus expected His disciples to live righteous lives that honor rather than profane God’s name (5:16; Lev 22:31-32). This is an important precondition for successful prayer.

God is the ideal Father—all-loving, all-knowing, all-wise, all-powerful, and always present with us. At the same time, He is in heaven, which tells

us He is greater than we can comprehend; so we approach Him as our Father with due reverence. The first person plural pronoun *Our* implies that Jesus intended this prayer to be a model for corporate prayer, i.e., a prayer for when disciples gather as a group. This confirms that Matt. 6:5 was not intended to prohibit disciples from praying together publicly in the synagogue or other gatherings but instead prohibited prayers that were motivated by religious showmanship.

The first request is that the Father's name be honored as holy (v. 9). One's name in Biblical thought stood for the person. The Father's covenant name is Yahweh (Exodus 3:14). This petition is that God will help all people everywhere to recognize the Lord God Almighty as He revealed Himself in Jesus Christ and honor Him accordingly (see John 6:44).

6:10. Your kingdom come could be translated "Your reign come." The kingdom has come in the hearts of all who have submitted to Jesus as Lord. It also is coming as more people yield their hearts to His reign. The kingdom will not have come fully, though, until Jesus returns and establishes it absolutely and forever. This petition asks the Father to bring people under His reign.

To pray for the Father to see that His will be done on earth as it is in heaven frightens some people. They fail to distinguish between what God desires and what He permits. He desires all to be saved (2 Peter 3:9), but He permits many to turn from Him. He desires all of us to keep His commands, but He permits our disobedience and the destruction it causes. We live, therefore, in a world cursed by sin. Even so, the Father weaves even sin's consequences into a pattern that ultimately will achieve His good will (Romans 8:28). Heaven is the only place free of sin and its painful effects. We should daily pray for the future consummation of God's rule in which He will reign fully and completely over the world.

6:11. The prayer's focus shifts from God's eternal purposes to our temporal needs. We are to request what we need to sustain life, such as

daily bread (Matthew 6:11). Daily may be understood as "for today" or "for tomorrow," in either case pointing to immediate need. Daily bread was the amount of bread necessary to survive for a day. The request is reminiscent of Proverbs 30:8-9. Jesus wanted His disciples to live in a state of constant dependence on God and His provision. This prayer reminds us that our Father ultimately is our Provider. As a wise father, God provides what we need, not necessarily what we want.

6:12. We also are to ask for forgiveness. Debts are sins viewed as obligations to the Father. The Greek grammar indicates that the disciple prays for forgiveness from God only after having first expressed forgiveness to others. We dare not take lightly the rest of the verse: as we also have forgiven our debtors (see also vv. 14-15). At least two Biblical teachings about salvation seem in conflict with the words forgive us . . . as we also have forgiven (v. 12; see also vv. 14-15; 18:21-35). (1) Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ, not by works (Ephesians 2:8-10). That rules out earning forgiveness by forgiving. (2) Faith in Christ brings forgiveness and eternal security (John 10:27-29).

6:13. The final petition has puzzled many believers—Do not bring us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. ("Evil one" also can be translated "evil"; the essential meaning is the same.) We know God is good and does not tempt us to sin (James 1:13), so how are we to understand this? The overall meaning is obvious: the prayer is for the Father to keep us doing His will rather than being led astray by Satan.

**LOVE ONE
ANOTHER &
GREET ONE
ANOTHER**
SESSION 3



LEADER NOTE

This section is a way to briefly review last week before getting into today's lesson. Please be careful to keep it brief. We don't need to re-teach the previous lesson; we want to help learners see how this lesson is related to the one before it.

CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER & FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER

Read Hebrews 10:24-25 together again:

HEBREWS 10:24-25

²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Last week, we took a look at how our consideration of other believers and forgiveness of them is a necessary and practical application of love. The choice to forgive one another is, in itself, encouragement. As with all the "one another" commands, they are demonstrations of Christ's love and, at the same time, they develop close relationships and build community.

What next step did you take this week to better encourage other people? In what way do you believe God still wants you to grow in the area of encouragement?

Name one important takeaway about forgiveness that stayed with you throughout the week.

Today we'll take a look at the commands to love one another and greet one another. What we'll find is that greeting one another, like all the rest of the "one another" commands, is a visible, valuable, and victorious way we demonstrate the love of Jesus to the body of Christ and to the watching world.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

LEADER NOTE:

In this section, we want to help adults know that God's command to love isn't optional. There are no loopholes. He expects us to love one another, so we should have that expectation of one another. Paul made it clear in 1 Corinthians 13 that love for others is essential to the Christian life.

KEY VERSE

JOHN 13:34

³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another.

1 JOHN 3:10-11

¹⁰ By this it is evident who are the children of

God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. ¹¹ For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

How is Biblical love different than the kind of love the world knows and practices?

Pastor Grant noted that Jesus gives love new meaning and power. How have you experienced that in your own life?

There are no exceptions or exemptions. When we act unlovingly toward one another, it matters. It is a big deal to God when we speak rudely to one another, act carelessly and impatiently, refuse to forgive, and think less of one another than we should. We have a God who loves us as a heavenly Father, and we must seek to love each other in the same way He loves us.

Would you say showing Biblical love is an expectation you have for yourself from day to day? Do other believers expect you to demonstrate love in the day to day? Why or why not?

KEY VERSE

JOHN 13:34

³⁴ ... just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

Notice Jesus didn't say, "Kind of like I have loved you..." He said, "As I have loved you." Do you believe it's possible for you to love other people just as Jesus as loved you? How is that possible?

KEY VERSES

1 JOHN 4:7-11

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that

we might live through him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have 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.

Name as many adjectives as you can to describe the love God has shown you and give examples of each (i.e., sacrificial – Jesus died on the cross for my sins; all-consuming – He pursues me, Luke 15).

If we're going to love others like God loves us, it's going to cost us. It's going to require we love people who hate us and hurt us and who are genuinely hard to like. The kind of sacrificial love that Jesus shows us is possible only when we trust and depend on Him enough to love through us.

KEY VERSE

JOHN 13:35

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

If the church is designed to be a community of impossible love that shows the world that God is real, how are we doing? How can we do better?

Pastor Grant pointed out, “Most of us think that the evidence of salvation is love for God. That is not what Jesus said. Jesus said the evidence of whether or not you are His disciple is love for one another.” That’s because loving people like Jesus loves them is an impossibility in our sinful nature. This is not something we can achieve with good effort; it is an outcome of a life surrendered to God, following Jesus, and filled with the power of His Holy Spirit.

GREET ONE ANOTHER

KEY VERSES

ROMANS 16:16-17, 20

¹⁶ Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you. ¹⁷ I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.

²⁰ The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

In what way are visible demonstrations of love and friendship valuable?

How do Paul’s words in verses 17 and 20 help you know the heart and motive behind the command to greet one another in verse 16?

When we see someone we love, we greet them warmly. These greetings are personal and demonstrate visibly the connection we share to those who are watching. Paul’s words here followed a lengthy list of greetings to specific individuals in Rome, each for whom Paul had great affection. Paul wrote to people he longed to be with. He had not yet made it to Rome, but wanted badly to join these believers that they might encourage one another in person.

Glancing through the greetings in verses 1-15 of Romans 16, what stands out to you?

What does the way in which a church’s members greet one another say about the love they have for each other?

Greeting one another is not optional or trivial. It is a scriptural command. By greeting one another in a God honoring way, we display the Gospel through these relationships.

YOUR NEXT STEP TOWARD LOVING ONE ANOTHER

LEADER NOTE

Regardless of where a person is in his or her spiritual life, everyone has a next step to take. Use this time to help learners personally apply Biblical truths to their lives and determine to grow in their love for others.

GROW IN YOUR EXPECTATION OF LOVE FOR OTHERS.

We cannot excuse our behavior by saying, “Oh, that’s just how I am.” Until the day we die, we should expect to grow in Christlikeness, and that means growing in our love for other people.

Who holds you accountable to act lovingly toward others? When are you prone to excuse your behavior toward others because of what you think they do or do not deserve?

GROW IN THE EXTENT OF YOUR LOVE FOR OTHERS.

It’s much easier to love those with whom you naturally connect than it is to love people who may be difficult. However, love that doesn’t cost us anything falls short of the kind of love God commands of us.

When is the last time you served someone when it wasn’t convenient? When is the last time you chose to respond to another person’s rudeness with kindness? When is the last time you did something that was of no benefit to you but of great benefit to someone else?

GROW IN THE EXPRESSION OF YOUR LOVE FOR OTHERS (BE A GREETER!)

Following Jesus and loving one another are connected behaviors. So there is something more at stake than whether or not you are known as “a nice person.” Our love for one another is our witness that identifies us before a watching world.

What would unbelievers be able to conclude about Jesus from your life? What needs to change?

Which area do you currently struggle with the most—pursuing the expectation of love, extending sacrificial love, or expressing love in ways that people notice? How can this group help you grow in that area?

COMMENTARY

JOHN 13:34-35

Jesus invited His followers to embrace His love and to express His love through their interactions with each other. His commandment to them was not new in the sense that it was different in substance. Rather, it was new in application—one's neighbor was anybody. It also was new in its model—Jesus' self-sacrificing love, especially displayed later on the cross. In an encounter with a scribe, Jesus summarized the commandments in the Mosaic law (Mark 12:28-31). Stated in two Old Testament passages (Lev. 19:18; Deut. 6:4-5), the Mosaic commandments directed believers to love God wholeheartedly and to love one's neighbor as one's self.

As Jesus prepared His disciples for their future in His body, the church, He yearned for them to experience the new commandment in their relationships. He had corrected their earlier ambitions over position and greatness by His own humble service of washing their feet. As Judas left the Passover supper the disciples were eating with Jesus, He focused attention on their covenant commitments to one another. Three times in two verses, Jesus repeated the essence of His teaching. To love one another was the supreme means of identification for His disciples.

The kind of love Jesus commanded the disciples to give was not merely the brotherly love of human fellowship. Even unbelievers related to others on that level of love. Jesus wanted His followers to experience and to express God's love. Each of the four occurrences of the Greek word translated "love" and "loved" in John 13:34-35 uses a Greek word meaning God's kind of love. This love seeks the good of another rather than benefit for self. It sacrifices without condition and serves without motive of personal gain.

The source of such love is the Lord Himself. Jesus knew human nature does not love sacrificially and unconditionally as God loves. He

reminded the eleven disciples of the way He loved them. The words "Just as" meant they were to love one another in the same way and to the same degree He loved them. Their only hope for success in loving this way lay in their relationship with Him. As they were channels, receiving and passing on Christ's love, they could fulfill His intention for their lives.

The object of the disciples' love was one another. Jesus certainly was not excusing the disciples from loving other people who were not His disciples. He was not suggesting they form an exclusive club in which they loved each other but not those outside their group. Rather, Jesus was setting a new standard for love among believers.

The disciples' purpose in showing godly love was to witness for Jesus. According to Him, only the disciples' love for one another showed the world they were His disciples. Only by love would they endure together and impact their world.

Jesus calls Christians to love one another, as He said, "Just as I have loved you." We who have received Christ's sacrificial love are to extend that same love to others. His love transforms our hearts so we cannot help but love. If we fail to love, we should examine ourselves to see if His love truly resides in our lives (1 John 4:7-8).

Love among believers provides the foundational testimony to the lost. Unbelievers may criticize Christians, but many do have high expectations of those who claim Christ's name. They look for holy lifestyles among believers and love in their relationships with one another. Weak love among believers results in weak witness to nonbelievers. Worse, when Christians argue and fight with one another, lost people use their bickering as an excuse to reject Christ. The world judges our love for God by the love we have for one another.

Christians should love one another to glorify God. Just as children's behavior reflects on parents' character, even so our love paints a portrait of our Heavenly Father. Just as you are glad when people comment on the good behavior and loving attitudes of your children, so our Heavenly Father rejoices to see His children living in harmony and love.

1 JOHN 3:10-11

He who does what is sinful is of the devil makes it clear that the sinning antichrists were not righteous, but were of the devil. This does not mean that when a Christian sins, he suddenly loses his place as a child of God and takes his place as a child of the devil. Rather, it means that the antichrists—since they claim righteousness while living in sin—are children of the devil. To sin is to take part in the devil's plan, which automatically sets a person in opposition to God. Scripture takes seriously the nature of believers as born-again, Spirit-filled, new creatures in Christ. It will not tolerate any casual attitude toward sin. Sin and salvation are opposites. Wanting to sin is not part of being led by the Spirit or having Christ in us. Refusal to take this warning seriously should call us to reexamine our commitment to Christ.

1 JOHN 4:7

This is the third and final time John appeals to the subject of brotherly love. He first mentioned it in 2:7-11, where it is given as an indicator of one who is walking in the light. The second occurrence comes in 3:11-24) and is mentioned as evidence that one is a child of God. "Dear friends" introduces a new subject, and it reestablishes warmth and affection following a very pointed and direct discussion. He loves them and will now challenge them to love others as well.

John's exhortation is for Christians to love Christians, although the importance of loving non-Christians is not to be excluded. The basis for this love is God and His love; in fact, it is because love is from God. Love flows from or out of God and has God as its source. Not only is

this true of God, but all who love have been born of God. In other words, inasmuch as anyone has even the smallest capacity to love, this comes by the grace of God. John is referring to a particular kind of love that is found only in those who have been regenerated by Christ. The perfect tense of "born" would include the initial rebirth of Christians and the continuing effects this would have in their life, and the present tense of "know" emphasizes that Christians are continuing to grow in knowledge of God. In other words, it is not the Christian's ability to love that causes the new birth, but his ability to love flows from his regeneration in Christ.

ROMANS 16:1-20


16:1-2. Before Paul begins his greetings to his friends in the church in Rome, he commends to them a fellow believer, Phoebe, a servant of the church in Cenchrea. It is widely agreed that Phoebe was likely the carrier of Paul's letter to Rome. Her designation as a servant probably implies a position of responsibility in the church at Cenchrea, perhaps that of deaconess. Paul's request that she be given any help she may need is doubtless a response to the great help she had been to many. Paul's reference to Phoebe as a great help is probably more than just physical assistance, meaning that Phoebe was possibly a woman of means who had helped to support the Cenchrean church and possibly Paul himself.

16:3-16. Next, Paul enters into a lengthy list of greetings to acquaintances in Rome. Immediately coming to mind is the image of Christ as the Good Shepherd of His sheep (John 10:3). As a shepherd of the church in Rome, Paul obviously knows many of the sheep there by name. Yet another side of the apostle Paul is seen in his conveyance of personal greetings and expressions of well-being to so many by name. Two final words from Paul in verse 16 add additional insights into the state, or the need, of the church at Rome. First, for the fourth time in his letters, Paul urges the believers to greet one another with a holy kiss (cf. 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26; see also 1 Pet. 5:14).

Was this exhortation because they were lacking affection for one another or because they were being encouraged to continue it? Either way, it is a good word for the church today. Second, all the churches of Christ send greetings to the church in Rome. These greetings most likely came from the members of Paul's entourage who were about to leave with him on the journey to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4). They would represent churches in Macedonia and Achaia as well as Asia Minor (Galatia). Paul worked hard at doing whatever might increase the unity of the body of Christ.

16:19-20. In the midst of his warnings, Paul reaffirms his joy, first mentioned in Romans 1:8, over their faith and obedience. But he does not want them to be naive about their faith. His words about what is good and innocent about what is evil parallels Jesus' words to His disciples when He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God (Matt. 10:16). The life of faith must be received with the innocence and purity of faith of a child (Mark 10:15) but lived in the maturity and reality of an adult who knows there is a war going on. The harshness of Paul's words—will soon crush—is cast in stark contrast to the backdrop of his earlier declaration—I am full of joy. Both are true in the Christian life—joy in the midst of war. The joy comes from knowing that the war has been and will be won. Our part (the Roman church's part) is to be alert and vigilant until the final armistice. It is the grace of God that empowers us to understand, and stand in, the conflict.





**PRAY FOR
ONE ANOTHER
& PREFER ONE
ANOTHER**

SESSION 4

LEADER NOTE

This section is a way to briefly review last week before getting into today's lesson. Please be careful to keep it brief. We don't need to re-teach last week's lesson; we want to help learners see how this lesson is related to the one before it.

LOVE AND GREET ONE ANOTHER

In last week's study, we learned that our love for others in the body of Christ isn't optional; it's a command. God expects us to love in visible ways, such as greeting one another. From Jesus' example, we know that demonstrating His love is costly and expressing His love is convincing.

Name one takeaway from last week that stayed with you throughout the week.

How was your expectation of love different this week? How was the extent of the love you were willing to give different? Was the expression of your love for others convincing proof that you belong to Jesus?

Knowing God commands us to love is a first step. This week, we'll examine two more practical applications of love—praying and preferring—that are closely related to the rest of the “one another” commands.

Would you say prayer is a form of encouragement? Why or why not?

When was a time you knew someone was interceding for you? How did those prayers on your behalf impact you?

Look at the model prayer Jesus gave His disciples in Matthew 6:9-13. Jesus used the pronouns “Our” and “us”, not “My” or “me”. The Bible emphasizes relationship—with God and also with other people. As believers, we are children of the same Father, members of the same body, soldiers of the same army, and participants on the same team. We are in this together and we are for one another. As such, our Father has commanded us to show preference to one another and to lift each other up in prayer.

PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER

LEADER NOTE

This section and the two sections that follow highlight a few of the topics for which we are commanded to pray for one another. This is not an exhaustive list. Help learners first see the overall view of the passage. When we read James 5:13-20 in its entirety, we see James' point that we should pray for one another about everything. Some people only pray for their own needs. Others only pray when pressing needs arise. Wherever we are on this spectrum, there is always room to grow in our prayers for one another.

KEY VERSE

JAMES 5:13A

¹³ Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray.

What are some ways believers suffer? Why should we expect suffering?

Name a time your personal circumstances led you to your knees in prayer.

In this context, the word "suffering" means hardship or trouble. It refers to difficult circumstances, which Jesus said His followers would face (see John 16:33). James knew those he wrote to were suffering greatly, so he told them to pray. In hardship, our first response should be to turn to God. Pastor Grant explained it this way, "When your life becomes His life, your problems become His problems."

KEY VERSE

JAMES 5:14-15

¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the

Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

When there is opportunity to share prayer requests, healing for the sick is a common need mentioned. There are few things like illness that reveal one's helplessness and remind us of the need to turn to the Lord. We may know that we should pray about sickness, but James emphasized our need to also ask for prayer.

What does asking others for prayer reveal that simply praying yourself does not?

Why do you think James mentioned sin here? In what way is sin like sickness?

Like the man in Mark 2 who could not get to Jesus himself but allowed his friends to carry him, our collective faith works together and grows when we confess our needs and take them to Jesus together in prayer.

KEY VERSES

JAMES 5:16-18

¹⁶ Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. ¹⁷ Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently

that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. ¹⁸ Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

Does your current prayer life reflect a commitment to “one another”? Explain.

What are some things you imagine the leaders of Libertylive are praying that God will do in and through our church?

How does remembering that someone like Elijah had a nature like ours encourage us in the power of pray by ordinary people?

We can and should pray for one another beyond our physical needs. We can and should pray for one another beyond the requests we’ve heard. If God is going to move in and through us, it will be because we loved people enough and trusted God enough to pray for one another continually.

KEY VERSES

JAMES 5:19-20

¹⁹ My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, ²⁰ let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-4

¹ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ² for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. ³ This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

How do these two passages help us know how to focus our prayers for one another? For Libertylive?

Pastor Grant said, “When we lose our burden for people to be saved, there is something wrong.” **Why do you think Christians don’t typically name issues related to spiritual awakening and salvation when given the opportunity to share prayer requests?**

For believers, wandering happens gradually. We don’t often intend to move away from God, but when we’re not careful, we end up in a place we never meant to go. For unbelievers, wandering is a way of life. But God is at work, drawing them to Himself. When we pray for spiritual awakening and salvation, we show that we believe God is on the throne and that He loves all people, pursues them, and desires to bring them to Himself.

PREFER ONE ANOTHER

KEY VERSE

ROMANS 12:1-10

¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. ³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴ For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so

we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. ⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

According to these verses, what are the specific ways we are to show preference to one another?

Paul detailed the way we should show preference to one another. We should consider others higher than ourselves in our thinking, in our serving, and in our loving. This type of living starts in the mind, as we allow the Spirit to transform our thinking. As He does, we begin to understand the purpose of our gifts and how they relate to the body as a whole. As we serve others, we learn to love them better, outdoing one another in showing them honor.

When is it easiest for you to give preference to other people? When is it most difficult?

Look through verses 11-19. Which of the acts listed challenges you the most as a way of giving preference to other people? Why?

KEY VERSE

PHILIPPIANS 2:3-5

³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus

What specific ways to show preference to one another do you find in these verses?

How did Jesus give preference to you?

What is the connection between praying for one another and preferring one another?

YOUR NEXT STEP TOWARD PRAYING FOR & PREFERRING ONE ANOTHER

LEADER NOTE

Regardless of where a person is in his or her spiritual walk, everyone has a next step to take. Use this time to help learners personally apply Biblical truths to their lives and determine to grow in their prayer lives, especially as it relates to the ways they give preference to one another.

Most believers acknowledge the importance of prayer, but we don't always put it into practice. It isn't enough to simply know we should pray about suffering, sickness, spiritual awakening, and salvation. Neither is it enough to believe God wants us to pray for all the saints and God's servants. We must take steps toward praying for one another daily. Consider the following suggestions:

- Choose a place where you can meet with God, uninterrupted, for prayer each day.
- Schedule a time of day when you will meet with God in prayer. Put it on your calendar if needed. God will never be offended that you did what you needed to prioritize time with Him in this way.
- Think of other times throughout the day when you can pray and determine specific people you can pray for at those times. Examples: On your drive to work, pray for someone you know who is going through a difficult time. Before lunch, pray for church leaders who are preparing to spiritually feed God's people with the preaching and teaching of His Word.
- Buy a legal pad and make two lists. Make one list of all the general ways you can pray for Libertylive and other people. Make another list of all the specific needs you can pray about on behalf of other people.
- Address a small section of your prayer list each day.
- Study the Model Prayer in Matthew 6:9-15. Use it as a guide as you turn to the Lord in prayer for others throughout the day. Examples: Let your kingdom come and your will be done in _____'s life today. Give _____ the provision he (or she) needs today.

- Begin or join a prayer group. It's not all up to you! Join with others in prayer, either through texts and emails or in person through a weekly gathering. As you do, be honest about the ways you need to grow in prayer for others' suffering, sickness, salvation, and spiritual awakening.

Taking steps toward a vibrant prayer life will help you take steps toward showing preference to others in your thoughts, service, and love!

COMMENTARY

JAMES 5:13-20

5:13-14. James used a series of questions followed by commands as an effective way of exhorting the congregation to prayer and worship. Suffering in verse 13 is not a reference to physical illness; it is instead a spiritual burden caused by misfortune or poor choices. Elders, who functioned in various capacities in the early church, should anoint any sick person with olive oil and pray over him. Olive oil was considered a cure-all ointment in the ancient world, but for James the real healing power is in prayer.

5:15. The prayer of faith echoes 1:5-8. "Save" refers to physical healing (as in Mk 5:23,28,34; 10:52; Jn 11:12). "The Lord will restore him to health" does not indicate that death is at hand (v. 14), but that once healed by the power of God the sick person could get up and walk (Mt 9:5-7; Mk 1:31; 2:9-12; 9:27; Ac 3:7). "He will be forgiven" indicates that perhaps the illness was connected with sin, and the prayers of the elders could bring spiritual healing as well.

5:16. "Pray for one another" echoes the prayers of the elders, and these should lead to both physical and spiritual healing (i.e., forgiveness). Prayer is not a magical incantation or a guarantee of healing, but when offered fervently by a righteous person, God will respond in a way that best fits His good purposes.

5:17-18. James cited a Biblical personality, Elijah, who prayed effectively. The illustration is intended to encourage his audience that their prayers could lead to similar results.

5:19-20. James turned to the priority of reclaiming those who had strayed from the faith. "Someone turns" and "whoever turns" both reflect an effort to bring a straying believer back to an authentic Christian faith and lifestyle.

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-4

2:1 Paul didn't write 1 Timothy as an exhaustive treatise on church organization. Instead, he wrote to give Timothy confidence to face those who spread false doctrine and undercut the church's commission to evangelize. Therefore, Paul's first line of defense was prayer. In this verse, the apostle mentioned four different words for prayer. Petitions included requests individuals made of God. The term prayers was the most general word. Intercessions included prayers for other believers. The thanksgivings Paul mentioned probably included gratitude for God's blessings. The apostle may not have intended any sharp distinction among the four terms. The use of all four terms emphasizes the importance of prayer in overcoming the false teaching in Ephesus and in winning the lost to Christ. The subject of these prayers included everyone—indicating the breadth of Paul's concern.

2:2 Paul encouraged Timothy to pray for governmental authorities who could help provide an environment conducive to evangelism.

2:3 A quiet life of dignity and godliness pleases God. God is also pleased when believers express concern for the salvation of others.

2:4 Paul directly connected evangelism with pleasing God in this verse. Prayer for the lost pleases God because God wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. The false teachers promoted lies, but Paul encouraged Timothy to pray that those lies would be exposed. “Come to the knowledge of the truth” is a way of referring to being converted. “The truth” is often used in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus as a synonym for the Gospel.

The Greek word translated “saved” can convey various meanings, including “to deliver, preserve, protect, heal,” and “make whole.” In the context of 1 Timothy 2:4 the word refers specifically to conversion, to the transformation that occurs when a person accepts Jesus Christ as Savior. Paul understood salvation in the believer’s experience as embracing the past, present, and future. The initial moment of salvation, occurring when an individual accepts Christ as Savior, is sometimes referred to as justification. At that moment a believer enters into an eternally secure relationship of peace with God. Salvation, however, also continues in a process called sanctification or becoming more like Christ. The believer is enabled to progress toward spiritual maturity through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Ultimately the believer’s salvation will culminate in a future glorification, or deliverance from the power of sin. Such is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed with Christ. These various aspects of salvation motivated Paul to share the Gospel with unbelievers.

ROMANS 12:3-10

12:1. Paul urged all believers to present themselves as a living sacrifice. Such language must have clashed immediately in the minds of many. The common understanding was that only the first and best animals were fit to be offered as sacrifices. The sacrifice Paul had in mind was radically different. Jesus had given Himself as the once-and-for-all sacrifice for sin on the cross. Believers thus were to live in light of Jesus’ all-sufficient sacrifice, bringing glory to God. The idea of Christians’ presenting

their bodies as a living sacrifice harked back to the discussion of the body being dead to sin because of the life-giving presence of the Spirit (see 8:10). To live by the Spirit is to offer oneself completely and daily as a holy and pleasing sacrifice.

Paul further explained that living as a holy, pleasing sacrifice was a believer’s “spiritual worship”. The word rendered spiritual also can be understood as meaning logical or reasonable. The Greek word translated worship often was used to refer to carrying out religious duties or services. Thus Paul taught that in light of God’s gracious redemption (by the mercies of God), living as a sacrifice was the logical and pleasing way for Christians to serve God.

12:2. As Christians, we’re also to please God with our minds. The temptation is to go along with the dominant attitudes of the age, to adopt the prevailing cultural worldview characterized by self-worship (sin). The apostle urged his readers to reject worldliness and to be transformed by the renewing of the mind. The phrase “be transformed” in the Greek is a present passive imperative form.

This form suggests three important truths. First, the present tense describes a continuing action. Transformation of our thinking and attitudes is an ongoing, lifelong endeavor. Second, the passive voice indicates that the indwelling Spirit is the source of our transformation. We can’t transform ourselves but rather must be transformed. Third, however, is the truth suggested by the imperative that we must consciously place ourselves at the Spirit’s disposal for transformation to happen. The Spirit will not transform us against our will.

The result of having our minds renewed by the Spirit is to grow in our ability to discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God. The word translated “discern” literally means to prove by testing. Christian living is not about emptying the mind—as some religions claim—but rather about thinking intelligently and logically in accordance with God’s ways. God wants

His people to know what pleases Him because by living according to His ways we will experience the most abundant life possible (see John 10:10).

12:3-8. As part of a renewed mind, the Christian is to think wisely about himself and what his function is to be in the body of Christ (the church; see 1Co 12:12-28). Measure of faith may mean a person should measure himself by the Gospel. Others see it as different apportionments of faith. Either way, Paul exhorts Christians to be humble and to use what God has given for the good of the body. Christians are given gifts to use for the good of others.

The New Testament lists at least 17 kinds of gifts. Christians are defined not just by their personal faith but also by their inclusion in local faith fellowships that are expressions of the body of Christ (see 1Co 12:12-31). Only some of the gifts are explained in this present passage: prophecy in the New Testament churches was direct revelation from God before the canon was completed. This gift was to be used and measured in concert with the objective body of Christian truths.

Service (Gk diakonia) is the origin of the word “deacon.” A deacon here is not a member of a board of directors but a servant. It describes not a title or office but a gift of ministry. Pastors should have this gift.

Teaching is an essential gift. Parents teach children, older believers teach younger believers, vocational pastor-teachers are the primary instructors in a church, and elders should be able to teach also. All believers can teach to some level, but those who have a special facility for teaching are responsible to develop and utilize it.

Exhortation is the gift of motivating and encouraging. This gift is similar to the Holy Spirit’s function.

Giving is to be done with generosity. All can give, but capacities differ. Some delight to give out of

very small means (Mk 12:41-44); others give a “reverse tithe”—they give 90 percent and live on 10 percent.

Leading is a gift of vision and direction that is effective but should not be overbearing.

Mercy is helping the sick, the poor, and the sorrowful. This gift is to be exercised with cheerfulness. Practical assistance to needy members was a main emphasis of the early churches. This same emphasis should characterize churches today.

12:9 The love of which Paul speaks is, of course, agape, the selfless, unconditional expression of grace and compassion exemplified by the love of God for sinners (John 3:16; Rom. 5:5,8). Just as nothing can separate the believer from the benefits of God’s agape (Rom. 8:35,39), so nothing should be able to come between a believer and his or her love for sinners (Rom. 13:10; 14:15). By dissecting sincere, it is easy to see what Paul means. Anupokritos is simply the negative (negative prefix “a” plus “n”) of hupokrites, from which derives our “hypocrite.”

Therefore, sincere is not hypocritical. “Hypocrite” was used in the Greek world of the actor who wore masks to portray the emotion of his character—sincere Christians wear no masks. What you see is (should be) what you get, and Paul says that others should see love. It would be hypocritical to hate what is good and cling to what is evil; therefore, hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

12:10. Was Paul thinking of David’s Song of Ascents in Psalm 133 when he exhorted the Rome believers “to be devoted to one another in brotherly love”? Or was he thinking of how eleven of the sons of Jacob turned on their brother Joseph out of jealousy and anger and consigned him to Midianite slavery? Could he even have been thinking back seven years earlier when he and Barnabas “had such a sharp disagreement” that they could not continue ministering together (Acts 15:36-41)? Only those who are living sacrifices to God could possibly carry out

the exhortation to honor one another above yourselves. “Looking out for number one” may be a modern mantra, but it was written in the Garden of Eden. Considering others better than yourselves (Phil. 2:3) is just as offensive to the ancient carnal mind as it is to the modern one.

Only a renewed mind can tell that it is the “good, pleasing and perfect will” (Rom. 12:2) of God.

Paul’s special commendation of the believers in Thessalonica for how they loved “the brothers throughout Macedonia” is worthy of note (1 Thess. 4:9-10), especially since Paul seems to indicate that they learned to do so from God (as opposed to a human instrument such as Paul or another apostle).

PHILIPPIANS 2:3-5

2:3-4. These four habitual actions reveal themselves collectively through another four attributes. Rivalry or conceit recalls the problem Paul condemned (1:15,17). Humility, the antidote for wrong attitudes, results in considering others as more important. Additionally, humility considers the interests of others. Proper relationships include the contrast “not only but also.” Personal responsibilities demand consideration, but the concerns of others are equally important.

2:5. The phrase make your own attitude (“value”; cp. v. 2) commands the church to value Christ’s character as a model.





**SERVE ONE
ANOTHER
& SHOW
HOSPITALITY
TO ONE
ANOTHER**

SESSION 5

LEADER NOTE

This section is a way to briefly review the last few weeks before getting into today's lesson. Please be careful to keep it brief. We don't need to re-teach previous lessons; we want to help learners see how this lesson is related to the others in the series.

Which of the following “one another” commands has been most challenging to you so far: bearing one another's burdens, comforting one another, considering one another, forgiving one another, greeting one another, loving one another, praying for one another, or preferring one another? Explain.

What has God been teaching you in this series?

Last week, we focused on the commands to pray for one another and prefer one another. These commands remind us that the Bible emphasizes relationships—our relationship with God and with other people. We are in this together, and we are for one another. That means we should pray for each other in every circumstance and need. As we discuss what it means to show hospitality and serve one another this week, we will do well to remember that our actions toward one another won't meet their full potential if prayer does not accompany them.

SERVE ONE ANOTHER

KEY VERSE

GALATIANS 5:13-16

¹³For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁵But if

you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. ¹⁶But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

What is the relationship between Christian freedom and service?

True freedom in Christ leads to service of Him and others. We've seen it each week as we've studied the one another commands—following Jesus means we love God and people in practical ways. Notice Paul again contrasted a Gospel-centered attitude with a self-centered one. How do we avoid being consumed by one another? Walk by the Spirit, and serve others in love.

KEY VERSE

GALATIANS 5:19-26

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰

idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy,

drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.²⁴ And those who belong

to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Take a closer look at verses 19-21. How do the works of the flesh get in the way of service?

Respond to the following statement: “There are two ways to live—in the Spirit or in the flesh; serving one another or serving yourself.” How are you challenged by this?

These two ways of living are at war within the hearts of those who follow Christ. The flesh wants freedom to do what it wants that stands in opposition to God. The Spirit, though, enables us to please God. If we want to hear from God and walk in the Spirit, we must confess our sin and die to self. Let’s take a look at one specific way we are to serve one another: showing hospitality.

SHOW HOSPITALITY TO ONE ANOTHER

Showing hospitality to one another is a form of serving. It is just one example, but it is a specific command we are given as members of Christ’s body. Just as serving one another is not optional, neither is showing hospitality. Help group members understand this “one another” command isn’t a side note; it’s a vital part of loving people like Jesus taught us to.

KEY VERSE

1 PETER 4:11

¹¹ Whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that

in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Where in the world have you been most awed and moved by the glory of God (i.e., the mountains, the ocean, the birth of a child, etc.)?

Have you ever considered that God wants to display His glory just as powerfully in and through your life? Why or why not?

God has chosen to display His glory in all things. He doesn't only show Himself in the heavens, the majestic mountains, and in the ocean waves, but also on earth through people. It's amazing! God shows His glory in the way believers treat one another. This is why hospitality is one of our four core ministries at Liberty. Peter explained in verse 11: how we treat people is meant to reflect the character and glory of Christ! People who come to our church should notice God's glory and be in awe of Him because of the way we show hospitality.

KEY VERSE

ROMANS 12:10-13

¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the

Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

How do these verses expand your understanding of hospitality beyond having someone over for a meal?

The Greek word for hospitality in Romans 12 and Hebrews 13 means to love strangers. In effect, we're not really showing hospitality and showing God's glory if we're not reaching out beyond our circle of friends.

KEY VERSE

1 PETER 4:10

¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.

In what sense are all the other spiritual gifts tied to hospitality?

Explain why the following statement is true: Investment in a welcoming ministry is an investment into every other ministry our church offers.

Showing hospitality is required of all of God's people, not only those particularly gifted in this area. Gratefully, God does gift certain people with a measure of hospitality only explained by the power of the Holy Spirit. Still, all of us are to serve one another in this way.

KEY VERSE

1 PETER 4:7-9

⁷ The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. ⁸ Above all, keep loving one

another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹ Show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

If you knew you only had a short time left on earth, would you want to spend it in isolation or with other people? Why?

We tend to complain and strive for what we want and what we think we deserve. But understanding that everything in this life is temporary should flip that perspective upside down. This should cause us to view our possessions, our bodies, our discretionary time, our relationships—everything—as gifts from God to steward for His glory.

If Peter were writing this directly to you (and, in a sense, he did!), how specifically could you apply verse 9? To answer, fill in the blank: When you _____, show hospitality to one another without grumbling.

KEY VERSE

1 PETER 4:6A

⁶For this is why the Gospel was preached...

When have you seen hospitality be a springboard for sharing the Gospel?

Pastor Grant said, “The church should be hospitable in an unhospitable world, welcoming in an unwelcoming world, friendly in an unfriendly world.” There are broken people all around us, and people with needs we can’t know just by looking at them. It’s important for us to remember our own brokenness and needs before coming to faith in Christ, and to consider those we encounter in the same light.

KEY VERSE

EPHESIANS 2:11-13, 19

¹¹Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—¹²remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having

no hope and without God in the world.¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

How does remembering the saving grace of Jesus in your life help you be more hospitable to others?

YOUR NEXT STEP TOWARD SHOWING HOSPITALITY TO ONE ANOTHER

LEADER NOTE

Even the person who bakes cookies and delivers them to visitors each week has a next step to take in the areas of service and hospitality. Use this time to help learners personally apply Biblical truths to their lives and determine to grow in serving and showing hospitality to one another.

Consider the following suggestions, and choose one practical way you'll show hospitality and serve one another in the days ahead:

- Take the initiative to get to know someone new in the time that precedes the worship service.
- Invite a guest to lunch after church.
- Recognize that God desires to reveal His glory through me as I relate to other people. Act in accordance with this reality.
- Consider the way hospitality relates to my spiritual gifts and can be demonstrated as I use them.
- Stop grumbling.
- As you are serving, pray for opportunities to share the Gospel.
- Other _____

COMMENTARY

GALATIANS 5:13-26

5:13-14. In verse 1, Paul states that Christian freedom is the right and privilege of every believer. Then he points out six negative consequences of falling back into slavery. Now he warns them not to use this freedom as a license to sin. Rather than liberty being used for selfishness, the true objective of their newfound freedom is love. Quoting Leviticus 19:18, Paul summarizes the law as "love your neighbor as yourself." Always remember that we are slaves commissioned to love one another (Matt. 22:39).

5:15. As a result of the legalists, this church was divided. They were biting and devouring each other. Their church and community of faith were on the verge of destruction. Legalism treats people harshly and often leads to divisions.

5:16. The phrase "so I say" alerts the Galatian readers that Paul was about to make an important point. His following instructions are designed to combat the selfish behaviors

and abuses prominent in the Galatian fellowship (v. 15). The verb translated "live" literally means "walk." It refers to journeying through life. Paul commonly used the term to designate daily conduct or lifestyle. Along the pathway of life, the Spirit's guidance and power can help Christians avoid the self-destructive tendencies of the sinful nature. Paul followed his command with a promise: ordering our lives according to the Spirit's guidance will prevent believers from ever carrying out the desire of the "flesh." In the context of Galatians 5:16, the term "flesh" refers to people's lower nature. Coupled with the word for "flesh," the term for "desire" conveys the sense of craving what is evil. Consistently living in the Spirit would enable believers to overcome sin's pull, which the law could not do.

5:17. Every Christian is a walking civil war. Flesh and Spirit are in perpetual conflict; they are diametrically opposed to each other and

vie for dominance in believers' lives. What the flesh desires is antagonistic to what the Spirit desires for Christians. The language is that of unrelenting warfare for control of believers' lives. The Spirit strives to prevent believers from giving in to evil; the flesh tries to thwart the Spirit's work.

5:18. Paul emphasized that active cooperation with the Spirit and constant reliance on His power would enable the Galatian believers to experience freedom instead of bondage. If they consistently followed the Spirit's leadership, they would not be under the law. Paul's words indicate he was following up on his emphasis of not misusing Christian freedom and elaborating on how to use it properly (see vv. 13-15). The Judaizers contended that obeying the law enables people to overcome their base desires; yet Paul knew from experience that the law was powerless to suppress people's lower nature (see Rom. 7:7-8,14-25). Paul maintained strongly that only following the Spirit's guidance could enable people to overcome evil and experience the freedom of grace. The inner struggle between believers' old nature and the Spirit would continue, but following the Spirit's leading—walking behind Him—would empower them to be victorious.

5:19. Paul spelled out the results of acting on "the desires of the flesh" (v. 16). He cataloged the works of the flesh. The word "works" refers to what issues from living in the flesh—people's lower natures. Paul stated these works are apparent. Paul used 15 Greek words and one catchall term to present characteristic activities of people who are outside God's kingdom and devoid of the Spirit's leadership. All the impulses or drives Paul included are potentially good, but the base nature seeks to distort and pervert them. Paul began listing what the flesh produces by naming three sexual sins. Sexual immorality was epidemic and commonly accepted in the Galatian believers' environment. They were bombarded with temptations to revert to their former immoral lifestyles. Paul emphasized that sexual sins issue from our sinful nature's aggression in its warfare with the Spirit.

5:20a. Paul next addressed works of the flesh in the religious realm. The word "idolatry" referred primarily to worshiping pagan gods—false gods that people fashioned. Such worship often included sexual immorality. Broadly defined, idols are anything or anyone (including themselves) that people put in God's rightful place in their lives. Following the Spirit's leadership inspires life-giving, life-sustaining worship of God. Following the lower nature's impulses results in false, powerless religion.

5:20b-21. Paul's third category of the flesh's works related to people's interactions. Significantly, he listed sinful attitudes, equating them with sinful acts. In so doing, he listed hatreds first. The Greek word means "hostilities" and has the idea of personal animosities. With the phrase and "anything similar," Paul lumped other obvious works of the flesh with those he had listed. He again gave the Galatians advance warning: People with lifestyles characterized by the works of the flesh will not inherit God's kingdom. Inherit means "to share in." The kingdom of God is His rule, the sphere of His grace. The tense of the word practice conveys habitual performance. People who consistently perform the works of the flesh are not following the Spirit and indeed are not Christians.

5:22-23. Paul contrasted the fruit of the Spirit to the works of the flesh. The word "fruit" refers to virtues only the Spirit can cultivate and bring to full growth in believers' lives. Human nature apart from God can perform works; only the Spirit can produce fruit. For purposes of study, we can place the virtues in three groups: Christian, social, and personal conduct. The first three virtues in the cluster of the fruit of the Spirit show that only God can generate and maintain His desired harvest in the lives of believers. The second group of virtues in the cluster of Spirit-produced fruit pertains to believers' relationships with others—their social virtues. The third group of virtues is made up of qualities that believers exhibit in personal conduct. Where the fruit of the Spirit is present, no law is necessary. One purpose of the law was to prevent evil, but Spirit-empowered

Christians not only fulfill the law in principle but go far beyond what it requires. The presence of the fruit of the Spirit removes the need for the law's restraints.

5:24. At the time of conversion, genuine believers put to death (have crucified) the old nature by the Spirit's power. Those who belong to Christ are people who have placed faith in Him. At conversion, the war with the flesh's passions and desires—evil prompting and cravings—has been won. Skirmishes between the old nature and the Spirit's leading continue, but believers' ultimate victory is assured.

5:25. The phrase "if we live by the Spirit" does not express doubt. The Greek construction expresses certainty: "Because we live by the Spirit." The Holy Spirit is the source of our new spiritual life, so we must also follow Him. The Greek word rendered "follow" means "to proceed in a row," "to go in order," thus "to walk" in another's steps. It has the further sense of moving toward a goal. Paul exhorted the Galatian believers to order their lives by relying daily on the Spirit's guidance. Doing so would result in a Christian lifestyle exhibiting exemplary attitudes and actions.

5:26. Paul ended this section of his letter with an exhortation. Literally, he called on the Galatian Christians to stop some destructive attitudes. These attitudes were products of the flesh; they were not evidences of living by the Spirit.

1 PETER 4:6-11

4:6. Those who are now dead seems to refer to deceased believers in Christ. When they were alive, the Gospel was preached to them. While on earth they were judged by men in the fleshly realm, or condemned and martyred on account of the Gospel. But they now live by God in the spiritual realm, heaven.

4:7-11. Peter commanded believers to maintain their unity while doing everything to God's glory.

4:8. The phrase love covers a multitude of sins means that love repeatedly forgives (Pr 10:12).

4:9. When being persecuted, it is easy to snipe and complain even at other believers; thus Peter's command to be hospitable to one another.

4:10. The words based on the gift each one has received refer to a spiritual gift. Spiritual gifts are divine endowments that God entrusts to believers as stewards.

4:11. Christians should manage and use their spiritual gifts to God's glory, just as God intends.

ROMANS 12:10-13

12:10. Only those who are living sacrifices to God (Rom. 12:1) could possibly carry out the exhortation to honor one another above yourselves. "Looking out for number one" may be a modern mantra, but it was written in the Garden of Eden. Considering others better than yourselves (Phil. 2:3) is just as offensive to the ancient carnal mind as it is to the modern one. Only a renewed mind can tell that it is the "good, pleasing and perfect will" (Rom. 12:2) of God. Paul's special commendation of the believers in Thessalonica for how they loved "the brothers throughout Macedonia" is worthy of note (1 Thess. 4:9-10), especially since Paul seems to indicate that they learned to do so from God (as opposed to a human instrument such as Paul or another apostle).

12:11. Here Paul touches a theme mentioned to the Corinthian church after a long exposition concerning the future resurrection of the body, the putting on of immortality for eternity. Though that is not the subject here, maintaining zeal in service is, especially in the face of persecution or partisanship. He told the Corinthians, "Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (1 Cor. 15:58).

12:12. While Paul refers to life in the church in verse 10 (referring to "brotherly love"), here is the first hint of persecution—Be ... patient in affliction. Only the believer who has made

a decision to be a living sacrifice can maintain zeal and patience in affliction. Joy in hope was a theme in Romans 5:2, as was prayer in Romans 8:26-27. Once again we see Paul going back to the doctrinal part of his letter and making application for the present situation. The knowledge that the Holy Spirit is able to intercede through us in times of trouble can be a lifeline to the other side of the quagmire.

12:13. Another evidence of a living sacrifice is a person who gives generously. Does sharing with God's people who are in need, and the exhortation to practice hospitality, refer just to materially poor believers in Rome, or to those who have been made poor or destitute through persecution and affliction? Here is a good example of a practice that has been mentioned as a grace-gift in some believers' lives—giving (v. 8) to meet the needs of others—being presented as a responsibility of the church at large. Certainly some believers have been gifted and resourced by God so as to be able to give more than others, but all believers have a responsibility to practice hospitality and meet the needs of God's people.

EPHESIANS 2:11-13, 19

2:11. Paul asked those who were Gentiles to review what their lives had been like at one time, that is, before their salvation. (Gentiles were those who were not Jews either ethnically or religiously. That is, they had not descended from the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and they were not under the Old Testament covenant.) The alienation between Jews and Gentiles was based on observable differences in the flesh of both groups. For example, Jewish males had been marked by the religious ritual of circumcision. This rite symbolized that they belonged to the covenant family. Gentile males had no such mark. This led to an easy way for Jews to indulge in name-calling.

2:12. The terrible Gentile condition extended beyond racial discrimination. They had been deprived of the spiritual blessings that Jews had enjoyed for centuries. Paul mentioned

five areas of deficit. (1) Were without the Messiah: the Jews expected a coming King who would rule the world in righteousness. Their Scriptures were clear, and the Gospels show that initially many first-century Jews readily welcomed Jesus because they expected their Messiah to come (John 1:41). (2) Excluded from the citizenship of Israel: the Israelite nation had been founded under God's direction. God was their true King. (3) Were foreigners to the covenants of the promise: God's covenants (solemn agreements) had been made only with Israelites, such as Abraham and David (Gen. 15; 2 Sam. 7). (4) Were without hope: therefore, Gentiles were without the hope that Jews had for the Messiah. Furthermore, they were without any hope of salvation or eternal life. Although God had planned to include Gentiles in His salvation, they knew nothing about it until they heard the Gospel. (5) Were without God in the world: the phrase without God also can be translated as "godless." The Gentiles had plenty of gods, but they were without knowledge of the one true God. They had no personal relationship with Him.

2:13. Paul had starkly reminded his Gentile readers that they had been hopeless and godless before their salvation. Or, as he put it in this verse, Gentiles had been far away from God. The words But now mark a transition. Because through faith Gentiles now are in Christ, the past deprivation is gone. They have now been brought near. Paul explained the means by which this happened: the blood of the Messiah. Only by the atoning death of the Jewish Messiah could Gentiles (or Jews, for that matter) come into a right and near relationship with God. In these verses Paul spoke both to Gentile believers ("you") and to Jewish Christians ("we"). He described how both groups have been joined together into God's new people.

2:19. The "you" language throughout this passage refers to those born as Gentiles. Such believers are no longer what they were. The word "foreigners" was a reminder of their previous deprivation as those "excluded

from the citizenship of Israel” (2:12). The term strangers was a reminder that Gentiles had no knowledge of “the covenants of the promise” (2:12). By contrast, in the new humanity Jews and Gentiles together are fellow citizens with one another in the kingdom of God. The saints may refer either to Old Testament people or to all believers in the church (1:1). If the term “citizens” suggests that Jewish and Gentile believers are part of the same kingdom, then members of “God’s household” means that both groups belong equally to God’s one true family.

