

1“PAYING ATTENTION TO ONE ANOTHER”

(Ephesians 4:2; 4:25; 4:32a; 4:32b; 5:19)

“With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.”

“Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another.”

“And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted.”

“Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”

Verse twelve of Ephesians four speaks of “the body of Christ.” That is one of the primary themes of the book of Ephesians—the church is the body of Christ. That figure cannot possibly be explored enough by Christians. Indeed, it is more than a figure, or an emblem, or a symbol. It is organic reality. The church of Jesus Christ is His own body. It is not merely *like* a body; it *is* His body. Then in verse sixteen, Paul mentions “the whole body” of Christ. In this chapter, Paul speaks of two aspects of the body of Christ. In the first part of the chapter, he speaks of the *larger, universal* body of Christ. In verse four, he says, “There is one body.” Then, in the middle portion of the chapter, he speaks of the *local* body of Christ, the local church. There he gives ideal instructions for the proper function of the local church

Jesus Christ operates in much the same manner in which you operate. You are an invisible, unseen personality contained within a visible, physical body. If you as an invisible personality are going to express yourself, you must do so through and by means of the body. So a person’s body is the vehicle by which he can express himself and accomplish his work. His body is the means by which he becomes *functional*. Anything he does (stand, sit, walk, talk, think, write, travel, etc.), he does by means of his body. His body is also the means by which he is *recognizable*. I recognize him by means of his body, and he recognizes me by means of my body. That is the reason when I see Joe Jones walking down the street, I don’t say, “Hey, there goes the *body* of Joe Jones,” although his body is all I see. Instead, I say, “There goes Joe Jones,” because I recognize him by his body. The same is true of Jesus Christ. His body, the church, allows Him to be active, visible and recognizable in the community where it exists.

So *each church is a mediator of Christ, because it is His Body*. Then there is a second powerful idea in Ephesians 4: *each Christian is a minister of Christ* as a member of His Body. Let me anticipate our study by stating a third principle, which is the basis for this study: *every contact a Christian has is to be used as a means of fulfilling his ministry*. Ephesians 4:12 says that the pastor-teacher of the local body is to “equip the saints (all Christians) so that they (all the

saints, all Christians) may do the work of ministering.” The pastor-teacher is to “fully furnish,” or “outfit,” all the saints to make them ready to do their job of ministering.

I. THE DIRECTIONS OF CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

What is “the work of the ministry” which Paul refers to? The work of the ministry is three-directional, or three-dimensional. My personal ministry as an individual Christian—not as a preacher, not as a pastor, not as a teacher, not as an evangelist, but as an individual Christian—is to go in three directions.

1. Ministry in an Upward Direction

First, I am to engage in an *upward* ministry, a ministry toward God. Acts 13:2 indicates that it was “as they (the church body in Antioch) *ministered to the Lord*,” that the Holy Spirit told them to set aside Barnabas and Saul to form the first traveling missionary team of the book of Acts and of the world Christian movement. Every Christian should “minister to the Lord” on a regular basis, day by day and moment by moment. This ministry includes hearing His voice, praising Him, adoring Him, worshiping Him, and prayer made to Him. Surrender to Him is called our “reasonable service” to Him (Romans 12:2). In short, our primary ministry to God is the ministry of *communion with Him*. This ministry is a response to our awareness of God’s goodness, mercy, love and grace in our lives. This ministry should be fulfilled both alone and in the local body, privately and publicly.

The Bible says that “God is love” (I John 4:8). That’s what God *is*. Love is foundational to God’s character, basic to God’s nature. There are other foundational characteristics in God’s nature as well, but we are here speaking of His love. The fact that God is eternally love raises a question. If love is foundational to God’s character, and God lived “in the Forever” before He created man and the world, whom was He loving *then*? The Bible teaches that God is a social community within Himself. He is a three-way unity within Himself, made up of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Theologically, this is called “the Trinity.” For all of eternity past (the “past” is from our finite perspective), in a network of relational exchanges, the Three Persons in the Godhood of God loved and enjoyed each other member within His Person *eternally*. The Father was loving the Son and the Spirit—forever. The Son was loving the Father and the Spirit—forever. The Spirit was loving the Father and the Son—forever. Because “God *is* love,” there was no depletion and no reduction of that love—forever. In that ongoing network of complete Self-satisfaction within the Nature of God, they loved One Another for all eternity.

Now the punch line of our message. I have in me right now—at this moment—One of those Persons of the Godhead. *Do you think that the Holy Spirit stopped loving those Other Two when He came down to get inside of me?* Never! The Bible says, “The Holy Spirit has broadcast the love of God (love *for* God) in my heart” (Romans 5:5). So my heart has been flooded with the very Love that God *is*! This happened the day I was saved. How I remember it! Suddenly, in the moment of my spiritual birth, my heart was filled with the love of God. I loved Him and everybody else, instantly. I have often said that I wished then for “rubber arms,” so that I could stretch them around every person on earth and carry them to Jesus so that they could experience what had just happened to me. I could simplify my life since that time by saying that it has been

a contest (sometimes an intense *conflict*) between God loving in and through me, and my own desire to have my own selfish way. When I defer to the Holy Spirit, my heart becomes a love chapel. But when I choose to have my own way as opposed to His, my life assumes an overload of misery. So the first dimension, the *upward* ministry, should be easy for any Christian. Indeed, it is only difficult if we refuse to defer to the loving Holy Spirit within us.

2. Ministry in an Inward Direction

Second, I am to engage in a *between-ward* ministry, an *inward* ministry, a ministry toward and among the saints. This is a ministry inside the Body of Christ. In I Peter 4:10-11, the Christian's personal ministry inside the Body is clearly spelled out. The theme of the passage is spiritual gifts, the God-given means by which we are to minister to each other in the Body.

“As every man has received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God gives; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ: to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever.”

Traffic those verses again—with interpretation. “As every man (there is the *individuality* and *universality* of spiritual gifts) hath received (there is the *sovereignty* of God in dispatching spiritual gifts; you do not achieve your gift, you receive it) the gift, even so minister the same one to another (there is the intended *utility* of the gift you have received), as good stewards (there is the personal *responsibility* for the gift you have received) of the many-colored grace of God (there is the great *variety* of the gifts Christ has given to His Body; they are like a multi-faceted prism). If any man speak, let him speak as the out-speaking, or the mouth-piece, of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God gives (there is the supernatural *ability* by which these gifts are to be used in the Body); that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ: to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever.”

Here is a virtual goldmine of wealth about spiritual gifts and about their use in the ministry of the saints in the Body of Christ. Remember, we saw:

The *individuality* and *universality* of the gifts,
the *sovereignty* of God in giving the gifts,
the *utility* of the gifts in the Body,
my personal *responsibility* to use the gift God has given to me,
the great *variety* of the gifts in the Body,
and the supernatural *ability* by which I am to use the gift God has given.

Note that the use of these gifts falls into two categories: some are *speaking* gifts, and some are *serving* gifts (I Peter 4:11). These two ministries are *between-ward*, or *inward*, ministries in the Body of Christ, and they are to occur through the regular use of spiritual gifts in the Body. That is the second dimension of ministry in which every Christian is to be daily involved. This study is directed toward this dimension of ministry. Let me merely mention the third and final dimension of ministry.

3. Ministry in an Outward Direction

Third, I am to engage in an *outward* ministry toward the outside world. Just as I am to have all three of these ministries—upward, between-ward, and outward, so is the entire Body of Christ. The Body should be daily engaging in ministries in all three directions, just as Jesus did when He was here in His own physical body. He ministered upward, between-ward, and outward in His *first* body, and He wants to do the same in His *present* Body. As a member of that Body, are you daily ministering upward, between-ward, and outward? If not, should you not “go into the ministry” today?

II. THE DYNAMICS OF AN INWARD MINISTRY

In this study, I am discussing particularly the second of those three ministries, the between-ward ministry. I want to call your attention in Ephesians four and five to five small sentences. They are bound together by one common denominator, the term “one another.” Actually, the term does not occur in the final text, but the idea is certainly there. In the Greek language, the term “one another” is just one word. You should become very familiar with these two English words, “one another,” which translate that one Greek word, because these two English words are used over thirty times in the New Testament to show us our between-ward responsibilities in the Body of Christ. In this study, we will examine only six of the many “one anothers” of the New Testament.

1. The “One Another” of Toleration

The first “one another” we will examine might be called *the “one another” of toleration*. Ephesians 4:2 says, “With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.” Lowliness (humility), meekness and long-suffering are supportive qualities that enrich and insure Christian toleration, and each of those words is a world in itself. The Williams translation of the New Testament translates the last phrase like this: “Lovingly bearing with one another.” The Phillips paraphrase says, “Making allowances for each other because you love each other.” Dear Christian, don’t hurry here! Prayerfully ponder the paraphrase again, asking God to let you clearly see it and completely apply it. That is normally the last thing in the world that occurs to us in interpersonal relationships. We react to others, instead of setting the pace in bearing with one another.

If I “make allowances for you,” I will give you room to stumble and fail, room to breathe, and limitless room to grow. While holding you accountable to the highest standard of Gospel holiness, I will still love you none the less when you fail. That is, I will grant to you maximum opportunity for overcoming, while making allowances for your failures. A friend sent me this great quote by E-mail recently: “Real friends are those who, when you feel you’ve made a fool of yourself, don’t feel you’ve done a permanent job.” These “real friends” are learning to “make allowances” for others.

I have seen this “one another” in a close-up demonstration recently. One of my dear friends worked closely in a disciple-making relationship with a young man who had been trapped in a very, very serious drug habit. His heart had been changed by the Holy Spirit, but the dread

habit, like an anchor, would seduce him to failure again and again. Each time, he would come back, remorseful and as repentant as he knew how to be. Each time, my dear friend would patiently work with him, walking him through all the processes of repentance, forgiveness and restoration. His history for a prolonged period of time was like a spiral, marked by some victory and much defeat. But my dear brother “made allowances” for him faithfully, patiently and compassionately. Slowly, he came out of the deadly pattern and steadied out in a walk with God. Some time later, he enrolled in a theological seminary, and now he is pastor of a local church in another state! I wish you could have traced this example as I have. My disciple-making brother “made allowances” for his brother without compromise but with incredible patience and compassion. Many people will be benefitted by his forbearance, though they will never know the cost in disappointment, disillusionment, patience, persistence, and compassion. But finally, the victory came! When I fail as a Christian, I want a friend like that.

Our verse indicates that we have four great allies to assist us in “making allowances for one another.” These four allies are like planets rotating around a central body. The four allies are “lowliness,” “meekness,” “long-suffering,” and “love.” “Lowliness” (humility) is actually the word from which we get our English word “tapestry.” We are to assume such a position of unassuming humility that we become as low as a rug on the floor, willing to be walked on to promote the welfare of the other person. “Meekness” means “consolidated strength,” or “strength brought under control.” Do you see how this characteristic is so necessary if we are to practice the “one another” of tolerance? We use the strength which, if untamed, would condemn and crush our failing brother, rather to accept and support him. “Long-suffering” is simply the ability or the commitment to “suffer with that person” in his weakness or failure for a long, long time. The word translated “forbear” here means to “hold back.” You hold back your inclination to judge and condemn him, making allowances as necessary. “Love” is the word for total self-giving love, the word that only seeks the highest good of its object. When you combine these five words together—lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, love and forbearance, you see the delicate action that is necessary in practicing the “one another” of toleration.

On several occasions, I have been in the high Andes Mountains of South America. I am told that when pack animals transporting burdens there meet on a narrow trail, one animal will get down on its knees and let the others walk over it, thus passing in safety. What a picture of “making allowances for one another.”

In I Corinthians 13:7, Paul said, “Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” There is hardly anything in the world more creative than one person believing in another. This verse seems to say that love is willing to go through a lot in order to preserve a relationship with the beloved. This is the meaning of this “one another,” the one another of Christian toleration.

2. The “One Another” of Communication

The second “one another” of Ephesians 4 is *the one another of communication*. Ephesians 4:25 says, “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another.” Notice the negative beginning of this verse. Lying has become a way of life to many Americans. Lies are as easily told, it seems, as truth. One

newspaper editorial lamented the present epidemic of lying with these words: “The curse of our legal system today is public perjury, lying under oath.” The Greek word for lying here is “*pseudo*,” which refers to falsehood and deceitfulness. The positive side of the mandate is to “speak every man truth with his neighbor.” Now, this does not mean that we have liberties to decimate the person under the pretense of telling the truth. Verse 15 of this chapter says that we are to “speak the truth in love.” There should be a delicate balance between conviction and compassion as we speak to or about others. If you speak conviction without compassion, you may severely damage the other person. If you share compassion without speaking conviction, you may give him license to sin.

The word “truth” should be noted, also. Two women were talking about a mutual third acquaintance. One said in awe, “Tell me *more*.” The first said, “Listen, I’ve already told you *more than I know*.” There is a difference between “truth” and mere accuracy. Many things are *accurate*, but they are not “truth” in a New Testament sense. Truth has moral dimensions to it. Truth has Gospel dimensions to it. Many things that are reported accurately still have nothing to do with “truth.”

Remember the analogy of the human body here. All the members of a human body are in constant communication with one another. This communication is a regular occurrence in a healthy body. The network for that communication is vast, including the bloodstream, the nerves, the sight-sound-mind exchange, etc. The same kind of sensitive communication should be occurring among the members of Christ’s body at all times. This is the “one another” of Christian communication.

3. The “One Another” of Compassion

The third “one another” mentioned in the text is *the one another of compassion*. Ephesians 4:32 says, “And be ye kind one to another.” The word “and” connects this statement with the preceding verse. In that verse (31), there are six deadly attitudes and actions that are the enemies of compassion. Those six things are like poisons that destroy the disposition of a Christian. The six mentioned things are “bitterness,” “wrath,” “anger,” “clamor,” “evil speaking,” and “malice.” Bitterness is a subtle attitude that quickly becomes a deep-set “root” in the heart (Hebrews 12:15). “Wrath” means an explosive display of bad temper. “Anger” is slowly rising, seething ill disposition which may burst forth in a show of bad temper. “Clamor” is loud speech which demonstrates an uncontrolled temperament. And “malice” is ill intent toward anyone, a viciousness of mind and disposition toward another. Obviously, these attitudes must be put aside if we are to take care of each other as Scripture commands.

“And be ye kind one to another.” My first pastor after I became a Christian had a plaque on his office desk which read, “Be kind, because every one you meet is fighting a hard battle.” The word “kind” is the basis for our word, “kindred,” or “kinship.” It seems to presume that members of the same family should be kindly disposed toward one another. That makes great sense, doesn’t it? If we are *kin* to each other, we ought to be *kind* to each other.

Years ago, I saw this wise counsel, “Beware of people who have *deep convictions* and *shallow sympathies*.” It is a fine art to find consistent balance between conviction and

compassion in the Christian life, but this is to be our constant quest. There are too many *good but insensitive* Christians. Mark Twain referred to them as “good in the worst sense of the word.” How we need an epidemic of true kindness among us in the body of Christ! Someone said of Henry Ward Beecher, the great preacher, “No one ever felt the full force of his kindness until he did Mr. Beecher an injury.” He had apparently learned the lesson of this great text. Henry Drummond, the great British scientist and warm-hearted Christian preacher, said, “The greatest thing a Christian can do for his heavenly Father is to be kind to some of His other children.” F. W. Faber, another great Christian communicator, said, “Kindness has converted more sinners than either zeal, eloquence or learning.”

Dr. Harry Ironside, who for years was the pastor of the great Moody Memorial Church in Chicago, traveled all over the country on preaching engagements after he retired. His wife often traveled with him. He was on one such trip one time, and he had preached four times in one day in Bible conferences in the same city. Late that night, they were driving to a nearby city where he was to preach again on the next day. As they conversed, he became irritable and spoke sharply and critically to his wife. She became very quiet in the passenger seat. The Holy Spirit spoke gently to him, and He quickly chose against himself. He said to her, “Honey, please forgive me, but you’ll have to remember that I have preached four times today!” She reached over and put her hand on his and quietly replied, “Honey, I understand, but *you’ll* have to remember that *I listened to you four times today!*” You see, everybody needs kindness from other people, and it is never acceptable to presume that we have a right to be unkind under any circumstance.

A Christian job foreman in an electrical business had an employee in his work force who knew that he was a Christian and was constantly testing his Christianity. He began to taunt the foreman, and the taunts became more and more intense as the foreman refused to react in anger or revenge. Others watched the demonstration of verbal venom from one man and the demonstration of Christian graciousness on the part of the other. One day, one of the other workers pulled the foreman aside and asked, “How do you take it? If it were me, I’d fire him so fast it would make his head swim! How do you do it?” “Oh, I’m just following a lesson I learned from the moon,” was the foreman’s puzzling answer. “*A lesson from the moon?*” replied the workman, “*What lesson from the moon? What does that mean?*” The foreman answered, “Yes, I was reading the Gospel of Matthew one day, and I came across the statement of Jesus that we are the light of the world. I remembered that He also said that, as long as He was in the world, *He* was the light of the world. I realized that He meant that He is the *sun* and we are the *moon*. He originates the light, shines it on us, and we reflect His light to those around us.” “Yes,” said the puzzled worker, “but what lesson did you learn from that for this situation on the job?” The foreman answered, “Well, I arrive home late from work quite often. I have a dog that is usually out in the yard when I arrive after dark. I noticed that every time the moon is out, that dog will sit on his haunches and bark loudly at the moon, as if he is angry with it. But then I saw my lesson. *No matter how loudly that dog barks at the moon, the moon just keeps on shining as if it never noticed.* The dog’s nature may be to bark, but the moon’s nature is to shine. I can’t speak for that other fellow; it may just be *his nature* to bark in anger. *But I’m a Christian, and my nature is to shine. I can’t let his bad spirit keep me from shining.*”

“Be ye kind one to another,” and don’t let anything make you stop. May God help us to consistently practice the “one another” of Christian compassion.

4. The “One Another” of Remission

The fourth “one another” of our text is *the one another of remission*, or forgiveness of one another. Ephesians 4:32 says, “Forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you.” The words “even as” means “exactly as.” What a standard! The pattern and standard for our forgiving each other is in God’s forgiveness of us for Christ’s sake. When we think of the just reasons God might have used for *not* forgiving us, and the gracious reasons He used *for* forgiving us, surely we can use the model of His forgiveness as our example, and the resources of His grace as our means, and forgive others when they sin against us.

A Christian should always regard himself as a *forgiven forgiver*. He can never be anything *but* a forgiver because his standard is always to be *God’s forgiveness of him*. Because God can be counted on to forgive, every Christian should be able to be counted on to forgive, also. God’s forgiving is a model of what can happen between two alienated human beings. The dynamics are the same. God shows the way. “God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you,” the text says. Even so, we are to “forgive one another.”

In fact, Jesus indicated several times that your willingness to forgive those who have sinned against you will determine your ability to *be* forgiven by God. This does not mean that you buy God’s forgiveness by forgiving others. It simply means that if you are bound by an unwillingness to forgive others, you are demonstrating that the forgiving grace of God has never been fully activated in your own life. The “forgiveness pipeline” is the same size whether coming in to your life (God forgiving you) or going out of your life (you forgiving others).

Do not misunderstand this matter of forgiving others. Let no one think that it is easy or automatic. God Himself struggled with the matter through the awful agony of a Cross, and you will likely struggle with it, too. A teacher asked in a Sunday School class, “What does a person have to do to be forgiven?” A sharp little boy answered, “Well, first, he has to sin!” Friends, sin is one thing when it is merely done, but it is another thing when it is seriously committed *against you*. Someone else’s sins look easy to forgive—until you are in the line of fire where the sin hits the target! But this is the whole point. A Christian should aspire not merely to the *practice* of forgiveness (maybe only a one-time act), but to the *spirit* of forgiveness (a lifetime disposition, and *likely a lifetime struggle*). One wise Christian said it this way: “He who would belong to the kingdom of love as a recipient must belong to it as an agent.” May God fill the Body of Christ with *agents* of forgiveness who make *good* agents because they know so well what it is to be *recipients* of forgiveness!

The need and the power of forgiveness are revealed with great poignancy in a short story by Leo Tolstoy entitled, “God Sees the Truth But Waits.” It is the story of a man named Aksenov, who, although innocent of the murder of which he is accused, is condemned to exile for life. For twenty-six years he lived as a convict in Siberia; no word ever reached him of his wife and children. “His hair turned white as snow, and his beard grew long, thin, and grey. All the mirth left him; he stooped; he walked slowly, spoke little, and never laughed, but he often prayed.”

Then one day among a band of new convicts Aksenov discovered Makar, the man who really committed the crime for which Aksenov had suffered. Makar was now exiled to Siberia for some petty offense. His real murder of a quarter-century ago is still undiscovered. At first Aksenov was filled with bitterness and vengeance in contemplation of his life that had been robbed from him. He tried to pray but he could get no peace. His hatred was so great that he could not go near Makar. One day, though, he suddenly had his chance to strike back. He discovered Makar digging an escape tunnel out of the prison, and had the power to turn Makar over to certain death from the governor of the prison. Makar threatened him but Aksenov retorted, "I have no wish to escape, and you have no need to kill me; you killed me long ago! As to telling the governor of you, I may do so or not, as God shall direct."

When the inquiry came, however, Aksenov only answered, "I cannot say, your honor. It is not God's will that I should tell! Do what you like with me; I am in your hands." After this Makar came begging for forgiveness: "Ivan, forgive me! For the love of God, forgive me! I will confess that it was I who killed the merchant, and you will be released and can go to your home."

Aksenov answered, "It is easy for you to talk, but I have suffered for you these twenty-six years. Where could I go to now? My wife is dead, and my children have forgotten me. I have nowhere to go . . ."

Makar did not stand up, but instead beat his head on the floor. "Ivan, forgive me!" he cried. "When they flogged me it was not so hard to bear as it is to see you now . . . yet you had pity on me and did not tell. For Christ's sake forgive me, wretch that I am!" And he began to sob.

When Aksenov heard him sobbing he too began to weep. "God will forgive you!" he cried, "Maybe I am a hundred times worse than you." *And at these words his heart grew light and the longing for home left him.* In spite of what Aksenov had said, Makar confessed his guilt. But when the order for his release came, Aksenov was already dead.

Between these two men, love had the last word and forgiveness prevailed. As forgiveness was expressed, old wounds of sin and evil were healed. As in the case of every sin, healing could not have come in any other way. Tolstoy grasped this fact firmly and clearly. *God does see the truth but even He waits for the grace of forgiving love to be grasped among men.* Both men in the story needed this grace. Aksenov needed to be healed of the sins of bitterness, hatred, and vengeance, no matter how "innocent" his suffering was. Makar, in turn, needed to be healed of the sins of pride and cruelty. The only way that healing could come to either of these men was by forgiveness. Only a forgiving love could reach and change Makar's cruelty; his heart was unreachable except by love. And only the act of forgiving could bring peace to the one who was wronged. Whenever relationships between people are mangled by sin as in this story, forgiveness is the only way by which these lives may be restored to wholeness again. This is something that goes beyond all systems of justice. The miracle (*miracle*) of grace prevails through *forgiven forgivers*, people who are *broken enough to forgive* because they know they are *great sinners who have been forgiven*. This "one another" is desperately needed in the Body of Christ, and when practiced, it unleashes great waves of the love and grace of God.

5. The "One Another" of Celebration

The fifth “one another” for our study is *the one another of celebration*. Ephesians 5:19-20 says, “Speaking to yourselves (the ‘one another’ idea) in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The entire statement has a high atmosphere of great celebration about it.

G. K. Chesterton was right when he said that “joyful celebration is the gigantic secret of the Christian.” Celebration is at the heart of God’s plan for human beings. The reason for this is that joy is at the heart of God Himself. The Bible calls Him “the happy God.” Jesus said, “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God . . .” Notice that the joy is not merely in the angels, but in their *presence*. The joy is in God Himself. “You will show me the path of life, in Your Presence is fullness of joy, and at Your right hands there are pleasures forevermore” (Psalm 16:11). A veteran pastor, speaking from years of trial and error, gave this counsel to his people, “Go out of the way to find the ‘joy pie’—and be sure to cut yourself a big slice.” You see, dear Christian, you are commanded to rejoice, and God would not command it if it were not possible.

It is of interest to note that Paul wrote letters to two Macedonian churches, the church at Philippi and the church at Thessalonica. In both cities, he was heatedly abused and persecuted, being driven from both cities by those who could not receive his message of grace and forgiveness. However, in both letters to those churches, I Thessalonians and Philippians, the note of joy is loudly sounded. In fact, the book of Philippians is often called “the epistle of joy.” Few things are more remarkable about the New Testament than this continual stress on joy. All information we have about the early church indicates that, from an outward point of view, there was little that could cause rejoicing. But they were “in Christ,” and they had learned the truth of His words, “Your joy no man taketh from you” (John 16:22). So the word “joy” and many of its derived forms occur with startling frequency throughout the New Testament. For example, the word for “grace” is from the root word for “joy.” Also, one of the words translated “forgive” is also from the same root. Dear Christian, the Christianity of the New Testament is absolutely permeated with the spirit of holy joy. Surely your circumstance today is not more difficult than theirs. Is your life permeated with joy? If not, the reason is one of sin and disobedience.

Samuel Shoemaker, a great evangelist, said, “I have heard a lot of Christians confess a lot of sins, but I have never heard even one confess the sin of sadness. Yet the sin of sadness is the breeding parent of many, many other sins. Most sins would never be committed if the Christian were rejoicing in the Lord.” Shoemaker added his opinion that the surest mark of a Christian is not faith, or hope, or even love, but the surest mark of a Christian is joy. “Joy,” he said, “is the infallible sign of the Presence and blessing of God.”

The English word, “celebration,” comes from a Latin word that means “to frequent” something, or to do that thing very, very often. This is what worship is. It is to frequently, repeatedly, regularly recognize and celebrate God — in a positive, thankful, praising, extolling, adoring way. And we are to do it “between-ward,” among ourselves, in the presence of one another.

6. The “One Another” of Submission

The final “one another” of our study (which I will only mention) is the *one another of submission*. This responsibility is not to be minimized because of my brief treatment of it. Hardly anything is more essential for the proper function of the Body of Christ. Ephesians 5:21 says, “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.” Verse 22 then says, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord,” but it is to be noted that the responsibility of the wife toward the husband is mentioned only after the responsibility of mutual submission has already been established. In fact, most of the responsibility addressed to husbands and wives is addressed to the husband, probably because husbands are more stubborn and less likely to submit, and because the husband’s assignment is bigger. If the husband takes the proper initiative in loving, leading, *and submitting*, everything else is likely to fall into place.

The word translated, “submit,” is a military term. It means to “rank yourself underneath,” as if to assume that the other person is your superior and you are his inferior. Christians are to do this *voluntarily*, and to do it “one to another,” regardless of rank, position, or tenure. Submission is the responsibility of *every Christian*, and the submission is to be practiced “one to another in the fear of God.”

Question: are you as comfortable when *you* are submitting *to another* as you are when someone *else* is submitting to *you*?

One committed Christian said, “I have tried all kinds of mission work. I have done community mission work, and home mission work, and foreign mission work — but the greatest mission work I ever did is *submission work*!” This is the most demanding work, and the most rewarding work, a Christian can do. If he doesn’t do it, he will finally be a part of God’s continuing problem. If he *does* do it, he will be a happy and useful part of God’s great *solution*.

A man was leisurely browsing through a bookstore one day while waiting on his wife as she shopped in a nearby merchandise store. She appeared in the aisle to tell him she had finished her shopping, and he started out of the store with her. But suddenly, his eye was arrested by the title of a book on the shelf. It was entitled *How to Hug*. He had developed a special interest in putting some romance back into his marriage, so he impulsively bought the book. When he arrived home and examined its contents, he discovered that the book wasn’t what he thought it was. Instead of a warm, romantic book, he had actually purchased a volume from an encyclopedia covering the alphabetized topics beginning with the word “how” and ending with the word “hug.”

Could it be that we often cause a similar disappointment in the Body of Christ? — a disappointment to God and to the brothers and sisters around us? On the surface, we seem to be offering a warm, personal, and gratifying experience. But I’m sure that people are often disappointed with the “one anothers” they see (or do *not* see) in the local Body of Christ where they attend.

Every Christian must make a lifetime project of these “one anothers” — the “one another” of Christian *toleration*, the “one another” of Christian *communication*, the “one another” of Christian *compassion*, the “one another” of Christian *remission*, and the “one another” of Christian *celebration*. And this is only the beginning! After the four Gospels, the

word translated “one another” is used 58 times in the New Testament. Paul uses it most — some 40 times. While many of the “one anothers” are repetitions, at least 22 different injunctions are given to believers in Christ.

George MacDonald, the great Scottish author, said, “Division has done more to hide Christ from the view of men than all the infidelity that has ever been spoken.” Lars Wilhelmsson said, “The united Body of Christ is God’s greatest weapon in fulfilling the Great Commission.” Surely the Body should be united in something so important. Don’t we owe it to Him — *and to “one another”*?

ADDENDUM # 1

Some years ago, I preached an extended series of sermons on the “one anothers” of the New Testament. My studies are reflected in the notes which I retained from the sermon preparation. Here are some of the notes.

The Christian life is a reciprocal life. (1) First, there is the Divine-human relationship, that of a Father and His child. (2) There is the brother-brother, brother-sister, sister-brother, sister-sister relationship. (3) There is the brother (a Christian) - other (whether an outsider or another Christian) relationship. Within the Body of Christ, these relationships are highlighted in the New Testament:

I. Commands Bearing upon Inter-relationships:

- (A) Love one another. John 13:35.
- (B) Receive one another. Romans 15:7.
- (C) Greet one another. Romans 16:16.
- (D) Have the same care one for another. I Corinthians 12:24-25.
- (E) Submit to one another. Ephesians 5:21.
- (F) Forbear one another. Ephesians 4:1-3. Colossians 3:12-14.
- (G) Confess your sins to one another. James 5:16.
- (H) Forgive one another. Ephesians 4:31-32. Colossians 3:12-13.

II. The Negative Commands:

- (A) Do not judge one another. Romans 14:13.
- (B) Do not speak evil of one another. James 4:11.
- (C) Do not murmur against one another. James 5:9.
- (D) Do not bite and devour one another. Galatians 5:14-15.
- (E) Do not provoke one another. Galatians 5:25-26.
- (F) Do not envy one another.
- (G) Do not lie to one another. Colossians 3:9-10.

III. Commands Bearing Upon Mutual Edification:

- (A) Build up one another. Romans 14:19. I Thessalonians 5:11.
- (B) Teach one another. Colossians 3:16.
- (C) Exhort one another. Hebrews 3:12-13.
- (D) Admonish one another. Romans 15:13. Colossians 3:16. I Corinthians 4:14).

IV. Commands Bearing Upon Mutual Service:

- (A) Be servants one to another. Galatians 5:13-14.
- (B) Bear one another's burdens. Galatians 6:2.
- (C) Use hospitality one to another. I Peter 4:7-10.
- (D) Be kind to one another. Ephesians 4:31-32.

(E) Pray for one another. James 5:16.

ADDENDUM # 2

The following is an adaptation of a story sent to me by a friend who “surfs the ’net” and sends things that speak to *him* to *others*. I commend him as an example to others.

Two farming brothers lived on adjoining farms. In 40 years of farming side by side, they had never had a serious conflict. But that changed suddenly in one day. A small misunderstanding between them grew into a major difference, and then it exploded into a bitter argument, followed by weeks of cold silence between them.

One morning there was a knock at John’s door. When he answered the knock, he found a man holding a carpenter’s toolbox in his hand. The man said, “Sir, I’m a carpenter, and I’m looking for a few day’s work. Do you have any small jobs on your place that I might help with?” “Yes,” John replied, “I do have a job for you. Do you see that creek running right over there?” He pointed toward his brother’s farm, and the property line between them. “Last week, there was only an open meadow there, but he took a bulldozer to the river levee, and now there’s a creek between us. He did this to spite me, but I’ll let you help me answer him. There’s a pile of lumber over by my barn. I want you to build an eight-foot fence just on this side of the creek, so I won’t need to see his place anymore.”

The carpenter said, “I think I understand the assignment. Show me the nails and the post-hole digger and I’ll do a good job for you.” John, the older brother, had to go to town for supplies, so he got the supplies ready for the carpenter and then he was off to town. The carpenter worked with great effort all day long, measuring, sawing, assembling, nailing. About sunset the farmer returned. The carpenter was standing exhausted over a finished job. The farmer’s eyes popped and his mouth fell open as he saw the result. *There was no fence there at all; instead, there was a bridge* — a bridge stretching across the creek. As the carpenter had promised, it was “a good job,” handrails and all. As the older brother stood shocked, his neighbor, his younger brother, approached the far end of the bridge, scratching his head with one hand and raising the other as if asking a question. The two brothers walked onto the bridge and met in the middle. The younger brother said tenderly, “I can’t believe you’ve built this bridge after all I’ve said and done. But I appreciate it. After all, it’s time we put this silly disagreement behind us. It was killing us and wrecking all those years of happiness we had spent together, anyway.” Each put out his hand to the other, and then they embraced each other with open arms.

They turned to see the carpenter lifting his toolbox and turning to leave. “No, wait!” called out the older brother, “I have a lot more projects around here that I need help with.” The carpenter answered, “I’d love to, but I have a lot more bridges to build.”

The Carpenter came to build the Biggest Bridge of all, the Bridge of open traffic between offending men and an offended God. He used the rough-hewn arms of a wooden Cross to build this Bridge, and any of us, though we are sinners, can go home to God by way of that Cross. Once we have crossed the Bridge ourselves, we are to “traffic” it all the time as the Carpenter’s Apprentices, not building walls between us and others, but pointing to the Big Bridge while building smaller bridges of communication between us and others. So be it — for the Carpenter’s sake, and for the sake of men needing to cross the chasm between themselves and God.