



Life in the Local Church, Part 3

Selected Scriptures

July 5, 2015

We've been in a study of the church and that's extended beyond May, beyond June, and into July. We are coming to the end of that study very soon, but we're taking the time that's necessary to, to really learn what the Bible teaches about our involvement here in the local church. Church is the fundamental institution that is vital to every Christian's sanctification. It's vital. We learned that the church's purpose is to be a pillar and support of the truth. We're the guardians of the truth here in the church. That's every Christian's responsibility and we do that together by reinforcing it together every Sunday we come. We also learned about the church's ordinances, the sacraments, you could say, of the church, baptism, and communion. We learned about discipleship and discipline in the church. We learned how every single one of us is to be underneath the discipline of the local church, its leadership; we're submissive to that because we want to grow as



disciples. We also learned about the nature of the church, its diversity. We're one body, many parts, all of contributing to the good of the whole and concerned about the whole.

The last few weeks we've been talking more and more about the church's ministry to one another, this what we're calling, basically, the ministry of self-edification, edifying one another. Essential to the church's edification, its up-building, its strengthening, is what we call the one another's of the New Testament. The one another's of the New Testament, these, these are commands in the New Testament that employ a little Greek word, *allélón*, which is translated one another. One another. Obeying these little one another commands, absolutely essential to the growth, the health, the strength of the church. We are a people, an assembly of people, that's called out from the world. We're distinct from the world. What we do in here is not understandable to the world. They think it's nuts. But what we're doing here is something revealed to us by God in his Word. It makes sense to us; it doesn't make sense to the world. It makes sense to us when people don't understand. It makes sense when what we do here is foolishness to them. We come together,



called out from the world, come together to fulfill a purpose, a disciple-making, truth-telling purpose.

We assemble together to practice these simple ordinances: baptism, that you saw last week, communion, the Lord's Supper. We assemble together to make disciples of one another. We assemble together to grow as disciples ourselves, learning the Word of God, growing in the truth. We gather together and assemble together for training, for discipline. We gather together for correction and instruction. We want to be corrected and we need to correct other people. We need to be instructed in the truth. We gather together for mutual edification, mutual encouraging, service to one another. And it's to that end, this gathering together, that God has filled the New Testament with these one another commands, these commands to serve one another, the commands that are to the gathered and assembled body of Christ, and when we obey those commands, the whole body benefits, and that's why we call these one another's, you might call them, reciprocating commands. Obeying these commands results in blessing and encouragement to everyone, because our obedience to the commands is practical, immediate service that strengthens the body of Christ.

We said there are about 60 of these one another commands in the New Testament. About a third of them have to do with loving one another. About a third of them command us to unity. A high percentage of the rest of them all have to do with humility. Love, unity, humility, those are the primary thrusts of the one another commands in Scripture. Love, unity, humility: If we break those commands down a little further or organize them in a different way, we can organize them, really, into categories of attitude and action. We've talked about that when we have an interest in this attitude of love, unity, humility. Those virtues are what govern our internal attitudes. These, love, humility, unity, as we have those washing through our minds, those things are going to become manifest to others in our external actions in what we say, what we do, how we act toward other people.

As we embrace our responsibility to obey those one another commands, as we actually obey them, as we actually put them into practice, we're going to become a healthy, productive church. We're going to experience what Paul describes in Ephesians 4:16, becoming a body that is joined and held together by every joint.

We're going to become a body where each part is working properly. We're going to become a body that grows and builds itself up in love. We're led by Christ. We're energized by the Holy Spirit. We're directed by the revealed Word of God, and as we are led by Christ, energized by the Spirit, directed by God and his Word, we're going to become a mature, mutually edifying church.

And with that in mind, we're going to finish our one another study today, and let me begin reminding you of the first two points we made about these external one another commands. This external behavior, as love, unity, humility, as they are coursing through our inner life and our thinking, they're going to become manifest externally. And we covered, we covered those internal attitudes already, but we're gonna, we're moving on to external actions. We started first by observing, just a couple weeks ago, observing the first category of eternal one another commands, and the first one is, we're to reinforce the truth with one another. We're to reinforce the truth with one another. We talked about that; reinforcing the truth involves talking with one another, talking truthfully with one another, talking from a biblical worldview. That's the worldview that permeates

our speech. Through that, we also encourage one another with the truth. We reinforce the truth also when we instruct each other, when we exhort each other with the truth, when we admonish each other with the truth.

We're also going to reinforce the truth when we, just as Gary was reading out of Colossians Chapter 3, we're going to reinforce the truth when we practice the truth, when we put it into practical effect in our lives, being "doers of the word, not mere hearers who deceive ourselves," but we're going to be doers of the word. We saw that fleshed out in Ephesians 5:18 where it says, "And do not get drunk with wine, which is dissipation," and debauchery, "but be filled with the Spirit." We're going to be filled with the Spirit and, really, out of Colossians 3 that Gary read, in Colossians 3:16, being filled with the Spirit is to be filled with the Word. To be filled with the Word is to be filled with the Spirit. As the Word, as the Spirit's authored Word washes through our lives, as it permeates us, as it saturates us, this is what comes out. Ephesians 5:19 says, we're addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, we sing and make melody to one another in our hearts to the Lord. We give thanks always. We become a thankful

people. We become people filled with gratitude for what God has done. "We give thanks always and for everything to God the father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Then it says this, we're also "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ." We submit to one another.

Paul unpacks that last phrase, "submitting to one another," in verse 21, Ephesians 5:21. He unpacks that little phrase in the rest of the letter. Wives submit to husbands, husbands love wives, children obey parents, parents raise children in the Lord, slaves are submitting to their masters, masters are treating their slaves with dignity and respect. So out of a, a life that is filled and saturated with the Word of God, out of that comes God-honoring marriages. Out of that comes healthy families. Out of that comes respectable, productive members of society. All of that flows out of a church that's filled with the Spirit and filled with his Word. That grows out of a church that reinforces the truth with one another, as it says in Ephesians 5:20, "Addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." That means our, our most elevated forms of speech, poetry, song writing, all that expressed in harmonic, melodic, joyful singing accompanied by skillful, excellent

musicians, all of that is going to provide an overwhelming testimony of the transforming power of the Gospel to watching world. We're going to have more to say about how to reinforce the truth with one another next Sunday. I promised you that I'd get practical about that. We'll get that next Sunday. You won't want to miss it.

Second external, externally focused one another command is this: We're to honor one another. We're to honor one another. We are to, Romans 12:10, we're to "outdo one another in showing honor." Outdo one another, that is, we are to esteem others, esteem other Christians highly. We're to treat them with dignity, respect. We're to consider them as weighty in our eyes, important in our eyes, and give them honor. And as we said, just practically speaking, how do we do that? We can start simply by getting to know one another. Just get to know folks. That's really what the last two of the little fellowships we've had out on the lawn, that's what it's been about. Just trying to bring people together so we can get to know one another. Go further with your own personal life, invite people over to your home. Or if your house is messy and you don't feel comfortable with that, invite yourself to somebody else's home. I mean, if you want to

do that, see what their house looks like, get into their business, you know, just whatever. Just make it happen. Get together. I have been actually just thrilled to hear how this is going on more and more. How people are getting together outside of the church, outside, you know, during the week. Listen, that's just normal Christian living, getting together like that.

God is going to use all of our investment in building relationships; I guarantee it. He is going to use the investment as we build relationships with each other. This concept of honoring, receiving, welcoming one another, bringing them close, as it says in the Scripture, "Greeting each other with a holy kiss," so to speak, this is the glue that's going to bind us together. This is the cement that holds our life as a church together, honoring each other. In fact, being committed to honoring one another, that's what's going to bring all kinds of different people together. We're all very, very different people, different backgrounds, different personalities, different experiences. How is all that held together? How is it we don't fracture and divide into our little camps? Well, it's God by his Spirit, by his Word, by his truth, and us energized to honor one another, appreciating each other. This is actually

what brings the generations together, as well, so we don't fracture and divide like the rest of our culture does, the rest of our culture that pushes the old into the grave.

Here in the church, we don't do that. You know what? We appreciate those who are older, those who have wisdom, because we need their wisdom. We need to learn to count these relationships here in the local church as the most important relationships in our lives. Older serving the younger, giving up their wisdom, teaching the younger. The younger serving the older, appreciating them and honoring them. These are the relationships that we need to build and strengthen. They need to be the most important because these are the ones that are going to last throughout all of eternity. We're going to be together, beloved, together all eternity. So let's learn together to honor one another for the sake of Christ, okay?

So reinforce the truth, honor one another. Let's go to a third external action, a third external reaction. It should be there in your bulletin. The third thing: We need to serve one another. We need to serve one another. A number of the one

another commands in the New Testament I've organized underneath this heading, serve one another. And let me start by just reading some of them for you, making a couple comments, but serving one another. A couple of the one another's say plainly, just plain, serve one another. Galatians 5:13 says, "you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love," here it is, "serve one another." Serve one another. First Peter 4:10, "And as each has received a gift, use it to serve one another," use it to serve one another, "as good stewards of God's manifold," or God's varied, "grace."

Another way of saying serve one another comes from 1 Thessalonians 5:15, slightly different focus there in 1 Thessalonians 5:15, but Paul writes there, "See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to," here it is, "do good to one another," seek to do good to one another, "and to everyone." So we're not only talking about one another here in the local church, but seek to do good to everyone, even outside the church. The command to do good, pretty much synonymous with serve one another, but it really is focusing the attention on the goal of serving, which is *agape* love. We talked

about that, right. Agape love: Our service to one another is not beneficial unless it's aimed, directed at, what is truly good for somebody else. So we're to serve one another, but with their ultimate spiritual good, or their immediate practical good sometimes: all of that is in the forefront of our minds and we need to be intentional about this. We need to be directing our energies, our efforts in serving toward their good. That's loving.

Several of the serving oriented one another commands in the New Testament, they get a little more specific and then they start to get uncomfortable for us because they force us out of our comfort zone. Galatians 6:2, Paul says, "Bear one another's burdens." There's another one another command. "Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." The law of Christ is summed up in "be loving one another," right? That's the law of Christ. It's to love one another, and you're going to do that when you bear one another's burdens. Obeying that command, that involves some investment, doesn't it? That requires some time, energy, to bear burdens. First, we've got to understand the nature of the burden. Then we have to assess all that biblically. Then we have to enter in to that with

compassion and sympathy. We need to take up somebody else's weight. We need to understand the weight first, and then we need to take it up, so we're actually truly helpful to other people. We need to help them shoulder the load. Right? And sometimes, it's not just a practical, I need a meal, I need some clothing, or something like that. It's not that. Where it really gets tricky is when you enter into their burdens, which are spiritual, when you enter into their fears, when you enter into their anxieties, when you enter into their disappointed hopes, when you enter into the loss of a child, a loss of a friend, a loss of a loved one. When you enter into that, that's bearing burdens.

Another of these is in 1 Peter 4:9, it's one of these service-oriented one another commands. 1 Peter 4:9 says, "Show hospitality to one another," and get this, "Without grumbling." Without grumbling. Anyone who opens their home to others understands this. Allowing people to stay with them, even just having someone over for a meal, there's a lot that goes into that. There's a lot that stretches, hospitality stretches you, it starts to expose your selfishness, and that's where the, without grumbling, thing comes into play. I don't like to see

that. That's kind of ugly. You start to look in the mirror of God's Word and realize you've got some growing to do. We need to grow in our selfless service to other people, and Peter says do that by showing hospitality to one another. Look, if you're not inviting anybody into your home, if you're not bringing anybody near, if you're not giving of yourself to them, start to look at yourself in the mirror, ask some hard questions. Why is that? What is it in my life, in my thinking, that is preventing me from showing hospitality?

One more of these little service-oriented one another commands. This one gets pretty invasive. I'll be frank with you. It's entering into the intimate personal spaces of our lives. Paul gives a very short one another command in 1 Corinthians 7:5. He says, "Do not deprive one another." Do not deprive one another. Do you know what that's referring to? Here's the context. That's talking about marital intimacy. Both the husband and the wife are not to deprive one another. They are to consider their own bodies as belonging not to themselves, but as belonging to their own spouse. Look, that gets really personal, doesn't it? It gets really invasive. It enters right into your home, right into your marriage. And we need to embrace the fact,

folks, that there is no territory in our lives that is off limits to God and his Word. God has the right, as your Lord, to speak into everything in your life. He can get into your home. He can get into your thinking. Even your thoughts are not your own thoughts. Your feelings, you don't have a right to feel whatever you want to feel. God commands your allegiance in everything. His command reaches into our private lives and this is where this issue of serving one another hits about as close to home as you can get, right there in the marriage relationship, right?

Now, all those specific commands, all of these are going to grow out, they're going to stem from, they're extensions of Christ's most fundamental command, Love one another. That's why back in Galatians when Paul said, "Bear one another's burdens," he said, "And so fulfill the law of Christ." The law of Christ. What is the law of Christ? It's to love one another. It's to love one another. This attitude of love it's going to produce an action of love. If it's an attitude only, just some warm sentimental thoughts about somebody else, that's not love if it's not accompanied with action. It's got to show action. If there is no action, you know what? There is no love. Jesus said

in John 15:12, "This is my commandment that you love one another," and get this, "as I have loved you." His life, his love is an example to us, right?

John 13:34, in fact, turn in your Bibles back to John 13. I want to show you something there, John 13. But as you turn there, listen to this. We want to set Jesus' example before us in how he loved because that's the comparison, "As I have loved you." John 13:34, Jesus said much the same thing. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another." And says it again, "just as I have loved you, so also you are to love one another." He's getting emphatic about this point. Twice he gave the command, "Love one another." John 13:34, John 15:12, twice he pointed to his own love as the basis of the comparison. That's the standard. You're to love one another "as I have loved you." Right?

If you're there in John 13, let me get there, as well, John 13. Look at John 13, verse 1. I want to show you there. It was before the Feast of the Passover when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the father, so he's,

he's anticipating just in a few hours his crucifixion, his arrest, just this kangaroo court of a trial that he went through before Rome, before Herod. He's about to go through that. He's about to go through suffering that we can't even imagine. He's about to be put on the cross, and not just the physical suffering, but then the, the spiritual, the psychological suffering of having the father not come to his deliverance when he had every expectation of that.

So he knew his hour had come, verse 1, "to depart out of this world, to the father, having loved his own who were in the world," that is, his disciples there, "he loved them to the end. During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that his father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from the father and was going back to God, he rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him." Stop there. The way Jesus loved is the standard by which we measure our love. That's the example that is our standard set by Christ. We need to love in

that way. Verse 1 says, "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end." That's what my translation says there in the ESV. He loved them to the end, *eis telos*. He loved them to the uttermost. He loved them to the fullest extent. He didn't hold anything back in loving them.

The Apostle Paul helps us grasp the significance of what Jesus did there for his disciples that night in the Upper Room. In Philippians 2:5-7, he writes this, "Have this mind among yourselves, which was yours in Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God." Stop there for a second. Though he's "In the form of God." Look there in your text, there, verse 3, John 13:3, "Jesus, knowing that the father had given all things into his hands." Jesus has all authority, all power, all honor, all things are given into Jesus' hands and that he had come from God and he was going back to God. Jesus knew where he had come from, where he was going. He was face-to-face with the father. What does he do? Philippians 2:5, 6 and 7, "Though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God as a thing to be grasped," or held onto, or clutched onto, "but he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant." The Greek word there is *doulos*. He took the form of a slave, a lowly slave. He took up a

towel, filled a basin with water, stooped down, washed dirty feet; is that incredible? I mean the, the highest that you can go is God himself and Jesus is God. And he was face-to-face with the father and then he comes down. The lowest you can go is to wash dirty, stinking feet in the Middle East. That's the lowest form of service and slavery. It doesn't seem fitting, does it, to see the Lord of the universe to stoop to take the form of a slave? It doesn't seem fitting, does it, that he would stoop down and wash the filthy feet of proud, dull-hearted, argumentative disciples, but he did. He did.

You know what, Jesus went even further than that. His love was not only demonstrated in the superficial cleansing of dirty feet, but his love became manifest deeply, very deeply in fact, in the next verse. Philippians 2:8 says, "He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." There's no more humbling, more exposing death than to die on a cross, stretched out, all your power taken away, all your dignity taken away, stripped away, and you're exposed, bare before the watching, mocking world. Jesus' love went to the very bottom of the barrel, dealing with the most profound defilement of mankind, the ugly stain of human sin, your sin, my sin. That

sacrifice is our salvation through penal substitution. But that sacrifice has also become our example.

So there in John 13, skip ahead to verse 12. Take a look at verse 12, "When Jesus had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, 'Do you understand what I have done to you? You call me teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done to you.'" Stop there. Jesus' command to us to love one another, it's based on his own example of loving us. That's what he said. You should do just as I have done to you. The way Jesus loved is the standard. His example is the example we follow. His example is the goal we continually pursue.

Now clearly, we can't replicate the kind of love that Jesus demonstrated on the cross. We are utterly unqualified for that. We are eternally, infinitely unqualified for that, but that is the good news of the Gospel. It's not up to us. In fact, turn

over to Romans chapter 10, Romans chapter 10, Romans 10 in verse 5, this good news of the Gospel is that it's not up to our striving, it's not up to our attaining, it's not up to our own self-atonement, it's not up to our own good works, it's all up to God. It's up to Christ. He did what we cannot do, and that is the good news of the Gospel. Look what Romans 10:5 says, "For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them." You want to be righteous according to the law? Do all the commandments. Do them perfectly. Do them internally and externally without fail. Don't even falter in one command for one second, even in your thinking. Okay, we've all blown that.

So Moses says, the righteousness is based on the law, if you want to get righteousness based on law, you've got to do everything perfectly. "But," verse 6, here's the good news, "The righteousness based on faith says, 'Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?" (that is, to bring Christ down) 'or "Who will descend into the abyss?"' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)." So don't say in your heart, how am I going to attain all the law? No, Christ came for that very purpose, to attain the law. He's the one who fulfilled

everything on our behalf. Don't say in your heart either, how am I going atone for my own sin? That's to bring Christ up from the dead. You know what? He already did that. So don't try to do that. Don't try to think about that on your own, how am I going to atone for my sin? How am I going to pay the penance or the penalty required? How am I going to do enough good works to atone for my sin, to cover it over? Don't do that. Christ has already been risen from the dead. That means he died as a perfect sacrifice. God raised him from the dead showing his approval of that sacrifice. That's been accomplished. That's been accomplished. Don't try to do this yourself.

"But," verse 8, "what does it say?" What does the Scripture say? This is in Deuteronomy, quoting from Moses, "'The word is near you, it's in your mouth and in your heart.'" That is, the word of faith that we proclaim; because "if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." That is just a summary statement of the Gospel right there. As we unpack that, we believe in that, we confess it with our mouth, we profess it, we cling to it; you will be saved. He'll save you. "For with the heart," verse 10, for the heart, "one believes and

is justified," that is, declared righteous by God. "And with the mouth one confesses and is saved." For the Scripture says, 'Everyone,' that is everyone without exception, "'Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.'" Stop there. Do you believe in him? You will not be put to shame. Isn't that a comfort? That's Gospel, folks. That sacrifice by Jesus Christ has already been performed. The fulfillment of God's perfect law has already been accomplished, so don't say in your heart, how am I gonna ascend to heaven with my good works? Don't say in your heart, how am I gonna get down to the very depths below and atone for my sin? Already been accomplished, already been performed, already accomplished, already accepted by God. Trust, believe your redemption has been accomplished. Romans 6:10, "The death he died he died to sin, once for all," one time.

Christ's death on the cross is not a repeatable sacrifice, which is why the Roman Catholic mass is such a blasphemous abomination and a blow against the sufficiency of Christ's perfect atoning death. It offends Jesus Christ whenever the mass is performed. We can't die for someone else's sins. We can't perform this thing over and over. We can't make salvation happen. Only God in Christ could do that, and that said, that

said, we still look to Christ's sacrifice as our ultimate example, not of atoning for our own sins, not of atoning for somebody else's sins, but an example of love. Here's what love looks like. Here's what love did. In serving one another, we look to the sacrificial life and death of Christ. The way he served us has become the gold standard of how we serve one another. Let me ask you, would you be willing to die to save the life of one of your brothers and sisters in Christ? Would you? Look around the room. Look to each other. Look to your right, to your left. Would you die for that Christian man or that Christian woman next to you?

This weekend we've celebrated the Fourth of July. It's our nation's Independence Day. You know what all those pretty fireworks are meant to signify? They are meant to remind us of sacrificial service. That's expressed beautifully in our national anthem, *The Star-Spangled Banner*. "The rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air, gave proof through the night that our flag was still there." The purpose of rockets and bombs is not to make pretty lights for a festive crowd as they chow down hotdogs and drink Pepsi. That's not the point. Rockets and bombs, they bring death and destruction. They kill people.

People gave their lives for this country. People gave their lives for one another on the battlefield. You know what? They're still doing it. The light generated by those weapons, the light that killed close friends, that light illuminated the reality of sacrifice that united this young nation, that brought it together. That light illuminated a flag that represented this nation's unity, it was still flying overhead. Beautiful picture, isn't it, in our Star-Spangled Banner. Sobering picture, too.

Jesus said John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." You ask any soldier on the battlefield and say, why would you die for your friends? Why would you die? Why would you die out there on the battlefield? They'll say, I'll die for my country or they'll say most often, I'd die for the guy to my right and the guy to my left. "Greater love has no one that his, that someone say down his life for his friends." Serving one another through ultimate sacrifice, giving our lives Christians; would we do that for one another, if push came to shove? Would we do that? Listen, let's lighten it up a little bit here, okay? If we compare our acts of service with the ultimate act of love and service dying for one another, pretty much everything else we could do in the church,

is pretty much pales by comparison, right, pretty tame. I mean, sure I'll teach the K-3 Sunday school class, sign me up. I'll clean up after the barbecue. I'll help counsel someone who is struggling in their marriage. I mean no one's shooting at you, right? Get to work. Fine, no problem. Next to giving our lives to serve one another, everything else is just a piece of cake, right?

We can, Galatians 5:13, use our freedom in Christ not for our own pleasure, but to serve one another. We can, Galatians 6:2, bear one another's burdens. Why wouldn't we? We love. We can, 1 Peter 4:9, show hospitality to one another and without grumbling. We can, 1 Peter 4:10, use our gifts to serve one another because we want to be good stewards of the grace God has given to us. Husbands and wives, can, 1 Corinthians 7:5, give themselves to one another fully, intimately, sacrificially. Jesus expects us to humble ourselves in love, to serve one another in love even in the lowliest acts of service. In fact, we could even say, especially in the lowliest acts of service. If you think about it, any act of sacrificial service for one another, this isn't a burden to us. It's a joy. Look, look to Jesus, Hebrews 12:2, "The founder and perfecter of our faith,

who for the" what? "joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and he's seated at the right hand of the throne of God." You know what? It all worked out well for Jesus in the end, didn't it? What looked like an ultimate failure was actually an ultimate victory, and Satan didn't know it. He fell right into the trap.

Why did Jesus endure the torture, the cross, the shame, the slander, the mistrial? Why did he go through all that? Joy. For the joy set before him. He knew the joy of pleasing the father, and he is now experiencing the reward of the father, sitting in the highest place of honor, at the father's right hand. You know people, people serve in the church for all kinds of reasons. Not all of them are good reasons. Some serve to alleviate their guilt, to remove some burden of conscience they have. Some people serve to create a certain perception about themselves. Some people serve to earn favor, they're man-pleasers and so they just want to do whatever somebody says, they want to put themselves under somebody. Some people do it out of pride. They want pride of place, pride of title, pride of influence, whatever. Some people do it out of some kind selfish ambition. Some people just do it out of fear, fearing what God's going to

do if they don't or whatever. Jesus doesn't want any of that for us. What Jesus wants for us is to learn to serve like he did, for the joy set before him. Serving one another is the greatest freedom and joy and satisfaction we can ever find in life. And get this, Christ is commanding us to pursue it. He's commanding it, to find our joy in serving one another. So we serve from hearts filled with gratitude in what God has done for us. We serve with hearts filled with joy. We serve because we have compassion on people in need. We love them. We serve out of a desire to please God because we want to obey Christ's commands and follow his example. Those are all very good reasons to serve one another. There's joy in duty.

Just one quick illustration of that over in Luke's Gospel. You can turn there if you want to, Luke 4:38 and 39, or just listen. It's a simple illustration, very short, but one you might easily miss if you're reading over it quickly. It's a picture of, really, the simplicity of Christians serving one another. This is kind of how it goes. It says that Jesus "arose and he left the synagogue and he entered Simon's house." Simon is Peter, the Apostle Peter. He entered Simons' house, "Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they

appealed to Jesus on her behalf. And he stood over her, rebuked the fever, and it left her, and immediately she rose and began to serve them." How about that? Peter's mother-in-law, okay, wait. Just a footnote. Proof that Peter was married, by the way, okay. Therefore, not celibate. Therefore, not the model for the papacy. Okay, but that's another story, another sermon. I won't go there.

Peter's mother-in-law here, sick with a fever, which in those days a fever could very easily and very often did lead to death. Jesus heals her. And the text says, immediately, she sat back, relaxed, and got a Pepsi. No, it doesn't say that; "She rose and began to serve them." I mean, interesting reaction, isn't it? She didn't just sit back and relax, get some iced tea and chill. She didn't do that. She jumped up and she started serving. What compelled that? Well, the text doesn't spell it out exactly, but we can fill it in with what we know from the rest of the New Testament. We can fill it in from what we know from our own experience of having Jesus heal us of every malady, starting with our sin. What, what, what is our reaction? Joy, gratitude, love. When you consider what Jesus has done for you, when you really think about it, what it cost, what he saved you

from, what selflessness he demonstrated, don't you want to rise up and serve others, as well? Look, as a church, let's commit to this, to embracing this mindset, which was also in Christ Jesus. Let's do the lowly tasks, stooping low before one another, figuratively speaking, being willing to take one another's dirty feet in hand and wash them with soap and water. Why wouldn't we?

Folks, that is counter-cultural, that is absolutely revolutionary in this day and age. They're talking right now about the sexual revolution, and they're celebrating the sexual revolution in our country. You know what? That's no revolution. That's just what everybody's doing. That isn't, that isn't counter-cultural. That isn't revolutionary. That's just following along like a lemming wandering off a cliff, destroying yourself. This is revolutionary living, right here. This is counter-cultural. The tide of the culture is overwhelmingly self-centered, self-pleasing, self-gratifying. We're told all the time, it's all about you. It's all about you and your interests, your creativity, fulfill your dreams, your ambitions. That worldly attitude walks in this church, through the doors of every church, every Sunday, and you know what? It gets up and walks right out again when it finds it's not being pleased and

it's not being catered to. Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." For every true Christian, it is not about self. It's about serving Christ. It's about serving each other. We serve Christ by serving each other.

We're seeing that right here, folks; such an amazing examples of joyful service and sacrifice all through our Vacation Bible School Week, all through our church fellowships that we've had in the last couple months. So encouraging to see that. You know what? Excel still more. Excel still more. So you ask, what else needs to be done around here? I'm glad you asked. I've got a few very practical, very immediate applications. You can apply this right away. You can get to work, okay? Write these down. Okay, write it down. It won't be hard to remember, but write them down anyway. Main purpose of the church is to make disciples, right? Starts with evangelism, continues with edification. We spread the good seed of the Gospel. We baptize those in whom the Gospel takes root. We teach them so that they'll grow up out of that seed of the Gospel. They'll bear fruit. That's the pattern. We all need to be involved serving here in the church in the disciple-making process.

You know where that could start? With the youngest, most fertile opportunity in our midst, young people. Our children represent a wide open field of evangelistic opportunity. These kids come into the church every Sunday, and we get the opportunity to share the Gospel with them, to show them what love and care of Christ looks like. We get the opportunity to expose them to that, to expose them to Scripture, teach them the storyline of the Bible, help them memorize verses. Children's Ministry needs some help once a month. Once-a-month help. Just 12 times a year. Twelve times a year. Pretty entry-level commitment, right? But it's amazing the kind of dividends that investment is going to pay. We need just one teacher. I believe I'm right about this. I haven't checked with Monika recently. I think maybe things have changed, but check with her. We need to one teacher to lead our youngest children in the truth, just again, just one a month. Preschool, K through 3 kids.

We also need some once-a-month helpers, that is, no formal teaching, just guiding the kids, helping with crafts. Need a couple helpers just one a month in the toddler room. We need three of those once-a-month helpers in the preschool room, so basically, one teacher, five helpers. I think I have that right.

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We also need substitutes for the Sunday School rooms. Lots of substitutes. In fact, every single one of you should be a substitute, okay, unless you've got a broken back or you've got some kind of a health issue. Look, we need substitutes because we need people standing in the gap for our regular folks who can't make it for some emergency. Okay?

So Mark Alexander, Monika Walker, they can tell you all about that. Is Mark here? Mark's right back there. So stand up, Mark, so people can see you. That is Mark Alexander. He's the elder overseeing all the Children's Ministry and stuff. So Monika, I believe, is away with Mike for the weekend, but, but Mark is the guy you want to talk to for, if you see him this Sunday. We need your help. We need to take advantage of this precious stewardship the Lord has given us in these children.

If you don't connect as well with the youngest ones, consider serving the students in our midst. Student: middle schoolers, high schoolers, college students. Dan Allen over there and Bret Hastings, these are the guys who are overseeing that. They'd be happy to talk with you. Bret, stand up. You've

seen him this morning. He opened the service. But there's Bret Hastings. If you're new to our church, talk to them, see if you'd be a good fit for that ministry.

On the other end of the age spectrum, our Seeds of Grace Ministry started this spring. It's gaining momentum. These folks are spending time every couple of weeks getting to know one another, they're praying for people. They're visiting people in need. Every single night of the VBS, we had people here from Seeds of Grace who were spending time in the library just praying. Praying for the teachers. Praying for the kids. Praying for the whole event. Praying for the Gospel to take root. And that is an awesome ministry right there. That is awesome. So talk to those people. They're bringing the generations together, older with the younger, younger with the older. They're involving people in some very practical ministries. You can see Andy Nielsen or Bob Spykstra. Are you guys here? Andy or Bob? Okay, there's Andy right over there. He's raising his hand. Bob, where are you? There you go. Right there. Bob, Andy. So see those guys and talk to them about the Seeds of Grace ministry, and even if you can't come to their Seeds of Grace events, which

are held during the day, because you have work or something, talk to them because they have other things you can do. Okay?

Brad and Debby are over there in the Coffee Shop, and they're just drowning in coffee and lattes. Okay? They need some help. They need some workers in there. But you'll be able to serve a very important need, such as keeping you all awake for Sunday morning. I need that. If you're not hearing something that fits, or you have another interest, come talk to me, come talk to one of the elders. It would be our pleasure, our joy to serve you in helping you think these things through, finding opportunities to serve and to work in the church. We've got a lot more coming here at our church. We've got a lot more ministry to do, to conduct. We're going to reach out with this Gospel ministry around this city, around this region. We have a lot of work to do, you guys. You don't even know what we're planning as elders. We're sitting there conniving and conspiring and figuring out how we're just going to take over the whole state with Christ and his Gospel, and you're all a part of that. Okay?

Look, the time is, I've got to stop. We have one more point that I didn't cover, but I'm just going to kind of tell you what the point is, and then we're going to move on. The fourth point is that we need to deal with sin. When we are serving in the church, when we're bumping up against each other, you know what is going to happen? Our sin is going to become exposed. So we need to deal with our sin. We need to deal with our sin, preemptive strikes in our own heart, mortifying sin all the time, but then when we do sin, when the sin does spill out, we say something we shouldn't have said or whatever, when we offend, we need to go and confess our sins to one another. We need to ask forgiveness of one another. We need to seek reconciliation. And you know what? When someone seeks reconciliation from you, you know what you've got to do? You've got to forgive, you've got to forgive, because Christ has forgiven you everything.

So that's the summary of the entire point, and we, we won't, we won't continue all that right now. Here's one thing I want to say in closing. We've spent, you know, a good three weeks on these one another commands. These, these commands are so important. Like I said, they deal with attitude and action.

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They deal with love, humility, unity. They deal with the truth, reinforcing it with each other, honoring each other, bringing us together in service. Even when we sin against each other, confessing sins, dealing with sin; so important because all of this is key to the body life of the church. We need to become a church that is permeated with these one another attitudes: love, humility, unity. We need to become a church that is characterized and busy with good things, these one another actions.

And a quick question for you as we close. If you were to pick just one of these categories that we've been going through, just one category, and make it the foundational emphasis whenever we come together as a church; if you could only pick one thing to emphasize every time we come together as a church, what would you choose to emphasize? Now, let me go through them again: internal attitudes, internal one another commands, love one another, humble yourself before one another, be united to one another and then you've got the external one another actions, the commands: reinforce the truth with one another, and we said there was a lot to that. Right? Honor one another, serve one another, and deal with your sin with, sin with one another,

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Deal with sin. All of those are important. Some are elevated in importance in Scripture, right? Which one of those is foundational? Which one of those must you have and without which you cannot build any of the rest? Which one of those is a platform for everything else? Which one builds, strengthens, informs, and stirs up and provokes everything else? Think about your answer. Okay. Think about it. You can even discuss it among yourselves. Come back next week and I'll give you my answer. Okay? That will be the subject for next week's sermon.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, just want to thank you for this morning, thank you for what you're doing in our church. So exciting to see the lives that are changing and touched by your Word. Thank you for the great celebration we had last Sunday in baptisms, participating in the Lord's Supper together, to acknowledge his death for our sins. We thank you for the meeting we had, the fellowship that we had. We thank you for even the opportunity to talk about things going on in this nation that are important to us, and to realize the strategic importance of this local church and every other local church that is honoring your Word and upholding Jesus Christ. We just ask, Lord, that you'd help us to honor you, to honor him, to honor the Gospel,



to be clear about it and help others to come to the saving
knowledge of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray, amen.