

*Woods Chapel
Bible Fellowship*

May 14, 2006
Worship Service

“God’s One Anothers”

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Selected Scriptures

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. It has been several years ago now in a most unlikely place that someone made a simple statement that has never left me. It was made at a Tuesday morning meeting of some Christian businessmen at Winstead's here in Blue Springs. Seems like kind of an unlikely place to be so impacted. However, somehow, the Spirit turned the conversation of these Christian businessmen to this question, “What is the greatest problem facing the church today?” Now, that seems like kind of an unlikely topic of conversation at a businessmen’s meeting. Funny how God works.
- B. Well, my mind certainly started churning on a few possible great, impressive answers. My seminary days seemed to flash before my eyes. In those days, we debated the problem of Arminianism versus Pelagianism. On a more practical note, how about the temptation to compromise the truth in areas where the truth is very plain. How about what many perceive to be a lack of commitment in the church today? How about the issue of shallow messages for itching ears? How about the recent rebirth of the whole gnostic gospel controversy due to the movie, “The DaVinci Code?” I was all ready to spit out some deep, theological, meaningful problems facing the church today which would foster some discussion.
- C. Then, out of the blue, a gentlemen who had been very quiet during the businessmen’s part of the meeting spoke up. I will have to admit, I was not expecting his answer to the question. In fact, I bet no one at the meeting was expecting his answer. I bet not too many Christians here today would have listed this in a top ten problems of the church today. What is the greatest problem facing the church today? This gentlemen responded in a quiet way, “A lack of love”. Wait a minute, that’s your answer? I thought we were pondering the greatest problem facing the church today?
- D. That’s all he said. He didn’t elaborate. He didn’t launch into some great explanation. He just said, “A lack of love.” What was just as interesting as his brief answer without any explanation was the nodding of every head at the meeting as he made that statement. Without hesitation, the group of men around the table who were long time Christians silently nodded very quickly in agreement with his simple statement of the biggest problem facing the church today - a

lack of love. I don't know what you might have done, but I nodded in quiet agreement as well.

- E. His answer really got me thinking. Why would he say that? Why would that be considered such a great problem in the church? Well, I think he would say that because we have all, most likely, experienced a lack of love in the body of Christ. Too often, we may have recited this poem if only we knew the words. "To dwell above with saints we love, oh, that will be glory. But to dwell below with saints we know, now that's a different story." Unfortunately, too many people experience a lack of love from people in the body of Christ.
- F. That led to my follow up question. Why would he think that is the biggest problem facing the church today? There are a lot of problems facing the church today. Why would he so quickly answer that a lack of love, in his opinion, is the biggest problem facing the church today? I think I found the answer in the place you would expect to find the answer - in God's word. I found the answer as I was reading God's word and the Spirit began to open my eyes to a collection of verses which had one thing in common. Listen to just some of those verses. READ.
- G. Did you hear what all these verses have in common? Just two words which I think tell me why a lack of love could be the biggest problem the church faces - the words "one another." Stick with me here. Why do these verses with these two words help me see how a lack of love could be such a big problem? Because in these verses I see the important priority that God gives to our relationships with one another in the body of Christ. We may not think about it too often, but God is very concerned about how we treat each other in the body of Christ. So much so that he gave us several verses that deal specifically with that important issue - our relationships with one another.
- H. The word "another" in the Greek speaks of things of the same kind and with the added word "one", the two convey of message of oneness or perhaps more accurately from the verses, mutuality. God has adopted us into a family that should be characterized by oneness among the family members. God's will for the church is that its people treat one another with love, acceptance, forgiveness, kindness, compassion, patience, that we comfort, care for, encourage, serve, and carry one another.
- I. As I saw more and more of these verses emphasizing one another, I could understand why someone might say a lack of love is the greatest problem facing the church today. God's will for the church is that its people place a high priority on how we treat one another. If we fail to follow God's will, that is a big problem.

- J. This morning, I wanted to share with you verses which I have called, "God's one anothers". There are too many to consider specifically this morning. We will briefly consider ten of the collection. Some need very little explanation - they just need some action. At the end of the service, you will find the entire collection on the table in the back. I think you will also conclude that a lack of love, or a lack of living these one anothers, could be the greatest problem the church is facing.

II. GOD'S ONE ANOTHERS

- A. The first one another is perhaps the reason for the gentlemen's very quick and simple answer. I bet you know which one it is -- LOVE ONE ANOTHER. Many verses make this point. Jn. 13:34; Ro. 12:10, 13:8.
1. The book of I John makes the point most dramatically and over and over again. Verses 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12. READ. It's hard to miss John's point. God's will is that we love one another. In fact, God tells us that if we don't show love for one another, we don't even know who God is because his very nature is love. God tells us in His word that the mark of a true disciple is love for other disciples (Jn. 13:35) and the greatest virtue of all, considering faith, hope and love, is love (I Co. 13:13).
 2. That's why a lack of love could be the greatest problem facing the church. If we are not loving one another, we are not acting at all like God's people. That would be a big problem for the church, the people of God in this world. We are not showing the world what God in his very essence is all about - love. If we can't even show love for one another, we can't show the world God's love and we have a big problem.
 3. I am sure you remember how the love God desires is described. Paul tells us in I Cor. 13 that It is a love which is patient, kind, not jealous, not selfish, not easily provoked, keeps no account of wrongs suffered. The love God requires of us is one which focuses on the good of others. It is sacrificing for the benefit of others. Do we have that kind of love for one another? Is it deep and devoted? Do we have a devotion and deep love which causes us to do things for the good of others, not ourselves?? It is God's will that we show a deep love to one another.
- B. The next one another is found in Romans 15. Without this one another, the church again faces a big problem. God tells us to ACCEPT ONE ANOTHER. Ro. 15:7.
1. The word "accept" means to welcome with open arms. In chapter 14, God tells us to welcome others with open arms those who have different opinions, not for the purpose of passing

judgment on their opinions, but to receive them just as they are in Christ. In those areas of life where we are free to have differing opinions, we must accept others and their differing opinions. It is vital to their growth in Christ to allow them to form their opinions as they grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

2. You might also write down Ro. 12:16 and I Pe. 3:8. These verses command us to live in harmony with one another. This seems to be an integral part of accepting one another. As we consider our brothers and sisters in Christ, we must be accepting of them even though they may not agree with our opinions.
 3. Is this what we do as Christians? Do we accept others who have differing opinions on subjects without passing judgment on them? Do we respect the need for others to grow in their relationship with Christ and form their own opinions? Or do we seize every opportunity to judge, to criticize, to correct others? Those doing God's will are accepting of others.
- C. The next one kind of goes hand in hand with the first two. It will be hard to live by the first two if we don't have this third one. Paul includes this in his letter to the Ephesians. FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER. Eph. 4:32. How about Col. 3:13 -- forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive one another.
1. Forgiveness involves two things. Letting go of the wrong and the wrongdoer. It means that when we are mistreated by someone else, we let go of the mistreatment and we let go of the mistreater. We don't hold a grudge, don't carry bitterness against one another.
 2. I love what someone has said about forgiveness -- forgiveness is such a beautiful word, until you have something to forgive. And to make matters ever worse, Jesus tells us to forgive 70 times 7. No matter how often we are wronged, we must let go of the wrong and the wrongdoer.
 3. How about forgiving one another? Are we doing this in the body of Christ? Is that what the world sees in our lives - or even is that what other Christians sees in our lives? Or is there a lot more bitterness, hatred, ill feelings? If there is no forgiveness in the body of Christ, you might conclude that a lack of forgiveness is the biggest problem facing the church today.
- D. How about this one another. It is in the passage where Paul talks about the body of Christ. He tells us as members of the same body to have CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER. I Co. 12:25.

1. I love the word for "care". It means to worry, be anxious; to be concerned about, hence to care. In the context, Paul is telling the Corinthians Christians that if they have a proper view of the body of Christ, they will have a deep concern for others, will be worried about them, anxious for their well being.
 2. He uses the physical body to teach them, and us, that the body of Christ is one body just like the physical body. Just like we care for all the members of our physical body, we should have that same care for the members of our spiritual body, those in the body of Christ. Paul has to remind the Corinthian Christians of this truth because they were prone to tear up, divide, chop apart their fellow believers. That sounds like that could be a big problem for the church.
 3. Paul also tells us to "comfort one another". The word for comfort is to come along side. It is the picture of someone who comes along side you and puts their arm around you. It is a word which means to help someone along the way of life. To be a comfort, someone who shows they care.
 4. Peter tells us to "offer hospitality to one another without grumbling". I Pe. 4:9. Isn't it interesting God has him add the statement "without grumbling". Hard to imagine someone grumbling about having to be hospitable.
 5. Are we caring for one another??? Are we anxious about the well being of other Christians? Do we worry about them? Or are we the choppers, those who tear down other members of the body? If there is no caring for one another in the body of Christ, we have a big problem.
- E. This is another very important one. It may be the one that is commanded most often next to love one another. It is stated in different ways as well. I think I Th. 5:11 may put it best -- ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER.
1. The verse goes on to say build one another up. Heb. 3:13 says to encourage one another daily. I like that emphasis - each and everyday we should be thinking encouraging others. God tells us that a daily mind set for the Christian should be to encourage one another.
 2. Encouragement is the idea that we ought to be building one another up, saying and doing things that benefit each other, that pick us up when we are down, saying just the right thing at just the right time to lift up a down spirit. Boy, is this needed today, and probably at all other times in the history of the church. We need more encouragers and encouragement. Is this what others

see in us? What a big problem the church will face if we lose our encouragers.

F. How about this one. It is found in Ephesians as well. Paul tells them to be KIND TO ONE ANOTHER. Eph. 4:32. He goes on to say be compassionate.

1. The word "kind" means that our actions toward people ought to be good for them, helpful. We ought to treat others with a view to a positive attitude of helping. We need to be tender hearted. The word speaks of being compassionate, feeling very deeply for others in need. We need to be empathetic with others and treat them with soft hands and tender hearts.
2. In contrast to being kind, we are told not to slander one another, lie to one another, or complain against one another. Interesting that God must command us to be kind and not to be unkind to one another. Many a ministry has been swept away because kindness was forgotten. Many a Christian life has been devastated because kindness has been forgotten. What a big problem the church has when Christians are not kind to one another.

G. This is another very clear one. SERVE ONE ANOTHER. Gal. 5:13 -- serve one another in love. To serve means to sacrifice for the good of others. It is the idea of denying ourselves and doing things for others.

1. Jesus was the example of serving. He stated to the disciples, "I did not come to be served, but to serve and to give my life a ransom for many." (Mk 10:45). He put the needs and lives of others above his own and sacrificed his own life for the good of others.
2. I am very concerned about this one today. The church is in big trouble if we fail to serve one another. Even here at WCBF, we are lacking in servants. People to serve in the various ministries of the body of Christ here at WCBF. Like most churches, 10% do 90% of the serving. We need to be reminded that we completely fail to live like Christ when we fail to serve.
3. But, to serve means we have to set aside selfish interests, our own time, our own needs, to serve for the good of others. What a tall order God has given us. The church would be in big trouble if we fail to serve one another.

H. Here's another very important one another. It is found in Galatians 6:2 -- "bear one another's burdens". CARRY ONE ANOTHER is the

idea. The picture is of someone with a burden too heavy for them to carry alone -- and along comes someone beside them to help them carry the load.

1. This is so needed today. There are so many Christians carrying very heavy loads. The loads come in a variety of packages -- marriage, money, health, knowing God's will, following God's will, morality. We need to be helping one another carry the heavy loads of life.
 2. There is one big problem with this one another - it requires us to be in touch with people's lives enough to know what they are carrying. We are such a detached society, stuck in our lives with our little circle of people with our own little loads. You can't help carry the loads of others if you don't know they exist. We need to be helping one another carry the heavy loads of life that come to Christians in the devil's world. The church has a big problem if we fail to carry one another.
- I. The next one is interesting. It kind of goes with the idea of serving. It is found in Ephesians as well -- SUBMIT TO ONE ANOTHER. Eph. 5:21. Paul puts it a little differently to the Roman Christians -- "honor one another above yourselves". Ro. 12:10. How about Ph. 2:3 -- "let each of you regard one another as more important than himself".
1. This one another is kind of at the heart of all the one anothers. In order for us to follow God's one anothers, we have to put others first. We can only love, accept, forgive, be kind, caring, and serving if we think of others first. It is one which is so hard to do, maybe nearly impossible in our day and time. It tells us to live for others, to forego our rights for the benefit of others.
 2. This is another one that doesn't need explanation, it just needs action. It is so hard to set our lives aside for the good of others. This is very contrary to what the world is pushing on each of us. It pushes the importance of me, myself, and I. The same was true in Jesus day. Two of his own disciples, influenced by their culture, demanded to sit on his right and left as he ruled over the kingdom of God. It is very hard to put others first. If the church is full of self-centered people, the church will have a big problem.
- J. One final one another. James tells us to PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER. Js. 5:16. Sounds so simple doesn't it? But do we pray for one another? Once again, there is a great stumbling block to praying for one another -- we have to know what to pray for one another. We have to be in touch enough with others to know what we can be praying for. I am sure you have heard from someone who thanked God for the prayers of the saints. I spoke with someone this week

who was confident that the prayers of God's people were being offered for him and he was very grateful. There is great value in praying for one another.

III. CONCLUSION

- A. As you may know, I'm kind of a bottom line guy. If possible, I like to know what is being said after all the smoke clears. I think we have a great one another verse that tells us what God wants for us one another after all the smoke clears. I think this verse summarizes rather well what we have considered this morning. How about this one another verse -- "seek after that which is good for one another". I Th. 5:15.
- B. That's really what all 10 of the one another we have considered this morning are really all about -- doing good for others. And don't forget how possessed we ought to be about this idea of doing good for one another. Paul uses the word for "seek" which means to persecute someone, to press hard toward something. It is a word of great determination and focus on a goal. The goal is to do good to one another.
- C. The word good means that which is beneficial, helpful, positive, kind, generous. It too is a perfect word to make the point. It means to be determined in our relationships with one another to do what is good, beneficial, helpful, kind, generous, for the other. The word for "good" has the benefit of the other person completely in mind. That's really the bottom line of all that we have seen this morning. As toward one another, God has commanded that we have the good of the other person in mind.
- D. I wanted to pass out a copy of the little flyer, "God's One Another". I hope you will keep it somewhere as a constant reminder of how God wants us to treat one another. This is so important to the body of Christ. It is important that we love one another, forgive one another, accept one another, care for one another, encourage one another, be kind to one another, carry one another's burdens, submit to one another and serve one another and pray for one another. Just reading through those encourages me about being a part of the body of Christ. How great it would be if we would keep in mind always that being a Christian is a "one another" thing. It is living for the good of others, seeking their best interests in all that we do. What a great thing to be in the family of God. Let's pray.