

TOO HOT TO HANDLE

3 What To Do About One Another

We began by asking the question, “What is the church?” and then moved on to ask “What is a church?”

The church is a community of people who belong to God, a community of people individually and collectively ruled by Christ, a community which represents Christ in the world, a community in which God dwells and which He watches over jealously, a community which is energised and directed by the Holy Spirit, a growing community, a community which looks forward to perfection as the bride of Christ.

A church — a local church — is the bit of the church that is visible to the world at a certain place and time. It is part of the church and it represents the church. All of those characteristics of the church that we have described should be evident in a local church and, what is more, every local church should reflect the oneness of the church both in the way it relates to other local churches and in the relationships that exist between its members.

Last week we moved on to focus on those relationships and asked what really is the nature of the bond that unites the church and what should be the nature of the bond that unites the members of a local church? We looked at various terms, metaphors and descriptions that help answer those questions. We thought about the meaning of fellowship. We learned from the New Testament picture of the church as a body. We considered what it means that we are fellow citizens and members of one family. We thought about love as a characteristic of the way Christians relate to each other and we even thought about the unity of the Godhead, for that too is held up as a picture of what our relationships should be like.

But that was all very abstract and general. Tonight we want to get down to what this bond looks like in action. If we want to reflect the unity that characterises the church what do we have to do? If there is a strong bond between us, how will it show?

Clear Instruction

God’s word does not leave us guessing here. It gives us some very specific instructions. I want you to look at what I call the “One Another” passages and consider their implications.

- Hebrews 10:25 Meet with one another
- Romans 15:7 Befriend one another
- Ephesians 4:32 Be kind to one another
- 1 Peter 4:9–10 Be generous to one another
- Ephesians 6:18 Pray for one another
- 1 Thessalonians 5:11 Edify one another
- Ephesians 4:2 Support one another
- Hebrews 3:13 Encourage one another
- John 13:14 Wash one another's feet.
- Galatians 5:13 Serve one another.
- James 5:16 Confess your faults to one another
- Colossians 3:16 Admonish one another
- Colossians 3:13 Forgive one another
- 1 Thessalonians 4:18 Comfort one another
- Galatians 6:2 Bear one another's burdens
- Hebrews 10:24 Stir one another up to good works
- Galatians 5:15, 26 Do not provoke one another
- Romans 14:13 Do not judge one another
- Romans 12:10 Honour one another
- Ephesians 5:21 Submit to one another
- 1 John 3:10-23, 4:7-12 Love one another

As you study these passages be careful not to study them in a detached and academic way. It is not difficult to do that — to give intellectual assent to their teaching, and talk about the great truths we have learned from it and how they could change the world. We do not, however, find it so easy to think of the changes God's Word should make to us.

Here are some examples of the kind of thing I have in mind. They are merely practical applications of these passages of Scripture

- Pray regularly and specifically for other members of your church.
- Arrange to meet socially with some other members of your church apart from usual church activities.
- Whenever you meet with other believers, talk about the Lord and our hope in Him.
- Tell someone else what the Lord has been teaching you from the Scriptures this week.
- When you meet with other believers, always make a point of praying together.
- In conversation, listen to others and be careful to discern what they are trying to communicate.
- Make a point of avoiding all critical conversation about others.
- Show an interest in the good things that are happening in the lives of others: rejoice with those who rejoice.
- Offer some practical help to someone who needs it – gardening, ironing, cooking, repairing something, minding the children....
- If you are aware of a specific need that you cannot meet, bring it to the attention of the elders of your church.
- Look out for others who may be coping with trials and in some small way express your concern.
- If you are aware that someone is struggling in some spiritual matter, bring it to the attention of your minister or pastor.
- Take a genuine interest in someone who is lonely and, if possible, establish an ongoing friendship.
- Try to develop a few close friendships rather than many superficial ones.

Over the coming weeks I want you to read each of these passages again and add to the list. I also want you to think about the things that make it difficult to fulfil what they command and about how you are going to overcome those difficulties.

Coming Soon

Next we will move on to think about how all that we have learned so far applies when we have to address differences of opinion.