

“HEALTHY BODIES Part 3”

One of the most expressive analogies to express the nature and function of the church of Jesus Christ is the human body. I felt directed to spend some time on the three key principles of body life and the corresponding commands that reinforce them. Several weeks ago we began exploring the richness of the body analogy. Paul appealed to the body to teach three essential principles that necessary for a healthy body.

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 1 Corinthians 12:4-7

The principle of **diversity** is clearly illustrated in these verses by the use of the word varieties three times and the use of the words “each one”.

The principle of **unity** is clearly illustrated by the use of the word “same”.

The principle of **mutuality** is clearly illustrated by the use of the words “common good”.

Many of the letters addressed to individual and specific churches focused on destructive relational issues plaguing the body. Just like various diseases disrupt the harmonious interrelationship between parts of the body and violate the diversity, unity, mutuality principle, so the disease of pride, selfishness, jealousy etc. hinder the proper function of the body of Christ in the world.

If you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. James 3:14-16

What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? James 4:1

Disease in the members results in dysfunction in the body. Since the same Holy Spirit dwells in every member and Christ is the Head of the members, the natural function of the body is unity, diversity and mutuality.

We don't have to strive for unity. Unity comes automatically when members function by the direction and empowerment of the Head. When the flesh and sin infect the members, unity is broken. All the letters in the New Testament promote healthy interaction between the members of the body. I have chosen to focus on those passages that include the phrase “one another”.

UNITY

The Holy Spirit both describes and prescribes unity in the body of Christ. There is essential unity by reason of our connection to the same head; Jesus. There is practical unity by reason of control by the Holy Spirit.

Paul instructed the Ephesians to “be diligent to preserve the unity of the body of Christ

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:1-3

God issued specific commands related to the preservation of the unity of the body. The majority of the one another commands relate to preserving unity.

PROMOTE AND PRESERVE UNITY

“LOVE ONE ANOTHER” (Don’t be indifferent to one another)

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34-35

This is by far the most repeated command. It goes beyond loving people. The glorious nature of this aspect of the body is the mutual expression of the core of God’s nature. John declared, “God IS love.” Loving God and others is the heart of the whole Bible. The early Church enjoyed an extensive assortment of people groups. Their fellowships consisted of rich & poor, slave & free, Jew & Greek, common & intellectual, high class & lower class, young & old. This was a genuine testing ground for the love of God that had been shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. It would have been easy to form groups of like background to whom they could easily relate. That was not God's intention for the demonstrating His unconditional love to the world that transcends ethnic, economical, physical, intellectual, social barriers. There is a tendency today to build churches around commonality rather than diversity. No one said such diversity in a group would be easy. The early church had their share of struggles with unity. It wasn't long before the Holy Spirit found it necessary to inspire Paul and Peter to send some pointed exhortations to get along with one another.

“RECEIVE AND GREET ONE ANOTHER” (Don’t reject or ignore one another)

Let us first review the passages and then make some specific observations.

Now receive the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. Romans 14:1

Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, receive one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. Romans 15:5-7

The word translated “receive” could also be translated “accept”, “take to one’s self”. Admit (into fellowship) Consider each other an equal member in the “club”. Receive into membership on the basis of your mutual connection to Jesus. The measure of our acceptance of an acceptance equal to how Jesus accepted us to the glory of God. That kind of says it all. In spite of our differences, we are children of the same Father, members of the same body of Christ, indwelt by the same Holy Spirit. The opposite of receive and accept would be to reject. Everyone judges and evaluates others. We put up barriers, we communicate rejection, and we flat out fail to embrace those we deem less worthy. In means we are to take to ourselves our brothers in Christ, freely and without constraint or reserve in full recognition of our equal and mutual fellowship and heritage in Christ.

This means that we are to respond to other members in the body regardless of race, social status, doctrinal variance (with certain exceptions) background, education, intellectual abilities, physical appearance, habits, customs etc. We sometimes develop a prejudice against other Christian's and put up walls or no trespassing signs simply because they are different. There is no place for prejudice against another member of the SAME body. They are part of us whether we acknowledge it or not. It is much more beneficial if we learn to "accept one another". We tangibly demonstrate our acceptance by “greeting one another.” This is not just saying “Hi, how are you?” The greeting in the New Testament times communicated acknowledgment, acceptance, mutual acceptance.

Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings. Rom 16:16

The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house. 1Co 16:10

All the brothers here send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss. 1Co 16:20 Greet all the saints in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me send greetings. Phi 4:21

Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ. 1Pe 5:14

This was a practice not only between members of the same church but between churches.

We continued our voyage from Tyre and landed at Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and stayed with them for a day. Act 21:7

I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord. Rom 16:22

The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house. 1Co 16:19

Here are some brief guidelines. Outwardly acknowledge our mutual life in Christ and our brotherly love for one another. Greeting may be physical (kiss, handshake, hug), audible (words), written (letters, cards).

Our greeting should:

- 1—Be personal -- Scripture gives significant space to personal greetings
- 2--Acknowledge value to the kingdom
- 3—Be Sincere
- 4-- Not be extended to false teachers.

Scripture outlines three exceptions to “the receive / greet command”.

1. False teachers

Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds. 2 John 1:9-11

2. Unrepentant, immoral believers

I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES. 1 Corinthians 5:9-13

3. Unrepentant unruly, undisciplined believers

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us. 2 Thessalonians 3:6

For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread. But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary of doing good. If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. Yet do not regard him as

an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all! 2 Thessalonians 3:10-16

John called out one pastor for violating this principle.

I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church. 3Jo 1:9-10

The practice of such acceptance promotes and preserves the unity of the body.

“Do Good and Be Kind to one another”

So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith. Gal 6:10

See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. 1 Thessalonians 5:15

Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. Hebrews 13:16

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Eph 4:31-32

Kindness expresses love and benevolence to fellow Christians in gestures of generosity, helpfulness, and thoughtfulness even under difficult conditions and expects nothing in return.

A teacher asked the pupils in her class to give the meaning of lovingkindness. A little boy jumped up and said, "Well, if I was hungry and someone gave me a piece of bread, that would be kindness. But if they put a little jam on the bread, that would be lovingkindness."

Kindness addresses the needs and relieves the miseries of other through demonstrable deeds. We normally think of acts of kindness. To be kind is to demonstrate my care for another in some clear way.

*Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Col 3:12
But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, Gal 5:22
Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, Hebrews 10:24*

Such kindness promotes and preserves the unity of the body in the bond of peace.

“Agree and live harmonious with one another”

Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. 1 Corinthians 1:10

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? 1 Corinthians 3:1-3

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Romans 12:16

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 15:5-6

To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. 1 Peter 3:8-9

Paul had to admonish a couple women in the church at Philippi to get along.

I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. Philip 4:2-3

“honor one another”

Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Romans 12:10

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Romans 12:16

make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Philippians 2:2-4

“Forgive and forbear one another”

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Eph 4:3

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. Col 3:13

The word translated "forebear" means "to hold up, hold back, to put up with or endure a difficult circumstance such as persecution or affliction, to put up with a person.

DEFINITION

Graciously enduring and putting up with the displeasing, offensive, or sinful attitudes and actions of others. It includes the idea that rebuke, discipline, or correction be delayed as long as possible in hope that the offender recognizes their offense themselves and take steps to correct it.

True love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 1 Corinthians 13:7

Forbearance is necessary to preserve the unity in that we are not so quick to jump on the faults and flaws of others or make quick judgments and criticism. Often times we are so focused on correction that we miss forbearance and needlessly strain relationships in the body.

Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all transgressions. Proverbs 10:12

Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers (overlooks) a multitude of sins. 1 Peter 4:8

“Forgive one another”

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. Col 3:13

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. Ephesians 4:32

There are some prohibitions against things that fail to promote and preserve unity but stirs strife instead. Next week we will consider some of them.

How are we doing? It is easy to think we are doing well when we don't associate with people enough to test the quality of these things in adverse situations and difficult people. Use these instructions to test your walk. They are the natural reflection of a life lived by the power of the Holy Spirit. They will naturally manifest when sin and selfishness have not spread their disease in the usually unified body. Where there are struggles, we have blocked our connection to the Holy Spirit somewhere.

Repent! Reset!

DIGGING DEEPER

DAY ONE

CONNECT with the Father. Remember that access to the Father is provided through the work of Jesus FOR us and IN us. Think of your most peaceful place. Imagine Jesus waiting there for you. We know from Scripture that He seeks worshippers (responders) who will worship in Spirit and truth. Talk to Him.

Thank you Father for accepting me and receiving me. How great a love you have for me that I should be called Your child and I really am your dearly loved child (1 John 3:1). Thank you that I have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but a spirit of adoption as your child by which I cry out, "Abba! Father!" Thank You for the witness of the Holy Spirit who bears witness in my heart that I am Your child (Rom 8:15-16). May the eyes of my heart be enlightened, so that I will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe which are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenlies (Eph 1:18-20). AMEN!

The current series of messages have been focusing on the specific commands related to community life of the church. The best analogy of good community life is the analogy of how our physical body functions. The three primary principles that make the body work are Unity, Diversity and Mutuality. Most all the "one another" commands can be categorized under one of those three categories. We began with unity factor. The body is unified by reason of our connection with Christ but that unity can be threatened by sin and selfishness. Paul commands us to promote and preserve the unity of the body in the bond of peace. What promotes and preserves that unity?

Last time we focused on the key command to love one another JUST AS Christ has loved us.

This week we explored five more "one another" commands which fits nicely into our five days. We will dig deeper on each of those commands this week.

"RECEIVE AND GREET ONE ANOTHER" (Don't reject or ignore one another)

Review the notes again. Especially take more time to contemplate the supplies passages. What is God saying to you. In any organization there are "cliques". The worst kind of clique is one that is mutually exclusive; one that only associates with certain people. It is natural to have a group of friends that you hang out more than others. But are we deliberately keeping certain people out. Do you have certain people you avoid? Usually we refer to them as "those ____." Those people. Those Baptists. Those Charismatics. Those liberals or those right wingers. Those Calvinists or those Armenians. There will be no such distinctions in heaven. No denominations or special interest groups; only followers of Jesus. The early church drew attention by the diversity that existed in their gatherings. This calls for an attitude check. The practice of "greeting" indicated acceptance and genuine expression of inclusion. This was not only true of the specific church but transpired between churches.

Examine your own heart. Listen for any specific promptings from the Holy Spirit regarding how you are doing in the receiving and greeting category.

Take some time to reflect on ways we can greet one another that communicates acceptance and inclusion. Think about what could say that goes beyond "Hi, how are you?" Try it out this coming Sunday.

DAY TWO

Begin today with A.C.T.S. That stands for Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication or asking.

Adoration – Lord you are so..., You are the God who..., Your name is...

Confession -- Lord I admit that..., I confess (things you did you shouldn't) I acknowledge my failure to...(things you didn't do you should)

Thanksgiving – Thank you for your forgiveness.

Supplication – Would you...?

Today take time to read the notes under “Do Good and be Kind to one another”. I like to think of compassion as the emotion behind the action of kindness. Kindness is active. Scripture record that Jesus was filled with compassion just before He did something to relieve suffering.

Jesus clearly spelled out what this looks like.

“But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. “Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. Treat others the same way you want them to treat you. “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return. Luke 6:27-38

This kind of response to difficult people is not hard, it seems impossible. And it is apart from the supernatural working of God on our attitudes. How can we demonstrate a difference when we just do things everyone else can do. If we follow the same standard as the unbeliever what impact does that make?

Here are some additional passages on kindness.

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. Ephesians 4:32

The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, 2 Timothy 2:24

Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored. Titus 2:3-5

Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? Romans 2:4

but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger, in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love, 2 Corinthians 6:4-6

Here are some additional passages on doing good.

“Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow. Isaiah 1:16-17

So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith. Galatians 6:10

Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith. Galatians 6:9-10

For, "THE ONE WHO DESIRES LIFE, TO LOVE AND SEE GOOD DAYS, MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT. "HE MUST TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD; HE MUST SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT. "FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER, BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL." 1 Peter 3:10-12

Through Jesus then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. Hebrews 13:15-16

DAY THREE

Time for a Psalm to start our day.

Your lovingkindness, O LORD, extends to the heavens, Your faithfulness reaches to the skies. Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; Your judgments are like a great deep. O LORD, You preserve man and beast. How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings. They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house; And You give them to drink of the river of Your delights. For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light. O continue Your lovingkindness to those who know You, And Your righteousness to the upright in heart. Psalm 36:5-10

Take some time to meditate on the numerous "figures" used by the Psalmist. i.e. heavens, skies, great deep, shadow of wings, river of delights.

What do you think flows in that river of delights? What delights God? What fill His heart with gladness?

Today's "one another command" is Agree and live in harmony with one another.

Read back over the notes and listen for God's nudge.

I always think about how embarrassing to get called out in Scripture like the two ladies in Philippi. The body would not function if the various members decided to operate independently of the other members. What a mess if the vessels refused to deliver blood to the hands or feet. When the body does not function harmoniously there is debilitation and even death (cancer).

Take some time to think about what a harmonious church would look like. The opposite of harmony is strife.

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. Galatians 5:19-21

Notice how many thing listed relate to lack of harmony.

Strife is not new. Here are some proverbs that address strife.

God hates a false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers. Proverbs 6:19

Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all transgressions. Proverbs 10:12

A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, But the slow to anger calms a dispute. Proverbs 15:18

A perverse man spreads strife, And a slanderer separates intimate friends. Proverbs 16:28

The beginning of strife is like letting out water, So abandon the quarrel before it breaks out. Proverbs 17:14

Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man, But any fool will quarrel. Proverbs 20:3

Drive out the scoffer, and contention will go out, Even strife and dishonor will cease. Proverbs 22:10

Like one who takes a dog by the ears Is he who passes by and meddles with strife not belonging to him. Proverbs 26:17

An arrogant man stirs up strife, But he who trusts in the LORD will prosper. Proverbs 28:25

An angry man stirs up strife, And a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression. Proverbs 29:22

For the churning of milk produces butter, And pressing the nose brings forth blood; So the churning of anger produces strife. Proverbs 30:33

Strife often time is the result of hidden sin.

For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps there will be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances; I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not repented of the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they have practiced. 2 Corinthians 12:20-21

Look at the list of dysfunctional relationship in the church and the cause and cure revealed by Paul.

If we are to impact our community it will be through a visible harmony between members of churches and between churches.

DAY FOUR

Today's reflection is on the command to honor one another. The following is an extended discussion on what it means to honor.

Romans tells us that we are to outdo one another in extending honor.

"Honor"

The Verb (i.e. Honor the Lord) = to pay homage to, to hold in high regard, revere or reverence, reward, value, prize, set a price or estimate a value, appraise, treasure, esteem, appreciate, cherish

The Noun (i.e. the Lord is worthy of all honor)= that which is paid in token of worth or value, worship, dignity, an estimate (written or spoken) of worth or an appraisal.

The Adjective (i.e. honored guest) = valuable, precious, of great worth, respected, held in high regard.
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Honoring has to do with acknowledging the value of a person or thing and affirming or conveying that value to them or others by word or deed.

There are really two parts to honoring.

Acknowledge Value

This part has to do with what happens in our own thinking. It is something we choose to do. It is a decision we make regarding people and even things. Here, the focus is on people.

This thought process has two aspects.

1 – Assign or ascribe value

We can chose to assign or ascribe value and honor regardless of a person or thing's demonstrated or actual value. We do this all the time. Someone makes a decision to value a generally cheap and worthless piece of cardboard at over \$800 just because it has Ichiro's picture on it. There is no inherent value in the object.

The value has been ascribed by people based on certain criteria. We watch this take place in the "Antique Road Show" all the time. I have tried to teach my children that those things are only valuable if you can find someone who will actually pay you that much. We can choose to treat people with respect, esteem them, their ideas, their contribution to society and even their place in our own life.

We can assign or ascribe value in spite of actual behavior.

The second aspect of acknowledging value has to do with adjusting our perspective.

2 –Apprehend value.

We look through the eyes of God. We look for worth and value. We determine to see them and treasure them as image bearers of God. Every person, in some way, bears the image of his or her Creator. When it comes to people, we make a decision to treasure or value them because God tells us to and at their very core they actually still bear the image of our Lord and Master. Honoring people begins in our own perceptions of people. How do we view the poor, the different, the outcast, the inept, and the strange? All of us are come from the same Creator. When we dishonor others we dishonor the one who made them. Honoring is a choice to

advance people on a value scale. All of us have developed criteria by which we evaluate the worth of a person or thing. Honoring is a choice to retool our criteria to match God's eternal perspective and to deliberately move people up on our scale of importance.

Affirm Value

At some time, the value we apprehend or ascribe in our thinking and attitude toward others must be affirmed to the person honored by some word or deed. Honoring someone must move from acknowledgment to affirmation. Love that is concealed does little for the one being loved. Honor that we fail to communicate does little to encourage the one being honored. Honor is communicated by words and deeds. Just as we can love and honor one another in word and deed, we may also dishonor or devalue by our deeds and words.

Just as valuing begins in the mind so devaluing and dishonor begins in our thinking. The Biblical word for dishonor or despise has to do with treating someone or something as a vapor, of little value or worth. We entertain negative thoughts and ideas about a person that give birth to a negative attitude which blossoms into dishonoring words and deeds. We develop negative, derogatory names that hurt and devalue. Rather than draw attention to the worth of a person we focus on defects and decide they have as little value to us as a morning fog, a mere annoyance.

Left to simmer and take root over a period of time, dishonoring thoughts develop into a dishonoring pattern and attitude toward people in general or concerning a specific person.

This eventually expresses itself in some hurtful words and harmful deeds either to others or to the person.

God says the true love acknowledges and affirms value in His creatures.

In regard to the idea of ascribing value to one another...

In regard to attributing worth and esteeming one another...

In regard to paying reverence and respect to one another...

In regard to recognizing and affirming value...

In regard to treasuring each other...

In regard to conveying value...

...genuine love responds in a particular way.

Genuine love "takes the lead"

"preferring" (before + to lead) = to go before or first and lead the way, to be the leader, precede, show the way as a guide, act with eagerness, do exceedingly. Paul says that the characteristic of genuine love is to take the lead in regard to the practice of valuing each other. Strive to be the best example at honoring others. Don't wait for others to honor you. Each believer is to seize the initiative and lead the way in regard to showing honor. Jesus warned against those who focus on getting instead of giving honor.

"Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets, who devour widows' houses, and for appearance's sake offer long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation." Luke 20:46-47

Can you imagine what kind of church we would have if EVERYONE practiced this admonition? Imagine a church fight over who could honor the other the most. Here, Paul indicates that genuine love thinks of others first and takes the lead in acknowledging and affirming value in others. "In regard to the issue of showing honor, genuine love tries to outdo one another."

Who should we honor?

The instruction to honor others or value others turns up elsewhere in the Bible.

- **We are to honor the Lord above all.**

Paul indicated earlier that the first step toward paganism is a failure to honor God as God.

For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Romans 1:21

He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion! Amen. 1 Tim. 6:15-16

- **Everyone must honor those in authority.**

... Honor the king. 1 Peter 2:17

Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor. Romans 13:7

the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise(dishonor, treat as vapor) authority. 2 Peter 2:9-10

- **Believers must honor each other.**

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; Romans 12:10

- **Everyone is to honor all men.**

Honor all people... 1 Peter 2:17

- **The church is to honor true widows.**

Honor widows who are widows indeed; 1 Tim. 5:3

- **Husbands honor their wives.**

You husbands in the same way (with a servant attitude), live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered. 1 Peter 3:7

- **Couples honor their marriage**

Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge. Hebrews 13:4

- **Slaves honor their masters.**

All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against. 1 Tim. 6:1

- **Children honor their parents.**

Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. Ephes. 6:2-3

- **Everyone is to honor little children**

"See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven. Matthew 18:10

- **The church should honor leaders.**

The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. 1 Tim. 5:17

But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another. 1 Thes. 5:12-13

How can we affirm honor?

We already stated that honor begins in our thinking by both apprehending and ascribing value and establishes a pattern or attitude of honor. An honoring attitude toward people expresses itself in words and which ministers to and encourages others. Jesus said if the people won't praise me or honor me the very rocks would cry out. Proverbs calls us to honor the Lord by giving of the first fruits.

In Malachi, God rebukes the priest for “despising”, treating God’s name like vapor, for disrespecting Him by offering Him the stuff that they didn’t want anymore.

- Hebrews instructs us to honor the Lord by the fruit of our lips that give praise and honor to God.
- We honor parents by making sure their needs are met and treating them with respect.
- Children honor parents by respecting and obeying their authority and counsel.
- Slaves honor their masters by serving them as they would serve the Lord.
- Husbands honor their wives by viewing them as fellow heirs of God’s grace and by living with them in an understanding way.
- We honor the government by obeying the laws and paying what taxes are due.
- The church honors true widows by taking care of his or her needs.
- Honor elders by submitting to their authority, taking care of their needs and appreciating them.

Scripture teaches us to demonstrate honor by both word and deed. I would say that the expression of honor in our congregations should follow the same pattern. Treat leadership with respect. Honor the Lord by taking care of His property and investing in the ministry of the local church.

Value each other by meeting needs. Treasure each other with verbal affirmation and recognition of worth as well as being concerning about needs.

Whatever we decide to treasure or value eventually captures our heart.

“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Luke 12:34

So much of Scripture focuses on things that build relationships. Honoring or valuing others is one of those practices that need serious consideration.

We need to renew our thinking regarding the most important body builder. God encourages us to outdo one another in regard to honoring. Honoring has to do with acknowledging the value of a person or thing and affirming or conveying that value by word or deed.

Application Suggestions

On the basis of this message God is encouraging me to...

- Work at friendships?
- View people as members of your family?
- How have you dishonored or devalued people that needs to be acknowledged and confessed?
- Are you willing to ask God to change a pattern of dishonor into one which strives to lead the way in honoring?
- From the list of people and groups the Bible calls you to honor how can you improve?
- What can you do specifically to honor them either in word or deed?
- Is there a specific person that needs to be promoted up your value scale?
- What will you do this week as a result of this Word from the Lord?

DAY FIVE

Today reviews the command to forbear and forgive. If only the members of Christ’s body would practice this consistently. Harmony would not be an issue.

FORBEAR

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Eph 4:3

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. Col 3:13

The word translated "forebear" means "to hold up, hold back, to put up with or endure a difficult circumstance such as persecution or affliction, to put up with a person.

DEFINITION

Graciously enduring and putting up with the displeasing, offensive, or sinful attitudes and actions in others. It includes the idea that rebuke, discipline, or correction be delayed as long as possible in hope that the offender recognize his offense himself and take steps to correct it.

We see forbearance in God with Israel, the World and with us His children.

Remember, love bears all things. God does not overlook sin forever, there is often need to take action. Forbearance is necessary to preserve the unity in that we are not so quick to jump on the faults and flaws of others or make quick judgments and criticism. Often times we are so focused on correction that we miss forbearance and needlessly strain relationships in the body.

The opposite is to not grumble against one another. This has the idea of murmuring against or speaking against.

Murmuring is expressing discontent, impatience, or displeasure with one believer to other believers, usually in secret or in a covert manner.

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. Act 6:1

The Biblical options are clear when we have a complaint.

1--Forebear

2--Forgive

3--Confront with love

FORGIVE

We have dealt extensively with forgiveness previously. I will provide what I think are the key characteristics of full forgiveness. Regarding a fellow believer who has wronged or offended you without contempt or resentment but rather with compassion, not demanding payment in the future for an act committed in the past. Matthew 18

Model of Jesus

- 1. Character produced not earned**
- 2. Confrontive or communicative**
- 3. Costly to the forgiver**
- 4. Complete**
- 5. Continual 70X7**

Mandate for believers

- 1. Commanded**
- 2. Character produced not earned**
- 3. Confrontive or communicative**
- 4. Costly to the forgiver**

5. Complete

6. Continual 70X7

If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven - if there was anything to forgive - I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes. 2Co 2:11

The consequences of a failure to forgive are deadly. Bitterness defiles everyone around. If you want to fully enjoy the wonder of God's forgiveness of you, you must in turn forgive like Jesus forgave you.

In your prayer today, ask God to bring to mind anyone you have failed or refused to forgive.