

One Another Passages in the New Testament

Second Class: Jan. 30, 2022

Last week before we finished, we talked about listening. I'd like to emphasize that listening involves "paying attention". What did Jesus do when He wanted people to pay attention? He said, "Amen, amen." This literally meant, "I have something important to say, so **pay attention**." Check yourself this week. In your normal conversations, how often does your mind wander from the person and/or the subject? Do you pay attention?

Also, let's review PART and M. What do they stand for?

After last week I decided to look up in the NIV each passage from the list I gave you. I found 17 times where they translated the Greek "one another" as "each other". The NASB translated it correctly each time. So that's what I'll teach from.

When I was studying MFT, we occasionally watched a movie in class in order to discuss how the movie portrayed what we were studying. Three that I remember were "Good Will Hunting", "Walking across Egypt", and "The Gods Must Be Crazy". Movies can provide an excellent opportunity to practice your observation skills. Notice the presence or absence of PART qualities and Mirroring. Hallmark movies can tend to be very formulaic. But occasionally there is a good one. Recently the movie, "North to Home" played. It is an excellent one to practice observing PART and M.

With regard to presence, The Christian writer, David G. Benner, wrote "*Presence and Encounter*". And in that book, he gives a more expanded definition of presence. One aspect he discusses is the presence each of us brings to every encounter we have with others. It is the feeling you leave people with. And a really strong presence can stay with people even after you have physically left the room or even after they have died. Just this last Friday, a song came to my mind. It's an older one, "Peg of My Heart." Sue's Mom was named Peggy. I can't think of that song without getting teary eyed and feeling how wonderful a mom she was, and how grateful I was to be accepted into her family and loved as much as one of her children. I shall always think of her and feel her presence with me each time I do.

Here are some questions to think about: How often do we think about the presence we bring with us? How can we become more aware of presence—ours and others?

After reading that part of Benner's book, it occurred to me that a marriage was designed to form a unitary presence (one flesh). You as a couple create a presence together. And that presence is there even when your spouse is physically somewhere else. How often do you think about the presence you as a couple are forming?

But beyond that, I think there is also a unitary presence that we in our church fellowship form as a community (one body). What kind of presence do we bring to this neighborhood? What do we want it to be? We will form a presence. That cannot be avoided. Will it be clear or clouded? Smooth running or chaotic? We get to decide. How will we join together to build that presence? It will require an intentional commitment to know and work together. Have we been doing that? If not, are we ready for that?

How Our Brains Work

The book I think most helpful in the area of Interpersonal Neurobiology is Curt Thompson's "*Anatomy of The Soul*". It discusses, from scientific research, the equipment God has given us in our brains. Thompson often uses Scripture to describe how the brain functions in different ways and uses neuroscience to understand Scripture.

Thompson tells us that research has found that the average human brain has approximately 100 billion neurons each of which can make up to 10,000 connections with other neurons. Now, if you're quick, you recognize that the maximum number of connections our brains can make is: 1 followed by 15 zeroes. That's 1 quadrillion. To put this into perspective, imagine each neuron is one inch long. If you strung all of these connections together, they would reach to the moon and back 30,000 times or roughly 15 billion miles. How far away is Pluto? It is about 3 billion miles. So 15 billion is about five times the distance to the edge of our planetary system. We really are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Thompson is another author that discusses our two-part brain. He says that when the left half dominates, it puts more emphasis on knowing facts about God than on knowing God or being known by Him. And the left's need to be right can prevent us from knowing and experiencing being known. It makes us more concerned about correct theology than about God himself.

On the other hand, the right brain enables us to delight in the moment. It uses holistic processing that enables us to feel connected to everything around us through our bodies and minds. This gives us a deep awareness of “We”.

The left focuses on “Me”, who “I” am and what “I” want. When it dominates in relationships, joy becomes just a concept and love becomes something we may know about but do not know from experience.

The right enables us to be touched by and to touch others.

But let me be clear. One side is not more spiritual than the other. And one is not more oriented toward sin. One side does connect better with others. But you can enjoy sinning alone or you can enjoy sinning along with others. As Thompson says, research has discovered that an integrated mind tends to have a greater sense of well-being. And he believes an integrated mind is how we become available to the Holy Spirit and experience the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

Being Known

Neuroscience recognizes that we all have a great desire to be known and to be understood. Thompson states that the integration of left and right is required in order to experience being fully known.

He also notes that neuroscience has discovered that no human brain (or mind) can develop in isolation. The mind needs other minds in order to grow and be healthy. This is true from the moment we are born. And in the same way, we need connection with God’s mind in order to grow spiritually. We will be using some of this information as we explore and discuss the one another passages. I believe we are designed as creatures who thrive on intimacy, that is, a closeness in relation to God and to others. And I believe that is born out both in Scripture and in science.

The importance of **being known** by God.

There is an extended quote by C.S. Lewis from his book, *The Weight of Glory* that looks at two things that I think bear on our “one another” relationships. Lewis is talking about the fact that we are all created in God’s image and that we are made for eternity. He says being created in His image means He is sharing a part of His glory with us. Lewis uses 2 Cor. 4:17 as his source Scripture: “*For momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.*” Lewis says that we don’t know what that eternal weight of glory will

finally look like but we know it will be wonderful. Although he uses this term, weight, in a sense of heaviness, it does not just refer to a heavy burden. Paul also uses it to refer to what *has substance*. The glory that God will share with us is solid. It won't fade away.

I am going to read the quote in two parts with commentary in between. Lewis begins with the importance of being known by God. Therapists and neuroscientists all insist on the importance to us of the experience of being known and understood by others. They describe it as “feeling felt”. This is no less important in our relationship with God. I think Lewis does a great job in describing this. He says,

“St. Paul promises to those who love God not, as we should expect, that they will know Him, but that they will be known by Him (1 Cor. 8:3). It is a strange promise...But it is dreadfully re-echoed in another passage of the New Testament. There we are warned that it may happen to any one of us to appear at last before the face of God and hear only the appalling words: ‘I never knew you. Depart from Me.’...we can be both banished from the presence of Him who is present everywhere and erased from the knowledge of Him who knows all. We can be left utterly and absolutely outside...On the other hand, we can be called in, welcomed, received, acknowledged.”

End of this part of the quote.

This experience of being known by God is important to our relationship with Him. Thompson agrees with Lewis and says that you cannot truly know God until you've **experienced being known** by Him. But also, by extension, it is important to experience being known in our one another relationships as well. This series will, in part, be about that experience.

Magnificent Creations

Secondly, Lewis goes on to describe what it means to see each other through God's eyes. He continues:

“When human souls have become as perfect in voluntary obedience as the inanimate creation is in its lifeless obedience, then they will put on its glory, or rather that greater glory of which Nature is only the first sketch...When all the suns and nebulae have passed away, each one of you will still be alive. Nature is only the image, the symbol; but it is the symbol Scripture invites me to use. We are summoned to pass in through Nature, beyond her, into the splendor which she fitfully reflects. And in there, in beyond Nature

we shall eat of the tree of life.... Meanwhile, the cross comes before the crown... we are invited to follow our great Captain...It may be possible for each to think too much of his own potential glory hereafter; but it is hardly possible for him to think too often or too deeply about that of his neighbor. The load, or weight, or burden of my neighbor's glory should be laid daily on my back, a load so heavy that only humility can carry it, and the backs of the proud will be broken. It is a serious thing...to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or the other of these destinations. It is in light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with the awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilization—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendors.”

Now, before quoting the next sentence, you need to understand that Lewis believed the elements of communion were holy. He continues,

“Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses.”

Think what a difference it would make if we all saw each other through God's eyes. He sees both what you are but also what He designed you to be—the unique and beautiful you, created in His image. What if we actually saw each other that way? How would that change our attitudes toward one another? We actually were designed so that we could see, to some extent, what God sees. I have an assignment for you to be thinking about this week. Ask God to enable you to look at people and begin to see what He sees. Next week, when you come to class, stop and look at each person here. Then ask God again how He sees that person. What does He see that is unique and special? Then ask yourself again what do you see? Are you paying close attention? Another question to ask ourselves is: “How does God see our fellowship?”

With this in mind, I'm going to talk about something that may seem off topic. But there is a part that can apply to the one another passages.

One of the passages in the N.T. that I think is so often misunderstood is 1 Pet. 3:7. It is a passage I taught a few years ago in India. Let's go through it briefly.

“In the same way, husbands, live in your home according to knowledge, with your wives as the weaker vessel,” **What do you take from that?**

First, *Knowledge* here means with a full understanding. In other words, know all the facts, know what is true, then live by that. And by implication, don't follow the culture.

The biggest problem of interpretation in this passage is to define “weaker” vessel. I've heard two preachers, seen one concordance, and know of at least one professor at Western that I believe get this right. The word could refer to physical weakness. But in Greek culture, it had an additional meaning. It could mean valuable and therefore fragile.

The homes at that time had two sets of dishware, one for common everyday use and one much better to honor special guests. In a way these dishes were more easily breakable, or fragile, because they were such fine porcelain. That made them far more expensive and therefore, more precious and valuable. Peter continues:

“assigning them honor as co-heirs of the grace of life, so your prayers may not be hindered.”

Honor in that culture meant treating them as extremely high in value. Co-heirs literally means heirs together with, or on equal standing. This is the real tip off to how radical this was in that culture. Females could only inherit if there were no family males to inherit—no uncles, brothers, cousins, sons or nephews. So, a female heir was practically unheard of in that culture. But calling the wife a co-heir, on equal standing inheriting along with her husband. That was extremely radical. Some of the people who heard this must have been wondering whether Peter had lost his mind. “Did I hear that correctly? You surely don't mean a co-heir, do you? This must be a mistake.” This was such a departure from the culture.

Now, let me tell you a story how I used this in India. Chai is the most popular drink in India. We had chai available at all meals. We had a “chai break” at around 10 a.m. and another around 3 p.m. I asked the hotel where we were staying if I could borrow a chai cup. They gave me one. I presented it to a group of

pastors I was speaking to and asked them how much they would pay for such a cup. They agreed around 9 rupees would be a fair price.

I told them that when I was in college, I lived in the home of a wealthy woman and did yard work for my room. One evening she hosted a small dinner gathering. She asked my roommate and me to serve, then clear the table. We took everything back to the kitchen and were preparing to wash the dinner ware, when she entered the room. She said she would do the dishes. We said we would be happy to wash them. She said, “You don’t understand.” She picked up one of the cups and said, “This has been my family for several decades. It was made in Austria.” She pointed to the cup and said, “Do you see this gold? It is not gold paint. It’s real gold.” She told us what the cup would be worth if you wanted to buy it at that time and said, “But, if you break this, I can’t replace it.”

I told the group of pastors that Peter was saying that your wife is just such a unique gift from God. She is of extreme value. Be sure to treat her that way. If you break her, you can’t replace her. By the way, misusing her is also a way to make sure your prayers won’t be heard.

Then I told the pastors that the price of that cup in their economy today would not be worth 90 rupees, not 900, and not 9,000. It would be worth 90,000 rupees. It was 10,000 times the value of that chai cup. It was a great illustration of what Peter was telling these Christian men.

As an illustration, I tossed the plate on the floor. It bounced around but did not break. Then I compared this common use plate and throw away plate. I think Peter is saying that she is not a throw away or common use servant. She is more valuable than you can imagine. So, understand that and treat her like the beautiful gift from God that she is.

Taking off from this, let me share here another related thing I learned from Dr. Howard Hendricks. He said, “Begin each day spending some time thinking about what you value in your spouse. Then tell them.” And when it comes to our relationship with God, it is much the same process. When we tell Him what we value in Him and tell Him that we love Him, it’s called praise and adoration. The difference when we say those things to our wife or our husband is only in magnitude, and the profound gratitude we feel to God for His gift. It affirms how much we appreciate them as God’s wonderful gift, and how much we appreciate Him for His gift. You can’t feel grateful to God without being grateful for His gift. And you can’t feel grateful for His gift without feeling grateful to Him.