

One Another Passages in the New Testament

Fourth Class: Feb. 13, 2022

I want to begin with a quote from Thompson that I want to share: “If you feel overwhelmed with how long it seems to be taking your child to mature, God knows exactly how you feel.”

There was something I intended to share last week but I don’t think I got to it. Pastor Trevor has spoken about us making connection with one another. He made some suggestions. Do you remember what they were? Invite someone to coffee. Invite someone over for dinner. What are some others you can think of? Here is one simple suggestion to get started. Someone in this fellowship and I decided to share with each other on Sunday, something good that has happened to us during the week. It is often something significant God is doing in our lives. And sometimes it involves some difficult situations. But I have noticed that it always involves relationships in our lives. I’ve come to cherish those moments of sharing and always look forward to them. They are a blessing. That’s something that does not cost you anything, but it can be a significant connection.

Last week we spoke about the concept of confession. I want to begin by reiterating that I am not a professional bible teacher. So, if you have ideas on any of the teaching, please share them—either in class or let me know about it after class. And if any of you have done any study on any of the teaching, I want to know that also. I remind you again that I look at this project as a joint learning opportunity. It is my hope that this will be a journey of learning together and that we will contribute to one another’s learning in this series.

I want to ask how you did on the homework this week? Are you beginning to see each other through God’s eyes? Do you have any examples? I would challenge you to continue with this.

I would also challenge you to look at the *one another* passages from another perspective. We will look at them from the context of each gospel or letter they appear in. But I also want to look at them from the overall perspective of our church fellowship, and think of them not just as things God wants us to do with one another. Think of them as privileges where He gives us the opportunity to make great contributions to each of our lives.

Last week one of the things we looked at in 1 John 1:9, was how it is about restoration of relationship and also about building intimacy with God. A good

friend of mine just e-mailed me part of a paper on this verse which had a good connection I want to share. It pointed out that the sins we commit are a result of being unfaithful to God. By contrast, He remains faithful to us. I think that is a great comparison.

There is another concept which I think bears on these definitions. I discovered this a few years ago when I was preparing to teach a group of Indian pastors on the subject of the commands of Jesus. This applies to the “one another” passages since most of them are in the imperative, which makes them commands. Now this may at first sound like heresy. But hang in there with me. Did you know that Jesus never told us to “obey” His commands? Though the word is sometimes translated *obey*, the word He always uses is “*keep*”. It is a much broader and deeper word. It includes obedience but it also is a stewardship term. It means to care for, to tend, to cultivate and to protect. It implies an ongoing stewardship relationship with what we are called to keep. They are a part of our responsibility to God and part of our stewardship with one another.

Let’s think more about the idea of “cultivate”. I believe Jesus used the word “keep” to indicate that His commandments were to be cultivated into our lives so that they become a part of who we are, not just a list of things we can check off each day like the Pharisees did. And I believe keeping His commandments can lead us into a more intimate relationship with Him as well as with one another. Notice also that each commandment displays some quality of God that He wants reproduced in our lives.

Let me use an analogy. In a way, each commandment from Jesus is meant to grow a spiritual quality into our lives. He plants the seeds and grows each plant. We tend, care for, and cultivate. Picture a garden full of the spiritual qualities He is building into your life. Each quality can be like a beautiful blossom of God’s character that He shares with us. What does your garden look like? Are there beautiful flowers there? Does it have some weeds that need to be rooted out? That’s a part of what confession does. Does your garden reflect God’s beauty? That’s what it is meant to do. Do we help one another cultivate our gardens? That’s what we are supposed to do in our one another relationships. And regarding that, the word, one another, is also a stewardship term. It includes tending, caring for and protecting. It is a word that draws us into our collective responsibilities in the body of Christ. This is to be a dynamic collective where intimacy can be developed and mutual growth can be achieved. I believe that all these

commandments were meant to be *worked into* our lives so that they can be *lived out* in our relationships. And I believe that the whole of the Christian life is about the privilege of relationship—relationship with Him, with our families, with other individuals and with one another in our fellowship. What a privilege this all is.

We've just talked about forgiving as He has forgiven us. It is a *one another* passage, and the same connection can be made with any of the "one another" passages. For example, encouraging one another as He has encouraged us. Praying for one another as the Holy Spirit is interceding for us. You can continue down the whole list.

Epigenetics

Early on when I mentioned the field of Inter Personal Neurobiology, did I mention the field of Epigenetics? The NIH describes it as the. "...field of science that studies heritable changes caused by the activation and deactivation of genes without any change in the underlying DNA sequence." The CDC refers to it as a, "...study of how our behaviors and environments can cause change that affect the way our genes work."

The first I heard about this field was from the PBS program, "Ghost in Your Genes", that I saw in 2009 (I have a verbal transcript if anyone is interested). The "Ghost in Your Genes" program indicated that certain behaviors and environments could cause certain chemicals to attach to our genes and determine how certain of those genes work. And those changes to the operation of our genes could be passed on to our children along with the DNA package.

This leads me to ask, can removing these chemicals from our DNA also be a part of the Holy Spirit cleansing us from all unrighteousness? If this is true, then the idea of being cleansed from all unrighteousness becomes much more than an amorphous theological doctrine, and truly expands our understanding of how the Holy Spirit indwells us and works in our lives.

Indwelling Holy Spirit

Along that line, I'd like to introduce something else I've been considering. It's speculative so I'd like your thoughts.

At the last supper, a passage that has five one another verses, one of the things emphasized by Jesus is the continuing relationship between us and both him and the Father. In verse 10 he says, "I am in the Father and the Father is in me. In

verse 20 He modifies that a bit. “I in my Father and you in me and I in you.” Jumping back to verses 16 and 17 Jesus tells them the Father will send the Holy Spirit and “He remains with you, and will be in you.” This begs us to ask: Where or how does the Holy Spirit indwell us? **What do you think?**

Here is what I am thinking. When we were born physically, it was because a sperm cell from our father joined an egg cell from our mother. And that combination inhabits every one of our cells. In a sense you could say that physically, we are indwelled by our parents. And in a way, they are a part of us rather than us being a part of them. Is it possible that the Spirit indwells us similarly right down to the cellular level? **Tell me what you think.** In 1 John 3:9, the apostle says that anyone born of God does not practice sin because God’s seed remains in him. Do you know what the Greek word for “seed” is? Sperma. If we are born again, God’s sperm remains in us. Does this mean that, when we are “born again”, the Holy Spirit indwells us right down to the cellular level much like our parents’ DNA indwells us? Whether this is true, I am convinced that the reality has to be something just as or even more profound than that. This means that He is fully in us at all times. He will not override our will, but He is ready to act in us powerfully to bring about God’s will as we cooperate with him. But further than that, does this involve both a rewiring in our brains and chemical changes cellularly? If this is true, it certainly would expand our understanding of the power and mystery of the Holy Spirit’s ministry in our lives, and it makes His indwelling a serious matter that we dare not take lightly, but avail ourselves of constantly.

Here is another way to look at it: Take a bottle of water like this (open the bottle), and add a pack of Crystal Lite like this (open the package and pour into the bottle). This is a fusion. The water molecules and Crystal Lite molecules fuse together. Is that a helpful picture?

The **One Another** Passages in Scripture:

We will look at 47 passages in Scripture that deal with the “*one another*” relationships. These are found in 16 New Testament books. So, these are given to a large variety of church members in a large variety of contexts. They are distributed by author as follows:

Paul	27 passages.	5 have “ <i>one another</i> ” twice.
John	12 passages.	

Peter	4 passages.	
James	3 passages.	1 has “ <i>one another</i> ” twice.
Hebrews	1 passage.	
Mark	1 passage.	

So, unless you bring these all together into one place, you will miss some powerful teaching which would have easily been picked up by the people who first received these letters. I say that 1) because of the word, one another, itself and how they would immediately understand it, 2) the context in which each writing was received, but also 3) some of the grammar as well. Again, these would have immediately been recognized by the first recipients.

There are several important words from these New Testament passages that we need to look at as we begin:

First is *alleilon*, translated, “one another”. It is derived from a word meaning “other”. In Greek there are two words that translate as “other”. *Heteros* which means “other of a different kind” (also sometimes translated “neighbor”), and *allos* which means “other of the same kind”. “*One another*” comes from the second word. This implies a sameness in relationship. In our culture, when we think of the words *one another*, we tend to think of individuals in a group. We tend to think in terms of several dyadic relationships. This was not the primary thrust of this N.T. word.

The word *alleilon*, focuses on the community of the group. It is a collective term and always in the plural. When you think in terms of our study, you should think of group dynamics, how the group works together, not just how individuals work within the group. This is the word used of the Pharisees when they met to discuss how to deal with Jesus. It says they were discussing with one another. That is often translated “*among themselves*”. This was a collective, group discussion. Everyone was reflexively communicating within the group as a group function. It was much like in Mark 4:39-41 where Jesus calmed the winds and sea. Then it says of the disciples, “...*they became very much afraid and said to one another, ‘Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?’*” Those in a collective culture usually pick up on this meaning much more readily than those, like us, from an individualistic culture.

Second, there is another word in the New Testament, *heautos*, that is sometimes

translated “one another”. It focuses on the individuals. It means “each to the other” and is more like the way we use “one another”. *Heautos* can be plural or singular depending on the context.

Let me give you an example that might help. I’m going to describe two contrasting types of family interaction. One is the family that my son married into and the other is the one I married into. We share some similarities. But here is how we differ. When we gather for Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner with my son’s in-laws, we all sit around the table and talk. Usually there will be three or more different conversations going on between people who are sitting near each other. This is most like the Greek *heautos*, “*each one to the other*”. In contrast, when I have been with Sue’s family, we also sit around one table. But there is only one conversation going on. We are all a part of that one conversation. We are all contributing to that one conversation. That is more like the Greek *alleilon*. And it is one of the best examples I can think of to distinguish the differences. Does that make sense to you? **What is your experience in your own families? Does that make a difference in how you relate to one another here?**

Third, *koinonia* is another word that is important in our discussion. It occurs 20 times in the N.T., once in Acts and the rest in the epistles. It is usually translated “*fellowship*”. At the heart of the meaning is a group in which there is active co-participation. It describes participation together and sharing things in common. It is one of the key concepts you must understand in order to grasp what the “one another” passages are about.

Fourth, related to *koinonia* is the word, *koinonios* which occurs 10 times in the N.T., twice in the gospels and the rest in the epistles. It refers to a *partaker* or *participant*. It personalizes the idea of *koinonia*: it refers to one or more who are participants, not just spectators, and hold things in common with the group. In these ten occurrences, seven times it is plural—partners. Twice Paul refers to himself as a partner (singular) and once he refers to Titus as a partner (singular). In all three cases it means a partner in participation with others. **What do you think is the significance of so many plural uses? Do you think that describes our fellowship here at Bethany?**

Fifth, the word, *oikodomeo*, a verb, occurs 39 times in the N.T. It means to build. It plays a central role in the “one another” concept. It is seen in the instruction to build up *one another*.

Sixth, related to *oikodomeo*, the word, *oikodome* occurs 18 times in the N.T. It is a

noun referring to a building, the result of building up. It, along with the word, body, is often used to describe us as believers. We are both a *body* (1 Cor. 12 expands on the idea of a body) and a *building* (1 Pet. 2:5 says we are living stones being built up as a spiritual house). This is part of what it means to be a *koinonia community*. And each community is a unity of diversity. Everyone has a part. Everyone has a contribution. And they only work well when all are contributing.

Each of these two words and their derivatives, conveys a different picture of our relationship with one another and with God. These words will help us in understanding the “one another” passages.

One other thing needs to be mentioned. You are familiar with active and passive voices in English. What does each mean? Active: the subject performs the action. Passive: the subject receives the action. In Greek there was an in between called the Middle voice. It indicates that the subject both received the action and also participated in it. It is frequently used in these passages. This would have been immediately understood by those who first read or heard these letters read. They would recognize this as an additional emphasis on the one another concept.

In the list of passages we will study, we will look at some specific categories of one another relationships. This might change somewhat over the course of this study.

We will begin with the passages in John’s gospel. There are five and all are found in the chapters that describe the last supper. Four of them are about loving one another. The fifth is about serving one another.

There is a description I’d like to quote from the Life Application Bible:

“Being loved is the most powerful motivation in the world. Our ability to love is often shaped by our experience of love. We usually love others as we have been loved. Some of the greatest statements about God’s loving nature were written by a man who experienced God’s love in a unique way. John, Jesus’ disciple, expressed his relation to the Son of God by calling himself “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 21:20). Although Jesus’ love is clearly communicated in all the Gospels, in John’s gospel it is a central theme. Because his own experience of Jesus’ love was so strong and personal, John was sensitive to those words and actions of Jesus that illustrated how the One who is love, loved others.

Jesus confronts each of us as He confronted John. We cannot know the depth of Jesus' love unless we are willing to face the fact that He knows us completely. Otherwise, we are fooled into believing He must love the people we pretend to be, not the sinners we actually are. John and all the disciples convince us that God is able and willing to accept us as we are. Being aware of God's love is a great motivation for change. His love is not given in exchange for our efforts; his love frees us to really live. Have you accepted that love?"

Along with what this says, we need to remember what John says in 1 John 4:19. "We love because He first loved us."

Let me share a few statistics:

John uses the verb form of "love" in his gospel 37 times and 28 times in 1 John (2 in 2 John and 1 in 3 John). He accounts for 68 times out of the 142 times it appears in the whole N. T. 15 of those times occur in the fourth chapter of 1 John.

He uses the noun form only 7 times in his gospel, but 18 times in 1 John (twice in 2 John and 1 time in 3 John just like the verb). So, he uses the noun 28 out of the 116 times it appears in the whole N. T. 12 of those times also occur in the fourth chapter of 1 John. John uses that chapter to thoroughly describe what love is and what it does, as well as emphasize that its source is always God.

I think the overwhelming number of times John uses the verb indicates how he views love as active. For him love is not just a theological concept. It is an action.

I think this is a good way to begin looking at these passages in John.

In John 13 when Peter says Jesus will never wash his feet, he uses a double negative construction which is a very strong statement. I want to take off from that and insert an idea which is not one of the one another passages but a very important promise that God makes to us. In Heb. 13:5, he says, "I will never leave you, not only that, I will never forsake you."

There are five negatives in this short verse. Two of them are that double negative I referred to. They are connected by a fifth negative. This is the most strongly worded negative in all of Scripture.

The verse is in two parts. In the first part God promises never to leave us. This means to leave the vicinity. Here is a good demonstration. At this point I walked our of the middle exit door of the room. I then said, "Can you hear me?" The

class answered “Yes”. Then I asked, “Can you see me?” They answered, “No.” I reentered the room from the door next to the kitchen and explained that was on purpose. Because entering that way, everyone in the class was in my line of sight and I was in all of their lines of sight. This is what this word means. You will never be out of my sight. And just as important, I will never be out of your sight.

The second promise is that He will never forsake us. This means he has hold of us and will never let go. I asked Pastor Trevor to come up front, then asked for a hug, which he did. I kept my arm around him and explained that in this promise, God is saying He has hold of us and He will never let us go.

This is one of the strongest passages I know of in the Bible of God’s promises to us. This is a good place to end the lesson until next week.