



Part 1: The “One Another” Factor

Jesus’ Teaching

To better understand *how* the church operates, it is imperative to observe the vital bond between the Christians of the local church (and Christians in general). Jesus spent a lot of time in His ministry teaching the human element of His spiritual kingdom. For example, once He taught simply that:

[...] whatever you want men to do to you to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the prophets.¹

Jesus taught His followers that to achieve a successful relationship with others, we must treat one another with the respect, understanding, and love that we want to receive. There are a few principles based on this teaching: (1) We should act first, not waiting for others to initiate. (2) We should act regardless of whether they respond in the same manner. (3) We should act with consideration to their feelings by attempting to walk “in their shoes.” (4) We should act in wisdom, not letting our emotions or selfishness corrupt a meaningful relationship. Jesus concluded by saying that such actions are the embodiment of the entire covenant God had established in the Old Testament.

“One Another” Expanded

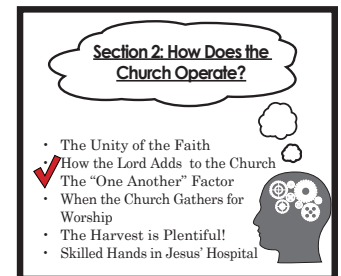
Jesus expanded on the principle of doing to others as we would have them do to us throughout His gospels.² The apostles also wrote frequently about the vital relationship among Christians. The *One Another factors* communicate the godly way in which relationships are to be formed, maintained, and relied upon even in times of great personal struggle.

An essential part of a local church’s spiritual health is the way that the Christians perceive one another and how they interact together. The church is a spiritual family, and must learn to cooperate as one. The following Scriptural concepts are but a sample of the New Testament’s teaching on the *One Another Factor*.

Love One Another

*A new commandment I give to you, that you **love one another**; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.³*

*Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to **love one another**.⁴*



¹ Matthew 7:12

³ John 13:34-35

² Mark 12:30-31, John 13:31-35,

⁴ 1 John 4:11

God loved us so much that He sent His only Son to die for our sins. Christians reflect this love and must be known throughout the world as a people who love one another. The Bible offers several ways that Christians can apply the *love one another* factor.

*Christians care for one another.*⁵ We may express our love by caring for each other in sickness or in need. We can open our homes in hospitality. We celebrate the victories and cry the defeats together, as we are genuinely interested in the lives of one another.

*Christians are kind to one another.*⁶ There may be personality conflicts between those who normally would not associate together. We demonstrate our love in the kindness we show one another. It may be with kind words when one has been rude. It may be through kind deeds when another is too proud to ask for help.

*Christians forgive one another.*⁷ Christians understand that God's love triumphs over hate or personal grudges. Christians show maturity when we forgive each other and work through personal problems instead of gossiping or ignoring one another.

Teach One Another

*Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.*⁸

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another.*⁹



Whether one is beginning their new life in Christ, or has fifty years' experience, everyone can learn and grow. An older Christian's wisdom grounds the young in the faith. A new Christian's zeal lights the "fire" within the heart of seasoned Christians. The Bible shows many ways to make the *teach one another* factor relevant in daily living:

*Christians encourage one another.*¹⁰ We can teach each other through developing a mutual confidence and hope. We build such encouragement through affirming that we are in this together. Sometimes people feel like the Christian life may be too hard, or that they are not good enough to be loved by God. Our encouragement can help each other focus on what matters and let go of what is holding us back.

*Christians convince one another.*¹¹ We lean on each other for help to understand God's word. There may be preconceived ideas or training from another religion or worldview that needs to be corrected. Christians must be prepared to speak the truth in love to each other.

*Christians rebuke one another.*¹² There will no doubt be times when someone is not only wrong, but refuses to listen to wise counsel. At times like this, Christians are to rebuke and correct the one who is in rebellion. The Bible says that correction and discipline are a necessary part of teaching one another. The purpose of this teaching is never to express hatred or personal superiority, but to save a soul from Hell by showing them the error of their ways.

Help One Another

*Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*¹³

⁵ 1 Corinthians 12:25

⁹ Colossians 3:16a

⁶ Ephesians 4:32

¹⁰ Hebrews 10:24-25

⁷ Colossians 3:13

¹¹ Ephesians 4:15,25

⁸ 1 Thessalonians 5:11



*[...] bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*¹⁴

We are the body of Christ. The different parts of the body need one another in order for the body to function in a healthy and normal way. Christians need one another to help during difficult times. The Bible offers various ways for Christians to help one another.

*Christians confess their sins to one another.*¹⁵ There may be nothing as humbling as admitting our failures. However, the affirmation that others are praying for us and understand our needs is a great comfort. No one should bear their guilt and shame alone. Through mutual confession, Christians help one another along this spiritual life.

*Christians submit to and serve one another.*¹⁶ The Lord Jesus taught us that the greatest among us will be the servant. He washed His disciples' feet as an example of how we are to treat one another. There will be times when we are inconvenienced, burdened, or even frustrated by Christians in need. Even so, Christians should take joy and satisfaction in serving one other.

*Christians forgive one another.*¹⁷ This is a repeated factor, but worthy considering that sometimes forgiveness is a burden to be bore. Christians can sometimes be immature and selfish. They may hurt others and not know it. Mature Christians bear the weakness of immature, forgiving their immaturity and patiently helping them grow.

A Spiritual Family

Why should we spend time studying about ways that Christians treat each other? Why not spend time on *more important things*? The reason this matters is because the church is a spiritual family. The *One Another Factor* is a mindset that Christians must have towards each other. Once, Jesus was teaching a group of His disciples when He was told that his mother and brothers were nearby. He said:

*Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.*¹⁸

The apostle Paul continued this mindset by explaining our relationship to God the Father: His children through adoption.

*But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship [...] So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.*¹⁹

The Holy Spirit used the concept of adoption to help us understand how our spiritual family functions. We understand that, in general, adoption is an addition of a child to a family motivated by loving parents. To choose an unrelated child, and to love that child unconditionally, is a beautiful and honorable action. Christians everywhere are part of the adopted family of brothers and sisters in Christ. What a wonderful God we serve, that He would compare our salvation to the adoption of a child! The Bible says:

*See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.*²⁰

¹² 2 Timothy 4:2, 1 Corinthians 5;

² Thessalonians 3:14-15

¹³ Galatians 6:1-2

¹⁴ Colossians 3:13

¹⁵ James 5:16

¹⁶ Ephesians 5:21; 1 Peter 5:5

¹⁷ Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13

¹⁸ Matthew 12:49-50

¹⁹ Galatians 4:4-6 (NIV)

²⁰ 1 John 3:1 (ERV)

Part 2: When the Church Gathers for Worship

Section 2: How Does the Church Operate?

- The Unity of the Faith
- How the Lord Adds to the Church
- The “One Another” Factor
- ✓ When the Church Gathers for Worship
- The Harvest is Plentiful!
- Skilled Hands in Jesus’ Hospital

What is Worship?

To worship means: *to adore or pay divine honors*. This is a general idea because we can adore or pay divine honor to a great number of things. Some parents worship their children. Some teenagers worship their favorite musical groups. Some businessmen worship their jobs or the money they gain from it.

The Bible offers a simple motivation for why Christians worship God: because God alone is *worthy* of worship.¹ God made everything. He doesn’t dwell in a temple, and doesn’t need anything from us. His great love offers mankind the opportunity to live forever in Heaven after death. We don’t deserve such a gift, and yet the Father loved the world so much that He have His only Son to die for our sins. And so, the church gathers together to worship God. The church’s assembly is a wonderful opportunity to give back to God a tiny portion of all the blessings He has given to us!

Jesus’ Teaching About Worship

Once, Jesus explained some valuable lessons about worship in the Christian Age:

*But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in **spirit and truth**.*²

First, Jesus explained that the Father seeks true worshipers. That means that God cares about our worship. True worship is more than how we feel or what we want to do. It is paying God divine honor according to the His word. Second, Jesus taught that those who desire to worship God *must* worship in *spirit and truth*. No exception is given to how we prefer to worship, only the duty to obey. How do we worship God in spirit and truth? To worship God in *spirit* means our heart and attitude (mindset) are focused on honoring God. To worship God in *truth* means that in addition to our mindset, our actions obey as God has instructed.

*The Church’s Worship (in Spirit and Truth)*³

When the church of Christ comes together on Sunday, true worship involves the actions of singing;⁴ prayer;⁵ Bible study;⁶ offering;⁷ and the Lord’s Supper.⁸ Why does worship involve these items? We can take comfort in God’s word. *For God is not the author of confusion but of peace.*⁹ Instead of confusing the world by changing the pattern of worship to fit the needs of each culture, Christians unite around the simple and peaceful pattern God has provided.

God’s pattern for worship in the New Testament is meant primarily to praise God, honor the Lord Jesus and to edify the church.¹⁰ This time together spent in worship helps Christians to spiritually: draw near to God, refocus, heal, encourage, and be edified. Worship is more than “going through the motions.” When people think that they can check off their items of worship, and go back to their “normal life”, they are gravely mistaken. Consider an example with the Lord’s Supper. The Bible says:

¹ See *Christian Basics: Why Should We Worship God?*

² John 4:23-24 (emphasis added)

³ See *Christian Basics* for studies into the simple worship of the church.

⁴ Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16

⁵ 1 Corinthians 14:14-15, James 5:13-18

⁶ 1 Corinthians 14:26

⁷ 1 Corinthians 16:1-2

⁸ Matthew 26:26-29, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

⁹ 1 Corinthians 14:33

¹⁰ Psalm 99:5, Luke 22:19, 1 Corinthians 14:17, 26, 40

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.¹¹

Besides the *actions* of eating unleavened bread and drinking grape juice from a cup, God expects us to do so in a *worthy manner* (heart and attitude). To not focus on Jesus is to worship in an *unworthy manner*. Christians are warned that doing so brings judgment on ourselves. Worshiping God in spirit and truth requires proper action and mindset.

Worship In Truth (actions)	Worship in Spirit (mindset)
Singing: songs of praise to God	A focus of making melody in your heart to the Lord. ¹²
Praying: a group petition to God to praise Him and request His blessings and provision.	A focus of listening to and agreeing with the needs, thanksgiving, petitions, and praise. ¹³
Bible study: a time of learning from God's word	A focus of edifying, listening, and learning. ¹⁴
The Collection: a free will offering of money.	A focus of generosity and joy. ¹⁵
The Lord's Supper: a communion or sharing of unleavened bread and grape juice	A focus of reflection and memorial for what Jesus has done. ¹⁶

When the church gathers for worship, it is a special time. Whether meeting in a building, a house, or under a tree, it is the time when Christians unite to worship God in spirit and truth. We are approaching God's presence!

God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be held in reverence by all those around Him.¹⁷

Does It Really Matter What We Do in Worship?

Worship in spirit and truth is pure and simple. Some may not be satisfied. They ask, "Why not make it more eventful or entertaining?" Perhaps they believe that a praise band that uses a guitar, piano, and some drums will make the worship experience more emotionally meaningful than simply singing. They seek to change God's worship to a pattern that is more pleasing to them. The Bible describes such worship this way:

- **Vain Worship:**¹⁸ Unsuccessful or erroneous worship. Vain worship fails because it has no Divinely authorized purpose.
- **Ignorant Worship:**¹⁹ Worship without awareness. God overlooked ignorance in past ages, but in the Christian Age, He declared that all should repent.²⁰
- **Forced Worship:**²¹ Worship that centered on personal emotion and opinion as the ultimate authority. Man's emotions and opinions are a deceitful guide.

Some may say that the Bible does not teach that we are *saved* by our worship but by God's grace through faith.²² This is correct. Thank God for the gift of salvation! However, while grace through faith grants our access into God's holy kingdom, we will be judged by our obedience!²³ Instead of entering a quagmire of "what-if" scenarios, Christians should remember Jesus' teachings: *God seeks true worshipers and we must worship God in spirit and truth.* As an example of how serious worship can be, consider an Old Testament example:

¹¹ 1 Corinthians 11:28-29 (emphasis added) ¹⁹ Acts 17:23

¹² Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16 ²⁰ Acts 17:30

¹³ Philippians 4:6-7, 1 Corinthians 14:16 ²¹ Colossians 2:23

¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 14:26 ²² See: *Christian Basics: How to Become a Christian*

¹⁵ 2 Corinthians 9:7 ²³ From beginning (Matthew 12:36-37) to end (Revelation 20:12), the New Testament warns of

¹⁶ Luke 22:19 judgment based on our actions. See: *Christian Basics: How Will We Be Judged?*

¹⁷ Psalm 89:7

*Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord. And Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the Lord spoke, saying: 'By those who come near Me, I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified.'"*²⁴

Whether they were worshiping in vain, ignorance, or with forced motives, God did not accept their sacrifice. He had an expectation for worship then, and He has a expectation for worship now.²⁵ Praise God that we live in the law of grace! We do not have to fear fire from Heaven when we disobey. However, Christians must worship as God commands or be prepared to answer for it in judgment. The good news is that worshiping God in spirit and truth comes naturally when one appreciates the wonderful God we serve!

Duty & Devotion Every Sunday

Christians have a duty to worship God every Sunday.²⁶ This duty is motivated not only by God's word, but by a devotion given in love to the God we serve. However, sometimes people have other commitments that conflict when the church assembles. Why should Christians make regular Sunday worship a priority?

Christians are to seek the kingdom of God first.²⁷ Seeking God's kingdom first means to prioritize one's life around God's will. This includes weekly, consistent worship with the church. How can one seek God's kingdom first if they are absent when the church assembles? If the situation is within our control, our excuses are simply confessions of seeking something else before God.

Christians are to encourage one another!²⁸ Your presence encourages others. Your lack of presence cannot. When the church gathers to worship God, we have an opportunity to stir up love and good works with one another! By not taking time to worship with the church, we lose the opportunity to fill our lives with godly encouragement and offer this cherished gift to others in need.

Christians are commanded to "not forsake the assembly."²⁹ Forsake means *to abandon, leave behind, or desert*. To forsake the assembly means to abandon the church for one's personal priorities. Let's be careful to correctly understand this command. Infirmary and emergency, (situations beyond our control) are **not** forsaking the assembly. A work shift, hobbies, recreation (situations within our control) are times when we have chosen to forsake the assembly and disobey God's command.

Christians must remember the duty to worship God in spirit and truth every Sunday. This duty comes naturally when one is devoted to the God of our salvation! What a wonderful opportunity we have to give back to God a tiny portion of all the blessings He has given to us! The Bible says: *I was glad when they said to me, let us go into the house of the Lord!*³⁰ Thanks be to God for the opportunity to offer along with other Christians the *fruits* of our lips, heart, and mind! May God continue to be honored by the worship of the church that Jesus built.

Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18).

"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. (Acts 20:28)

²⁴ Leviticus 10:1-4

²⁷ Matthew 6:33

²⁹ Hebrews 10:25

²⁵ Romans 15:4

²⁸ Hebrews 10:23-24

³⁰ Psalm 122:1

²⁶ Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; See *Christian Basics: Why do Christians worship Every Sunday?*