

## The Church's Greatest Need

*1 Thess. 5:11-28*

### INTRODUCTION

Today the church has many problems. On the national level and locally, there are faulty methods and faulty theology, and then there is the pressure to bow to the world's godless agenda. Another difficulty is our cultural lack of community, our individualism and tendency to "go-it-alone." These all combine to make it hard for churches to flourish.

I believe that one aspect of church life is especially vital in today's world. One could even call it "The Church's Greatest Need." The right doctrine is important, but church's fail even with good doctrine. A good pastor is necessary, but even more important than a pastor is the body life of the church. The greatest need is for the people in the church to be the church for each other. Each one of us should be involved in what I call "one-another" ministry. It is this ministry that is absolutely essential to a healthy church.

Many of you might be familiar with the Sunday School nursery rhyme that starts like this: "Here is the church, here is the steeple. Open the doors and see all the people." Now I can't remember how to do all the hand motions that go with it, but I remember doing them as a kid.

This little rhyme illustrates a problem with how many of us think of the church. We think of a church as a building, like the one we are in, with a steeple and pews. And then, inside the doors are all of us, the people. But church is more than a place, and it is more than a building. The church is the people. Our building is just a "meeting house" as the Puritans used to say. The Heights Church meets here in this building. But The Heights Church has an existence beyond mere brick and mortar, steeple and door. The church is an organism, not an

organization. We are a living, breathing, representation of the body of Christ.

So instead of thinking today about "coming to church" or "being present in church" I want us to think about "being the church." What does it mean to *be* the church? Why does God place us with other believers into a living body of Christ? What exactly is this all about?

Being the church is more than just coming together to have our pastor minister to us. The New Testament indicates that the pastor's job is to help the members of the church do the work of the ministry. The church, like a body, needs all of its members to function. We each need each other, and each part supplies what another part lacks. So being church, is about finding our ministry, finding our place to live out the Gospel. It is about us encouraging, loving, and caring for one another. Our text helps us learn more about this "one-another" ministry.

READ 1 Thess. 5:11-28

### I. What is "One-Another" Ministry?

Before we see our message specifically from 1 Thessalonians, it will help us to see a brief overview of this idea from all the NT.

#### A. One-Another Commands in the New Testament

1. Love one another (John 13:34-35, Rom. 12:10, 1 Jn. 3:11).
2. Live in harmony with one another (Rom. 12:16; 15:5).
3. Welcome one another (Rom. 15:7).
4. Instruct one another (Rom. 15:14).
5. Care for one another (1 Cor. 12:25).
6. Comfort one another (2 Cor. 13:11).
7. Agree with one another (2 Cor. 13:11).
8. Through love, serve one another (Gal. 5:13).

9. Bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2).
10. Bear with one another in love (Eph. 4:2, Col. 3:13).
11. Speak truth with one another (Eph. 4:25, Col. 3:9).
12. Be kind to one another (Eph. 4:32).
13. Forgive one another (Eph. 4:32, Col. 3:13).
14. Sing to one another (Eph. 5:19).
15. Submit to one another (Eph. 5:21).
16. Teach and admonish one another (Col. 3:16).
17. Exhort one another every day (Heb. 3:13).
18. Stir up one another to love and good works (Heb. 10:24).
19. Encourage one another (1 Thess. 4:18, 5:11; Heb. 10:25).
20. Confess your sins to one another (James 5:16).
21. Pray for one another (James 5:16).
22. Show hospitality to one another (1 Pet. 4:9).
23. Use your gifts to serve one another (1 Pet. 4:10).
24. Have fellowship with one another (1 Jn. 1:7).
25. Build one another up (1 Thess. 5:11).
26. Do good to one another (1 Thess. 5:15).

#### **B. Corporate nature of the New Testament**

1. Most of the books in the NT are written to churches.
2. Most of the commands and instruction are given to the entire church to do, corporately.
3. Philippians 1:1 is written to the church, together with the elders and deacons – but the church first.

#### **C. Definition of "One-Another" ministry**

1. The ministry of caring and helping, sharing and encouraging, welcoming and hosting, praying for and singing with, fellowshiping and loving, encouraging and exhorting, teaching and stirring up, doing good to and building up in the faith.

2. This is not done to us by professional ministers or elders or teachers.
3. This is our job to do to each of those around us.
4. We are to teach, love, help, welcome, build up, and exhort.
5. We have all been given gifts and are to use them to serve the body in love.

TRANSITION: Now what does 1 Thessalonians tell us about this indispensable ministry?

## **II. 6 Gleanings from 1 Thessalonians about this "One-Another" Ministry**

### **1. We must depend upon God to energize this "one another" ministry in our personal lives.**

- This ministry flows from the influence of God's Word (specifically the Gospel) in our lives.
- God's word is at work in us believers (2:13)
- The Gospel is bearing fruit and growing (Col. 1:6)
- As we contemplate the Word and the Gospel, "one-another" ministry should thrive.
- God also promises to help us in this ministry (3:11-13, 5:23-24)

### **2. We need to always abound in this regard and grow, doing "one another" ministry "more and more".**

- In calling the Thessalonian Christians to love, encourage and build each other up, Paul recognized that they were already doing this.
- All of us in this room, to one extent or another, have participated in "one-another" ministry.
- We need to recognize that we are called to increase in this, and do so "more and more" (3:12, 4:9-10, 4:1, 5:11).

### 3. This “one another” ministry has many facets.

- We saw this before, but look at how many different ways the Thessalonians are taught to do “one-another” ministry.
- We will explain each a bit more in-depth too, as time allows.
  - (1) love each other – 3:12 and 4:9-10
  - (2) encourage one another – 4:18 and 5:11
  - (3) “be at peace” with one another – 5:13b
  - (4) “admonish the idle [disruptive]” – 5:14a
  - (5) “encourage the fainthearted [through trials]” – 5:14b
  - (6) “help the weak [poor/sick/afflicted]” – 5:14c
  - (7) “be patient with them all” – 5:14d

--extra note: we need to distinguish what kind of interaction we should have with people based on their situation. We must take care in our ministry not to judge or hurt people – but follow God’s Word in how to help others from a pure heart.

  - (8) not seek vengeance (not repay wrong for wrong) – 5:15a
  - (9) “seek to do good to one another and to everyone” – 5:15b
  - (10) “rejoice always” (In context, this is a corporate command) – 5:16
  - (11) “pray without ceasing” (again, while this certainly applies personally, it is a corporate command) – 5:17
  - (12) “give thanks in all circumstances” – 5:18
  - (13) let the Spirit move (do not quench the Spirit) – 5:19
  - (14) do not despise the preaching and teaching of the word / or the ministry of the word through others – 5:20
  - (15) test everything (including sermons and teaching from the context), holding only to what is good – 5:21

(16) abstain from all forms of evil (church discipline could be in view with the corporate context, too) – 5:22

(17) pray for missionaries – 5:25

(18) greet one another (with a kiss) – 5:26

(19) encourage others to read Scripture – 5:27

### 4. This “one another” ministry is clearly a duty of every believer, not merely the elders, deacons, or pastors.

- 5:12 and 14 single out “brothers” (the word includes sisters) – as the ones who are to obey these commands.
- We skipped 5:12 earlier, but this is a one-another command for the congregation to respect, honor or especially to appreciate the elders and pastors.
- Just as we did here in 1 Thess. 5, almost all the epistles are directed to churches and so the commands are all corporate commands. Next time you read through an epistle, try to read the “us/we” into the commands and see how much of a difference that can make.

### 5. This “one another” ministry is indispensable.

- Pastors and elders can do these ministry items for us, but it will take longer for everyone to be served, and it won’t be done as well.
- But this isn’t optional, they are commands to us.
- Look at 4:18.
- Notice, Paul’s having written the words in 1 Thess. to each person in the church was not enough. They were to pick up the book/letter and use its teaching to encourage each other. Just reading the Bible and studying it alone does not cut it. We need the mutual ministry of the Word to be working in us through the mutual encouraging and exhorting, even admonishing, of our fellow believers (along with a weekly sermon from our preacher).

## 6. This “one another” ministry is needed lest our faith die.

- 3:5 indicates that a very real possibility is that our faith might die. Paul was worried that his ministry to this church was not effective.
- When he heard of their faith and love, from Timothy’s report, when he learned of their successful “one-another” ministry (as evidenced by all the statements like 5:11 “as you are doing”) then he was confident their faith was alive.
- Heb. 3:12-14 warns us that in any of us an evil, unbelieving heart can spring up, leading us to fall away. Who knows their own heart, deeply? Who doesn’t have secret longings for the world, and secret doubts? How can we combat this? Heb. 3 says it is through daily exhortings from each other. From each of us, being in one another’s lives, exhorting, encouraging, warning, or comforting as the case may be. This ministry keeps our faith alive and growing, we need one another desperately!

## CONCLUSION

Who’s job is it to make sure our church flourishes? You guessed it. It is our job, yours and mine. It’s our church, after all. Your faith and mine depend on your involvement (and mine) in “one-another” ministry.

People often get disappointed in a church with problems. They move on. For some people, church seems to be all about what they get. What is served to them. Where can they get the perfect experience? There are many valid reasons for moving to another church, don’t get me wrong. But this kind of thinking can be so wrong. Church isn’t about an experience, but about life together. It’s not just about what

service I can get, but what service can I give. Not which place is good enough, but which body can I plug into.

Being the church is hard. Opening up and sharing life together requires vulnerability. But this is the only way to make lasting progress in the Christian life. God never planned for us to be “lone-ranger Christians.” Jesus founded the Church, and He walks among the candlesticks (churches). He is intimately connected to his Body, the Church. If you want Jesus, you’ll find him here, in the church.

May God bless the “one-another” ministry in our church. May he help us develop our relationships in the body. May small groups flourish. May friendships deepen. May each of us find the help we need in giving help to others around us. May we all be blessed by Jesus’ presence here among us. May we realize what Paul says in Eph. 4:15-16. May we:

*“grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”*

## BENEDICTION:

*1 Thess. 3:11-13 Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.*

*1 Thess. 5:23-24 ...may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.*