

January 22, 2006
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene
("One Another" Series)
"Be Devoted To One Another"
Rom 12:10 & 14:19

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Last week I began a series I'm calling the "One Another" Series. The Bible has many one another commands: Encourage one another, Be at peace with one another, Humbly serve and submit to one another, Show kindness and honor to one another, Instruct one another, Forgive one another, and, of course they can all be summed up with the command to Love one another.

God values relationships and He wants us to learn how to live with one another in harmony. He wants us to learn how to love as He loves. There is only one way to do that...it's not an easy solution, but we have to be in community. You see if we are going to learn how to get along with one another we are going to actually *be* with one another.

God created us for community. We really do need each other. Last week I mentioned that we must accept one another, welcoming and receiving each other into our hearts. This week I want to talk about commitment to one another.

I want to read two scriptures from Romans. The first is: Rom 12:10 (NIV):
"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves"
Paul says "Be Devoted To One Another."

He also says in Rom 14:19 (NIV)
"Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification."

I want to read that again from a paraphrase of the New Testament called *The Message*:
(Rom 14:19 TM) "So let's agree to use all our energy in getting along with each other."

I like that, I think it gets the point across. What Paul is saying is that we must be committed to each other.

In Rom 12:10 (Be devoted to one another...) Paul's charge goes against the value of individualism-the attitude of "doing it all by myself" so admired in our society. The Greek word for "be devoted" (*philostorgoi*) means the type of loyalty and affection that family members have for one another. This kind of love allows for weaknesses and imperfections, communicates, deals with problems, affirms others, and has a strong commitment and loyalty to others. Such a bond will hold any church together no matter what problems come from without or within.

A loving community is built through commitment. A healthy Christian community is committed to loving each other, working with each other, and staying with each other.

We can develop a healthy, strong community that lives right with God and enjoy the results of that, only if we do the hard work of getting along with each other. We must be devoted to one another and committed to one another, using all our energy to pursue getting along with each other. So what does commitment to one another mean?

Commitment to one another means:

1. *Loving no matter what.* We must love and support each other at all times. Not just when things are going well, not just when it is easy, but at all times, no matter what. (Prov 17:17 NLT) “A friend is always loyal...” We are to love other people even at their worst, not just when they are loving and kind to us, not only when they are acting loveable. Look at how God loved us: (Rom 5:8 NLT) “But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.” (when we were at our worst!)

God created us for this kind of commitment, this is His will for us. He is committed to us and expects us to be committed to Him and to each other. 2 Cor 8:5(NIV) “And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will.”

We must value each other as God’s creation, people made in His image, recipients and channels for His grace. We must honor one another above ourselves. Make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Work out differences. Don’t speak badly of another (be loyal). Think well of others. Forgive when hurt. Love no matter what.

2. Commitment to one another means: *Being there for one another.* It means “being there” for each other, in good times and bad. First of all, just showing up is a basic sign of commitment. Heb 10:25(NIV) “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” If we care, we will be there. Just your presence at church is source of encouragement. But just showing up is not enough. We must do the hard work of getting to know one another, that we might encourage one another in more specific ways. The missionary who was killed and whose story is told in the new movie, “End of the Spear” once said, “Wherever you are, be all there.”

Building a community of commitment takes time. It means spending time with each other not only at church but beyond that. We must make each other a priority – sharing our lives together outside the church as well as in. We must move beyond superficial friendships. (Prov 18:24 NLT) “There are ‘friends’ who destroy each other, but a real friend sticks closer than a brother.” Those are the relationships we want. We are brothers and sisters in Christ.

That kind of friendship means moving beyond surface stuff and it takes time to develop. We don’t need a lot of friends in this life, but we do need a few good ones.

We need to be there for each other in times of rejoicing and we need to be there for each other in times of difficulty (to listen, encourage, to admonish, warn, rebuke...but we have to develop close relationships in order to do that...always speaking the truth *in love*. Sometimes we need to help in tangible ways like cooking a meal, clean a house, mowing a lawn, fixing a car.)

Gal 6:2 (NIV) “Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” How can we carry each other's burdens if we do not know each other well enough to know what those burdens are? How are we to know each other unless we are committed to one another – committed to spend time together, committed to getting to know each other? Gal 6:2 in THE MESSAGE, a paraphrase of the Bible by Eugene H. Peterson, puts it this way: “Stoop down and reach out to those who are oppressed. Share their burdens, and so complete Christ's law.”

“*Burdens*” refers to the heavy or oppressive burden that a believer cannot carry alone. It could be financial burdens; it could be burdens of temptation. It could be physical, emotional or spiritual burdens. We must help “bear” the loads that others find too heavy to carry alone. However, we must not regard our support of them as a burden, but a joy.

To bear one another's burdens brings joy because to help one another in tangible ways fulfills the law of Christ. How? Paul explained that in Gal 5:14, “For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (NRSV).

When I was in the Army I did my Basic Training at Ft. Jackson, South Carolina. Each morning began with calisthenics – push-ups, jumping jacks, squat-thrusts. Those exercises were followed by a mile run (it felt more like a three mile run). The first day we ran for awhile then came into an open grassy area surrounded by trees. We stopped there for a moment so that the Drill Sgt. could speak to us. He told us that right around the bend (which we could not see from where we were) was “Suicide Hill!” He said, “Everyone *will* make it up Suicide Hill, gentleman (or he may have called us maggots...I don't remember). If anyone does not make it, if just one person does not make it, the whole company will be punished with more calisthenics instead of getting a rest.” We started running again and as we came around the bend there it was, a steep hill that seemed to go straight up. I started up that hill and about half way up my mind was saying, “keep going,” but my legs were saying, “no way!” It was a very strange experience. I wanted to keep going, but it was as if my legs were cemented in place. Out of the corner of my eye I could see another soldier across from me also not moving. We were on each side of this narrow hill, and soldiers were running past us up the middle of the hill. Suddenly, I felt an arm around my waist, the biggest and strongest soldier in our company had me and he grabbed the other soldier across from me around the waist too and ran up the hill dragging the both of us. We noticed that others were being helped too. We all made it up the hill that day. I believe our Drill Sgt. was teaching us a valuable lesson that day. We were in this together, we were to be committed to each other. No one was ever to be left behind. We, at times may need to carry one another's burdens. I

was weighed down, my situation demanded all my resources, and it still wasn't enough. I needed support, I needed someone to help me up. And that is what Paul is telling us to do.

3. *Benefiting each other.* God gives each of us unique abilities for the purpose of sharing them with others. (1 Cor 12:7 NLT) "A spiritual gift is given to each of us as a means of helping the entire church." We must use the gifts God has given us to benefit the entire church, if we don't the church suffers. We really do need each other. We are handicapped if someone doesn't do their part. A greater strain is put on others to make up for those not doing their part. Just as our bodies have to make up for a hurting part of our body. You never know how important a part of your body is until you have to function without it. When I was a kid we were playing basketball over at Barry Berkiwitz's house. He had a hoop on his garage. I was trying to get a rebound and the ball land on the tip of my right pinky (it is still crooked to this day). I never realized how I needed that little finger until I had to get dressed, brush my teeth and do other everyday tasks without the use of it. (Rom 12:4-5 NLT) "Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are all parts of his one body, and each of us has different work to do. And since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other, and each of us needs all the others."

Who or what are you committed to /devoted to? If we asked your friends or family who know you and how you live, what would they say you are devoted to. Are you committed to the church – to one another in the church? We need you.