

**What the Church Must Show...
In a World Filled with Hate**
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The men have been away at Mo Ranch for the last two days, considering what it means to be a man of God, and how to let the Lord have His way in our lives. In the spirit of that pursuit, I want to share some thoughts with all of us here about how we – believers in Jesus Christ, who make up the church – what we must show in a world filled with hate.

I am amazed at the precipitous decline in civility, honesty, fair-mindedness, and impartiality today. The arrogance displayed by those who think that they are right, and therefore they don't have to listen to those who have a different view, or who will knowingly broadcast an untruth if they think it will help their case – this is eating away at the fabric of our society.

It has been said that the church is the conscience of a nation. I agree. Those who believe in God, and have received new life through faith in Jesus Christ, have an 'inner spiritual compass' that others do not. We have that because the Spirit lives in us, and enables us to be guided by His Word. So while others may attack each other, we need to show something different to a world filled with hate.

But what does that mean? What do we show? And how do we do it? It can seem pretty nebulous at times. After all, the Bible says a lot of things, and tells us all kinds of things we ought to do, and ought not to do...so how can we distill it down to some concise guidance for our lives each day? Today I want to suggest just one way we can do this.

To start, I want to give you an illustration of where we're going. A couple of weeks ago I was in Australia. This is what the Australian flag looks like. The five stars on the flag are the Southern Cross – probably the most famous constellation in the southern hemisphere night sky. It has been used by sailors and explorers to point to true south. Here is a picture of the night sky. The Southern Cross looks like a kite, and then off to the side are what are called two 'pointer stars.'

The way it works is this. You draw a line the long way through the cross, and a perpendicular line from the pointer stars, and where they intersect is true south.

We have a similar way of locating true north in the northern hemisphere. Everyone is familiar with the big dipper. Once you've located the big dipper, just draw a line from the two outer stars in the bowl of the dipper and you'll come to Polaris – which also forms the end of the handle of the little dipper – and that is the north star.

Now our question for this morning is, where do we look if we want to know how we should live in the Bible? What are our 'pointers' to show how we must live? The answer is that God has given us "one another's" to point our way. The best known of these is the one that Jesus gave His disciples in the upper room the night He was betrayed. You probably know this verse by heart --

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13.34-35)

Fifteen times in the NT this simple command is repeated: *Love one another*. But living in a day when there isn't much real love around, we need some help. And God has given it.

In the NT, there are a number of other "one another's" that 'flesh out' or explain what it means for us to *really* love one another. This morning we're going to look at ten of them,

1. Be kind to one another.

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. (Eph 4.32)

Greek adjective *χρηστός* comes from a verb that means 'to furnish what is needed.' This is a theme of all the passages that talk about how we should treat one another – that it is not what we want, but what the other person needs.

2. Regard one another as more important than yourself.

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves... (Phil 2.3)

The next verse elaborates on this: *do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others* (2.4). In a 'me first' world, where most people don't see beyond their own wants, Christians view others as more important than themselves, and look out for the interests of others. This is the kind of person everyone loves – and a beautiful expression of God's love for us.

3. Forgive one another.

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. (Col 3.12-13)

How much did the Lord forgive me? How much did He forgive you? When did He forgive us? When we asked. He didn't 'hold out' on us.

In Matt 18, Jesus told a parable of a king who forgave a man a huge debt – 165,000 *years* wages! – then that man found a man who owed him three months' wages, and refused to forgive him that debt. That's like us: God has forgiven us so much! How much do we forgive others who wrong us?

4. Don't speak against one another. (Don't complain against one another.)

Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it. (James 4.11)

Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door. (James 5.9)

One of the best ways we can show the world how different we are as Christians is the way we speak to each other. The

Christians in Galatia were ‘biting and devouring’ one another (5.15). The Corinthians were divided over their leaders, and arguing about which were the greatest gifts. In James 4.1, he says their ‘wars and fights’ come from their desires – they covet what others have.

When James says that ‘the judge is right at the door,’ he is referring to Jesus, before whom every Christian will stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The picture is of a defendant in a courtroom, and the judge is just about to enter. We should be thinking about how we will be judged by Christ, instead of judging and condemning each other.

5. Serve one another.

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. (Gal 5.13)

When it says here for us to “serve” one another, it does not use the Greek word for a ‘servant’ – *diakaneo* – the word from which we get ‘deacon’ – that refers to someone who ‘waits on tables.’ Instead, this uses *δουλεύω* – related to the Greek word *doulos* – the term for a slave!

There is irony here: We have been called to be free – it was for freedom that Christ set us free (Gal 5.1)! But *because we are free to do so*, we should make ourselves a slave to each other. Again...put others before ourselves.

6. Show tolerance for one another. (Tolerate one another.)

...with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love... (Eph 4.2)

Tolerance is a faddish word today. Everyone tells us to be tolerant. What they mean by this is that we should go against our morals and beliefs and embrace something God calls sin.

But the toleration God wants us to show is tolerance for those who are weak spiritually. A mature Christian may be clear on his or her doctrine, and if someone is confused, they might get frustrated with them. Showing love means being patient with those who are weaker than me, giving the Holy Spirit time to work in their lives.

7. Bear one another’s burdens.

Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. (Gal. 6.1-2)

The context here is critical: Someone has fallen into sin, and we all know that folks in churches know how to condemn someone who has fallen into sin! Paul tells the Galatians to restore that person – then says, *Bear one another’s burdens*.

The word for ‘burden’ here doesn’t refer to something like a backpack – that you might help someone carry; τὰ βάρη refers is a tremendous, unbearable burden, a load that is too much for one person to carry. These are the burdens that get us down, unable to get up. Dave Anderson writes:

There are a lot of things like that, aren't there? Is your wife an alcoholic and you are hiding it from the rest of the family? Is your child a homosexual and you are too ashamed to let anyone know? Has your husband walked out and left you alone? Have you been fired and you don't have a network to help you get a job? Has one of your children just gotten out of jail? Is your daughter pregnant and unmarried but you are going to hide it from the church by sending her out of state to have the baby? Are you on the verge of a breakdown with no one to talk to? Have you become a drug addict but your parents don't know?

The Bible says that when we bear one another's burdens, we *fulfill the law of Christ*. The Greek word for *fulfill* means something like 'fill it up to the brim'! What's the 'law of Christ'? "Love one another." How do we 'love one another right up to the brim'? We bear those burdens that they cannot bear themselves.

8. Stimulate one another to love and good deeds.

...and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (Heb 10.24-25)

Caring for those who are hurting is one thing: The other side is helping people take positive steps. The word for *stimulate* here means to 'stir up, provoke' in a good sense. The author of Hebrews tells us to not forsake our assembling together so we can do this.

Have you ever realized that going to church – gathering with other Christians and worshipping the Lord together – is the place where we stir each other up to do good deeds?

9. Encourage one another.

But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. (Heb 3.13)

Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing... (1 Thess. 5.11)

The Greek word translated *encourage* is *parakaleo*; literally it means to call alongside. A 'paraclete' was a lawyer, one you called to your side when you needed help, comfort. The word is used to describe the Holy Spirit by Jesus. We come alongside each other, and build up each other.

That's the kind of love the church should model before the world. If that's what the world saw in the church, they'd be beating a path to our doors.

10. Accept one another.

Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. (Rom 15.7)

I put this one last because while it is general, it is what I hope NBBC will always be. To 'accept' here means to 'welcome, to receive...to have as a guest.' No pretense, no false piety, just genuine acceptance.

How did Christ accept us? As dirty rotten sinners, with nothing in us that would merit Him saving us. But He chose to go to the cross, knowing that was the only way He could rescue us from our own miserable condition.

That's the way the world – filled with hate and violence and fear and despair – needs to see the church: A place where the love is unconditional, the forgiveness is generous, the concern is genuine, and the acceptance is complete.