

One Anothering, Part 1

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Preacher: Nathan Rambeck

[0 : 0 0] And we're going to spend four weeks on the topic of one anothering. We usually go through books of the Bible, but every once in a while, between books, we'll! We'll do more of a topical series, and that's what we're going to do today. Because we're starting small groups, I thought, let's talk about this, because there's really a reason and a purpose, and Joe spoke to it, about why we would do small groups. It's an opportunity to do what I'm calling one anothering. And some of you are out there like, that's not a word. I know it's not a word, but I didn't make it up. Somebody else did. I've heard it in the past, but it's a word or a phrase that really speaks to a lot of teaching from the Bible that talks about how, as the body of Christ, we should live with one another in the church, the body of Christ. And so you'll see that phrase, one another, many times throughout the scriptures. But I'd like to just start with a few questions, just to get our minds thinking. So one question is, what is the purpose of the church?

Why do we gather together? Why do we join together as a local community of believers? Is it just to hear a sermon? Is it to just get educated in the Bible? What is the purpose of the local church?

Another question, what person or persons outside of your family has had the biggest impact on your faith or your spiritual walk? Think about that. Who in my life, whether it's in the recent past or maybe long ago, has had a tremendous impact on my spiritual walk and on my faith?

Another one, if you were struggling with a trial in your life, who would you share that with? Again, outside of your family, who in your mind would you think, I'm going to go to this person and share with them the struggle that I'm dealing with, the trial that I'm dealing with? And then considering past trials that you've had, who can you think of in your life that has been there for you, that has helped and supported you along the way in some kind of way, whether big or small?

So again, our subject, and I think the title we said is, of this message, is one anothering more than just a Sunday greeting. And so I was reading about some statistics, you know, I think it's the Barna group or one of those polling organizations, and they said, and I'm trying to remember, I didn't write it down, but the number was something like 38 or 40 percent of believers who go to church regularly don't have regular connections with people. They don't have friends at their church. They just show up to a Sunday meeting and then go home, and that's it. And I don't think that's the way the church ought to be, and I think looking at the scriptures, the scriptures bear that out.

[3 : 2 9] So one anothering is just caring for one another in the body of Christ. So that's the definition. If you're wondering, what does one anothering mean? It's caring for one another in the body of Christ.

The term one anothering comes from all of these scriptures, and I'm just going to like read through all these passages. I'm not going to give any reference, but just to give you an idea of where this term comes from in the Bible. Love one another. Be kindly affectionate to one another.

Receive one another. Serve one another. Bear one another's burdens. Forgive one another. Comfort each other. Edify one another. Exhort one another. Consider one another. And even confess your sins to one another. And so all these scriptures, and many of the, these are all New Testament passages, many of them in the epistles of Paul as he teaches about the purpose of the body of Christ, the church, the church, both local and global. And he uses this phrase so often about one another.

And as we start small groups, especially as a church, my goal is to make sure that we as a church are fostering community relationships where we're in each other's lives. And not distant relationships, not just surface level relationships, but to go deeper. And it's not that our church doesn't have that at all. In fact, I think our church does a great job of doing that in a very organic way.

People live their lives together and see each other on a regular basis. But I thought, hey, this is an opportunity to cast a vision for this being a very purposeful part of what we do as a church.

[5 : 27] It needs to be something that's more than just an incidental part of our church. It needs to be a part of the core culture and values that we have here as a local body. So what I'm going to do today is just cast the vision. What does this look like? What does the Bible teach? We'll cast a big picture of what is one anothering and what does it look like? Kind of big picture in general. And then over the next few weeks, we'll dive into some of the details of what it practically looks like.

To be one anothering. You know, many people struggle going to church. Christians, people who are genuine believers. I'm not talking about non-believers who are just not interested in church because they're not interested in Jesus or the Bible or anything like that.

I'm talking about Christian believers who trust in Christ, who are saved by the grace of God. And they just don't like church. Some just opt out completely.

They just don't go to church anywhere. Others, they go to church, but it's more out of religious duty because they feel like they have to. They don't really get much out of it.

And they don't seem to enjoy it. You know, church life is messy. Is that true? Does that resonate with anybody? And it's not just some churches.

[6 : 58] Church life is messy with every church. Every church in America. Every church all over the world.

And is this something that is unique to our modern era? We might think so. You know, there's so many problems today. And back in the good old days, it wasn't like that. You know what?

There weren't any good old days. The church, the life of the church has been messy from the very beginning of the church. As you read through, especially the epistles of Paul that he writes to the churches that he's been to, you read about some of the things that he's addressing, and it's a total mess.

In almost every single letter that he writes, there's some kind of mess that needs to be cleaned up. Factions based on leader fan clubs.

Some people say, I am of this guy. Others say, I'm of this guy, he said to the Corinthians. There was tolerance of sexual immorality in some of the churches. In one case, there was a church where, when they had the Lord's Supper, they turned it into this big potluck meal where everybody was overeating and even getting drunk while they were having the Lord's Supper.

[8 : 16] And then there were things where Christian believers, brothers and sisters, were getting sideways with each other, and they decided that they were going to go to the secular courts and sue them because of conflict that they were having.

And Paul had to address those things. What a mess. What a mess. And church has been a mess, a messy thing for many, many centuries.

And it's not just, again, our church. It's not just some churches. It's the Baptists. It's the Presbyterians. It's the Methodists. It's the non-denominational churches like ours.

It's not just the big churches, right? And it's not just the small churches. It's not just the rich churches or the poor churches. Church life is messy wherever you go.

Why? Why is church life so messy? Somebody just said it. It's the people.

[9 : 32] Because you know what? People are the worst. They are. People are rude, and they're lazy, and they're inconsiderate.

They're annoying. They're hard to please. They're grumpy. They're needy. They're ungrateful. They're pushy. They're inconsiderate. People are the worst.

But you know what else? People are the best. Is that true? People are loving, and kind, and compassionate, and encouraging, and supportive, and helpful, hospitable, and comforting, and friendly, and wise, and patient, and generous, and giving, and gracious, and attentive, and thoughtful, and joyful, and fun, and energizing, and interesting, and entertaining.

People are all those things. Aren't people the best? You know, sometimes, the worst people are not any different from the best people.

Sometimes, you got the worst people over here, and the best people over here. And sometimes, you have the worst people, and the best people, in the same person. We all struggle.

[10 : 58] We all have good times, and bad times. Good days, and bad days. Things that we're good at. Strengths that we have. Weaknesses that we deal with. But you know what?

People are the main ingredient to life. And what is life, anyway, without people? There's not much to life without people.

You know, I think of a movie I watched years ago. By the way, this is not an endorsement. I can't remember what all was in the movie. But Tom Hanks, *The Castaway*. The *Castaway*. And this is a story of a man who gets deserted on an island by himself.

And I forget how long it was, but it was years. And you see what life was like for him by himself without anyone else.

And he tends to go crazy and nutty. And along the way, he tries to develop a relationship with a volleyball. He's so desperate for human interaction.

[12 : 02] And you know what? God, I bet you that if you asked him if he could stay there by himself or just have one grouchy, inconsiderate, rude person to share life with on that island, without a doubt, he would choose that one person.

People are the main ingredient of life. People are what life is all about. And God has designed groups of people that we will interact with and care for each other in a systematic way.

The first group is what we call the family. Moms, husbands and wives, moms and dads. Children, brothers, sisters, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, and nephews.

All make up a family. Usually biological, not always. Sometimes adoption comes into play. But that is God's design. God created the family as a way to care for one another.

But he also created a new group. A group that the family was created when? All the way back in the very beginning, right? With Adam and Eve. The very first family. The husband and wife. Adam and Eve.

[13 : 20] But then when Jesus Christ came and died for the sins of the world, we see that God designed and created a new group of people.

A group of people that would care for one another. That Paul calls the body of Christ. God created this group in his wisdom.

Designed to live life together in community. It's not as intimate as a family. But it is a type of family nonetheless.

We all as believers have become part of God's family. We are called his children. I'm going to start going through some scriptures here.

Romans 8, chapter 16, or excuse me. Romans chapter 8, verse 16 says this about the believer. The spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

[14 : 22] And if children, then heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. If indeed we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified with him. God calls us his children when we trust in Jesus Christ.

Also, we are described as believers as being part of God's household. Ephesians 2, verse 19 says this. Ephesians 2, verse 19. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

You see this throughout the scriptures in the New Testament where those of us that are part of the household of God, we call each other brother and sister.

All of you in this room, you are my brothers and my sisters. We are brothers and sisters together, members of the body of Christ. And just like God designed families as a way to care for one another, a husband cares for his wife, a wife cares for her husband, parents care for their children.

In the same way, God designed this body, this local body of believers, both, I guess, globally as well, but especially the local body, the local community of believers, to care for one another, to have the same purpose.

[15 : 47] And I want to talk about three things about one another. One is, what is the purpose? Why is this so important that we one another, one another?

The first one, I'm going to, and I'll pull up scriptures for each of these, but the first, we'll look at Galatians 6.2. And here's what Galatians 6.2 says. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. That's talking about caring for others in the church. And it says do this because you are fulfilling the law of Christ.

What does that mean, the law of Christ? Is this a commandment? Is it talking about like a commandment like the Ten Commandments? I don't think so. You know, we talk about laws in science, physical laws, that describe God's design for how the world works.

Gravity, momentum, these physical laws, how light works, waves and particles and all that, how all those things work is part of how God designed the world to work.

[17 : 10] Fulfilling the law of Christ is there is a design that God had for us as the body of Christ in Him on how we ought to live and how we ought to live together.

And so when we bear one another's burdens, when we love one another, when we care for one another, we are fulfilling the law of Christ. We are fulfilling God's design for us as members of this body.

The second one we'll look at comes from Hebrews 10, verse 23. It says this, Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching.

You know, life is hard. It's challenging. There are temptations in life, struggles. Sometimes you have to go to the ER in the middle of the night because you have a problem with your heart.

[18 : 31] And not only is just regular life hard, but the Christian life has its own challenges, its own difficulties. And you know, even with the promise that we have from the Lord that He will never let us as believers, those of us who are putting our trust and faith in Him, that He will never let us go out of His hand.

We want to persevere. Persevere through the Christian life. Be faithful. Persevere in our spiritual growth and our love for the Lord.

There are temptations that can come. Temptations to give up being faithful to the Lord. But you know what? God designed this group of believers to come alongside one another to live the Christian life together.

To help encourage one another and strengthen one another to persevere through the Christian life as God designed for us to do it. Another one is growth.

Growth. Ephesians 4.15 says this, but speaking the truth in love, we may grow up in all things into Him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

[19 : 55] This is a passage in which Paul is expounding on this group of believers called the body of Christ. And here he speaks to this idea of growth.

Each member, not just going and listening to a sermon each Sunday, even though that's helpful to our growth, but every member of the body is contributing to the growth of every other member.

It causes the whole body of Christ to grow. Also, just practical support. Going back to Galatians 6.2, bear one another's burdens.

The burdens of life can sometimes seem overwhelming. There's grief and despair and temptation and discouragement and loneliness and fear and anxiety and pain and doubt and shame.

And we need other people to come beside us to help us bear under those things. You know, we were singing that song this morning about, I have decided to follow Jesus.

[21 : 14] My favorite verse is, the third one I think it is, that says, though none go with me, still I will follow. Though none go with me, I'm still going to follow him.

That is my commitment. And I hope that's the commitment of every believer. And it should be. But is that how God designed it to be, that we would follow Jesus alone?

By no means. He intended that we would follow Jesus together. Brothers and sisters, walking together, bearing up under one another, strengthening, encouraging one another as we walk in Christ.

Christ. The last purpose I'd like to look at speaks to the body of Christ being a witness to the world.

In John chapter 13, verse 34, Jesus says this to his disciples. He says this, A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another.

[22 : 23] 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 one for another.

The world will look at the church, the body of Christ, whether it's a local body of believers or the church global, and saying, Hey, those people that love one another, and they love people that are kind of hard to love, there's something there that's different.

Those are those people who are disciples of Jesus. Later on, in John chapter 17, Jesus is praying to the Father.

This is John 17, 20, and he says this, As he's praying to the Father, I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in me through their word. So he's saying, I'm praying for my disciples that are standing here in front of me, but I'm also praying for those believers that will hear their word later.

And this includes us, you and me, who have heard the testimony of those men and trusted in Christ as well. Verse 21, That they may all be one as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.

[23 : 45] See, the unity that believers have in Christ is a witness to the world of who Jesus Christ is, that he is legit.

Jesus is legit. He's not just a fable. Verse 22, And the glory which you gave me I have given them, that they may be one, just as we are one.

I in them and you in me, and that they may be made perfect in one or complete in one, and that the world may know that you have sent me and I have loved them as you have loved me.

So our love for one another is a sign, a signpost out to the world for them to see us and how we live together and they're seeing that God is at work in this group of people.

That the gospel of Jesus Christ, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is not just a fairy tale, it's not just something that makes me feel better, but that the gospel of Jesus Christ is a truly life-changing thing in the life of those who trust in Him.

[25 : 03] The next thing I want to talk about is the priority of one another. One another is something that is not just something that happens by accident.

It's something that we ought to have as a practice, a proactive practice in our life. It's something that needs to be intentional and proactive.

You know, there's a story in the Gospels about the Good Samaritan. Jesus tells a story about someone who helped another person who was in need. But in that case, it was an example of someone who came along, just stumbled across somebody who was in need.

Jesus uses this as an example of your neighbor loving your neighbor. And that is good that we ought to do that when we stumble across someone in need that we should take care of them.

But is that the only time that we take care of those who are in need? The body of Christ requires intentionality in how we care for others. Not just waiting for things to come up, needs to arise, but being diligent, being purposeful about connecting with people day in and day out so that we have more opportunities to help those in need, to bear one another's burdens, to encourage one another.

[26 : 39] Going back to Hebrews 10, 24, again he says, and let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another and so much the more as you see the day approaching.

He's saying, hey, let's get together on a regular basis. And you know, many people over the years have used this verse as like a club to beat people over the head, especially pastors and leaders.

Hey, get in church. It says right here you have to. And I would hope that people would not go to church or be a part of a small group or do some other activity with the church out of a religious obligation.

That's certainly not going to be nearly as helpful. And it's really antithetical to the life of grace that God intends for us. but it is true that when you are disconnected from the body of Christ, you will suffer because God's design was that we would be connected to one another on a regular basis.

And so connecting in ways regularly and more intimately than even a service like this is so important will benefit your spiritual life and it will benefit the spiritual life of those that you connect with.

[28 : 09] And so one of the things that we can do when it comes to prioritizing this idea of one another is to build habits of intentionality.

Attending church services is just one of those habits and maybe not even the best one. Consider other habits of being intentional and connecting with others and I just wrote down a few we'll get into looking at this even further in the coming weeks but hospitality.

Schedule some time maybe once a month to have people from church over or other believers whether they're from the church or not. Schedule some time to invite people over to have dinner lunch breakfast whatever it is.

Consider calling people calling people that you know in church on a regular basis check in with them how's things going how are you doing anything that I can pray with you about habits put things on the calendar put things on your to-do list make habits out of them.

And the last thing I want to talk about is the cost of one another. One another is not always convenient in fact it rarely is.

[29 : 33] One another requires sacrifice. in 1 John chapter 3 verse 16 John says this by this we know love because he laid down his life for us and we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

You know in God's service to us through his humiliation death burial and resurrection all of that cost him something. Philippians 2 speaks to that as well.

and it didn't cost him a little it cost him his life. He literally laid down his life for us. And so his example can be an inspiration and a motivation to us that we would figuratively lay down our lives for one another.

That passage in Philippians 2 verse 1 through 4 says this therefore if there is any consolation in Christ if any comfort of love if any fellowship of the spirit if any affection and mercy fulfill my joy by being like-minded having the same love being of one accord of one mind let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself let each of you look out not only for his own interests but also for the interest of others so there's a sacrifice involved but I think it's a happy sacrifice it's going to cost things it's not just money though there might be money involved resources but it'll cost us time and energy and sometimes getting out of our comfort zone and the question I'd like to end with is but is it worth it is it worthwhile you know going back to the law of

Christ that we read about in Galatians 6-2 that law of Christ this is what God designed us for as members of the body of Christ and so when we ask is it worth it I think about a mother and a mother who bears a child through much difficulty starting you know you've got the nine months and then you have the labor and delivery and then that's just the beginning and then you have the sleepless nights and the crying and the feeding and the colic and taking care of a newborn baby but I look at so many women who go through all of that they sacrifice so much but I see a general satisfaction in their life it's so satisfying it's so satisfying to do what you were designed to do regardless of how much it costs you so I think that we as believers will find the same kind of satisfaction as we one another as we care for those who are part of the body of

[32 : 54] Christ as we pour out our life for one another so to to wrap up as just a call to action what can we do just think for yourself what can I do to level up my one another as I think about all the people in this church and I you know over the years I've been here for seven or eight years now and I have found out so many amazing things that all of you people do for one another it's very encouraging to me but is there something I can do to level that up is there a new habit I can form is there maybe just one thing I can even do just this week to care for someone in the body of Christ to invest in this little group that God calls the body of Christ think about that let's pray and then I'm going to open it up since we have a little bit of time for

Father we love you we thank you that you designed this group of people called the body of Christ as messy as it is and it will always be messy and we shouldn't kid ourselves in thinking that it won't be this side of eternity but we ask you to help us to be helpful caring members of this body that you created to support it just as you intended help us to form those habits to think about these things on a regular basis to contribute to this group that you designed for our purpose and our good we thank you for your help in Jesus name amen amen alright any thoughts okay we've got one already I

I can remember years ago Marv saying this that he likened this assembly every week to coming to the spiritual hospital help us through the next part of the week that always stuck with me yep a spiritual hospital amen and amen to that anybody else how long should we let the awkward silence abide okay we'll end it there oh we've got a young hand raised did you get permission from your daddy go ahead sweetie do you think adopting is okay do I think adopting is okay you know

I think so for sure did you know that in the Bible the Bible talks about us as God's adopted children that he adopted us and so and he uses examples about adoption in kind of the natural world as an example of his adoption for us so I think he thinks that it's a very good thing it has its challenges for sure but a very good thing without a doubt great question all right all right everybody we'll finish up there don't forget as we close here that there are some sign up sheets out there for the small groups if you'd like to try one out again there's no pressure to if I sign my name on this sheet of paper that I'm committed to doing this forever or whatever feel free to in fact if you would like to try going to both groups and just check them out feel free to do so but

I think putting your name on there will give us an indication of hey is this something we can host in a home or are we going to have to meet in church in the beginning things like that