Our Responsibilities to "One Another" in the Family of God

(A Challenge for the New Year)

12-26-2021

INTRODUCTION: Ephesians 5:18-21

***We need to genuinely take care of each other in the family of God!**

How should we take care of each other?

I. **BE MEMBERS with one another (Rom.12:4-5)**
(A plea to contribute our gift to each other)

II. **HONOR one another (12:10)**
(A plea to show family honor to each other)

III. **LOVE one another (13:8)**
(A plea to pay the dept of love to each other)

IV. **EDIFY one another (14:13,19)**
(A plea to be a stepping stone, not a stumbling block to each other)

V. **BEAR with one another (15:1)**
(A plea for patience toward each other)

VI. **PLEASE one another (15:2-4)**
(A plea for unselfishness toward each other)

VII. **UNITE with one another (15:5-6)**
(A plea for oneness with each other)

VIII. **ACCEPT one another (15:7)**
(A plea for impartiality toward each other)

IX. **ADMONISH one another (15:14)**
(A plea for loving confrontation with each other)

X. **WARMLY GREET one another (16:16)**
(A plea to show loving affection to each other)

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Cain sarcastically said to God: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Gen.4:9)

ILLUS: of a family where all of the family members (brothers and sisters) took care of each other. Contrary to that ideal, families today have become less close, less loving, and less patient.

Contemporary society reflects such self-centeredness quite graphically.
Most people seem to be out for themselves; with their own best interests in mind, living for # 1.

Our church is a family (Eph. 2:18-19), and like a family we need to care for one another.

***We need to genuinely take care of each other in the family of God!**

How should we take care of each other?

I. <u>BE MEMBERS</u> with one another (Rom.12:4-5)
(A plea to <u>contribute our gift</u> to each other)

v.4 "We have many members . . . not the same office."

"Office" = function, practice, action

Just as we have <u>many</u> parts ("members") in our physical, human body, and each part has a different function, so is the Body of Christ.

The various parts of our physical body can do some things, but cannot do others.

EX: The eye can see, but cannot hear;
the ear can hear, but cannot taste;
the lungs can take in air, but not water (or else you have pneumonia)

Diversity in the church Body is part of the marvelous plan and wisdom of God.

The key to any sport team is <u>diversity</u> - each player <u>performing</u> his own <u>role</u> (job) to accomplish the goals of the team.

"So we being many are <u>one body</u> in Christ"

We must stop viewing <u>ourselves as an:</u>	And see ourselves as a <u>vital part of the whole:</u>

stranded soldier	--	army
independent player	--	team
isolated soloist	--	grand choir
sole laborer	--	great work force
unneeded church member	--	Body of Christ

"Everyone (of us are) members one of another"

We need each other!

"Members" - this word shows the need for commitment to church membership.

No believer is an island unto himself. We need each other!

The dependence of the human body is exemplified by:

Eating -

You depend on your hands to bring the food to your mouth;
you depend on your tongue to tell you if it is too hot, etc.;
you depend on your teeth to chew it up;
your tongue pushes the food back, and you depend on your throat to force it down to your stomach;
you rely on your stomach to digest it with the help of certain acids which come in at just the right time;
your food then passes into the small intestine, where the nutrients are transported to the hungry blood cells which carry the nutrients to various parts of the body to build up muscle tissue, etc.;
then you depend on your large intestine to carry away the waste.
All of the above mentioned functions are essential for a healthy body, and al of the bodily operations work because of the brain.

Just as no part of your human body exists for itself, but for the assistance of some other bodily function, so no part of the Body of Christ is to exist selfishly for itself.

II. HONOR one another (12:10)
(A plea to show family honor to each other)

"Kindly affectioned" = Greek "philostorga"

"Phileo" - affection;
"Storga" - loyal, family devotion.

"To have a family affection; a loyal devotion like you have with your natural family members"

"Brotherly love" = we are to love each other as you do your physical brother. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. We are in God's family.

We should love each other because we are <u>brethren</u>.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren" (I Jn. 3:14; cp. Gal. 6:10).

In the early church, during a time of severe opposition to Christian, God's people stayed close to each other and cared for each other. The heathen were so deeply impressed by such a unique display of generosity, grace, and selflessness, that they said, "Behold, how these Christians love one another!"

"In honor" = treat others like a dignitary, someone special.

"Preferring" = lit. to let others <u>go ahead</u> of you. The word corresponds to the word "honor." Someone who is honorable goes first.

We need to put others first, to esteem others as better than ourselves (Phil. 2:3).

As Christians we should not strive to outdo one another to gain honor, but we should try to outdo one another in <u>showing</u> honor.

III. <u>LOVE</u> one another (13:8)
(A plea to <u>pay the dept of love</u> to each other)

DON'T BE INDEBTED - TO BILLS.

No one likes bills (we all love receiving letters in the mail, but not when they are in the form of invoices).

V. 8

"Owe no man anything" = don't be indebted in any way to anyone.

It is no sin to borrow; it is a sin to borrow and not pay back.
It is no sin to borrow - EX. of borrowed items -
1.The widow who was told by Elisha to borrow vessels (II Kings 4:1-7)
2.Elisha recovered the borrowed axe head (II Ki. 6:5)
3.Christ borrowed a donkey and a colt (Mt. 21:2-7).

Jesus said, "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away" (Mt. 5:42).

It is a sin to not pay back what you borrowed. "The wicked borroweth and payeth not again." Ps. 37:21

--After speaking about rendering "dues" (opheilas, v. 7), Paul now speaks about not owing (opheilete - v. 8) anyone anything except the debt of love.

DO BE INDEBTED - TO LOVE.

"Love" = agapao. This is the highest form of love (it's not mere sentiment, emotion, nor infatuation). This is God's love (the word does not appear in secular literature prior to the writing of the N.T.)

Agapa love is:

1.Volitional - It's a decision (an un-coerced choice of the will).

2.Rational - It's a thought-out decision [not a mere fleeting, unfounded emotion that prompts a good feeling about someone) Love is based on God and His love toward us.

3.Sacrificial - It's a thought out decision to give for the well-being of someone else (Jn. 3:16)

4.Unconditional - It's a thought-out decision to give for the well-being of someone else whether they deserve it or not (no "strings attached"; no "ifs")

* Rom. 5:8

Love is a fruit of salvation. According to I John it is a prime evidence (proof) that you are saved.
(SEE: I John 2:5, 9-10; 3:10, 14*; 4:7)

Why is the believer indebted to love? Why do we owe it to others to love them?

1. Because of God's love toward you

(I John 4:10-11; cp. Jn. 13:34)
God loved me when I didn't deserve it, and He still does; therefore, what basis do I have not to love even my enemy?

2. Because of God's love toward <u>them</u> (I Jn. 5:1)
If God loves them, so should I, since I am to love what God loves.

3. The reason given in context (Rom. 13:8b) is because of the fact that loves fulfills the moral law of God and <u>we are obligated to fulfill the moral law of God</u> as Christians.

ILLUS: Receiving invoices and statements which read "<u>Balance due</u>" or "Pay this amount." When God gives us His statement, it reads: "Balance due - Love."

Only one debt should carry an unpaid balance due, that is our "debt " to love. This is a debt about which we can never say: "I have paid it in full; I don't owe any more."

IV. <u>EDIFY</u> one another (14:13,19)

(A plea to <u>be a stepping stone, not a stumbling block</u> to each other)

V. 13

Rather than putting thought, time, and energy into scrutinizing someone's life in

order to pass judgment on them, we should instead pour our energies into making sure we are stepping stones for others, rather than stumbling blocks.

"Judge this rather" = decide on this

As believers we affect each other whether we realize it or not. We (by our lives) either hold up or trip up (v. 13); we either cause joy and peace or we cause grief (v. 15); we either build up or we might even destroy (v. 20).

"Stumbling block" - a stone that causes someone to trip and fall

"An occasion to fall" = that which trips us up. Greek = "skandalon' - the stick which caused the trap to fall.

We must not only ask ourselves, "Is this practice, place, or product okay for me?" But the spiritual Christian who has his weaker brother's best interest in mind must ask himself: "Would this practice, place, or product cause him to stumble?"

EX: One man may be able to read certain books and not be bothered by them, while a weaker Christian reading the same books might be tempted to sin.

But the issue is not, "How does it affect me?" So much as, "If I do this, how will it affect my brother? Will it make him stumble? Will it grieve him or even destroy him by encouraging him to sin? Is it really worth it to harm a brother just so I can enjoy some food? NO!" (Wiersbe, p. 561)

Beware of what you do around "baby Christians" (or immature Christians).

ILLUS: When you brought your baby home from the hospital, some things (practices) had to change in the home. You no longer left the scissors on the chair or the steak knife on the kitchen table. Anything that was potentially dangerous, you kept out of reach (EX: pills, medicine, chemicals, tools, etc.). Even though none of those things were wrong, you did not want your baby near them because of the possible harm that could occur. As the child grew and matured, you adjusted your house rules to deal with him in a more adult fashion.

So it is with baby Christians. (SEE Wiersbe, p. 561)

V. 19

"Follow after" = hunt after, to zealously pursue.

Our objective in life is not to do things that would tear apart relationships with other Christians, rather our goal is to do everything in our power to build others up in their faith.

V. BEAR with one another (15:1)
(A plea for patience toward each other)

"To bear" = to bear with; to put up with someone patiently.

In previous context, the patience would be toward those who would be offended or caused to stumble, if you did something that was against their conviction.

"Infirmities" - the weaknesses. Not speaking about physical infirmities, but spiritual infirmities.

Infirmities that stem from spiritual immaturity.

Those who are "weak in the faith" (14:1); those who stumble often due to immaturity (14:13, 21)
(Gal. 6:1-2 - "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ.")

With the diversity of people in the body of Christ, differences in gifts (I Cor. 12), backgrounds, cultures, and various levels of understanding the Scriptures, we need a great deal of patience with each other.

Everyone has their own unique quirks, problems, and personalities; and strong Christians need to bear with such people.

I Thes. 5:14 - "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men."

"Charity suffereth long" (I Cor. 13:4)

It's easier to be patient when you view each other as family.

"A little girl was once carrying a baby, and someone asked, "Is he not heavy?" "No," was the reply, "he is my brother." (Thomas, p. 380).

"Not to please ourselves" - not to live to enjoy our Christian liberty at the expense of others; not to live to gratify our selfish desires (14:15, 17) at the expense of someone else's conscience.

VI. PLEASE one another (15:2-4)

(A plea for unselfishness toward each other)

The ***"pleasing"*** intended by God is:

1) Not doctrinal compromise (EX: being an "ear tickler" - II Tim. 4:3-4)

2) Not to gain popular favor (EX: being a "men pleaser" - Gal. 1:10 - "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.")

3) Not to do eye service (being a hypocrite - Eph. 6:6).

Rather, the "pleasing" God is talking about is doing that which is for the spiritual well being of the other individual.

Sometimes, that which our fellow-brother needs most is loving confrontation (v. 14), not someone who will deceitfully tell him how wonderful he is
(Prov. 27:6 - "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.")

"His neighbor" - a neighbor is anyone who is "next to you" within your sphere of influence (not merely the one who lives next door). A neighbor is anyone with a need (EX: Good Samaritan - Lk. 10:25-37)

"For his good" - toward his good; with a goal toward his benefit.

I Cor. 10:23-24 - "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth."

"Edification" - Eng. word "edifice" which refers to a building or that which is built up).

Our goal as Christians is to find someone we can build up. We are to be on the look out for those who need help (Rom. 14:19). We are to be on the look-out for cracked lives that need spiritual plastering, crumbling people that need cement work, structurally damaged saints who have the right foundation yet have not been building on that foundation with the right materials, who need architectural advice.

It takes unselfishness to be concerned about someone else's spiritual house.

I have found that the best way to build my life spiritually is to be busy laboring to build others. (this is contrary to the world's philosophy, as Jesus confirmed through His teachings [See Mt. 20:25-28] and by his unselfish life [John 13:14-17]).

The pattern for pleasing others is Christ (v. 3)

We are to imitate Christ, in our dealings with other Christians.

"Pleased not himself" - the Kings of kings had every right to be waited on hand

and foot, to live in the world's best luxury, and to have the notoriety of the universe.

Yet He served as the waiter (Jn. 13), He gave up luxury (Mt. 8:20), and humbled Himself (Phil. 2:5-10)

"Christ pleased not himself" - Mt. 20:28 - "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

VII. UNITE with one another (15:5-6)

(A plea for oneness with each other)

V. 5

"God . . . grant you to be like minded" - Only God can produce unity, and He does so by giving us patience and consolation (peace and encouragement), which are fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

Patience and peacefulness are vital ingredients to provide unity.
Eph. 4:2-3 - "With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

"Likeminded" - to set your minds toward the same things.
God is not calling for Christian "clones" in personality, but in sharing common goals - namely, each other's total well-being.

"According to Christ Jesus" = Two ideas:

God wants us to be united by:

1) Following Christ's example (Rom. 15:3, 7)
   (To do as Jesus did)
2) Fulfilling Christ's desire (Jn. 17:21-23)
   (To do as Jesus wants)

Rom. 12:16 - "Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits."

"Oneness with God will lead to oneness among the brethren. When God is first, the result will be unity" (Thomas, p.381)

V. 6

Why should we be united?
In order that we may with one mind (purpose or intention) and one mouth glorify God! To glorify God is to make Him shine before the watching eyes of the world which is looking at us.

1) God is glorified when His people are heading in the same direction ("one mind" = to have the same goals and desires in life) (Mt. 5:16 - "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.")

"With one mind" = with one purpose, the same intention, the same desire. The same word appears in Acts showing the unity of believers - Acts 1:14, 2:46, 4:24, 5:12.

"Abraham's words to Lot are applicable today - "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee. . . for we are brethren" (Gen. 13:8) (Wiersbe, p. 562).

2) God is glorified when His people are saying the same message ("one mouth" = like a grand choir, God's people blend their voices to shout to the world - "Jesus saved! Jesus is true! Jesus changes lives! Jesus cares for you! etc.)
It is a shame for God's people to "talk like the devil" (lies, vulgarity, gossip, etc.).

Believers being "one in mind" is not visible to the world unless it is outwardly expressed by the "mouth"!

SINS that disrupt unity:
--Non-commitment (to church membership and attendance)
--Gossip, slander (judging - Rom. 14)
--Pride and other forms of selfishness
--Divisiveness, discord

VIRTUES that promote unity:
--Humility (Phil. 2:2ff)
--Peace (Ph. 4:3)
--Compassion & Love
> I Pet. 3:8 - "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous"

--Unselfishness
> Acts 4:32 - "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common."

"A chain is only as strong as its weakest link" (We must all be faithful to each other and to the work of God)

"The single most common factor in creating strong family (type) bonding is shared struggle" (Gary Smalley)
"A team that sweats together, gets together"
--For any relationship to work, there must be uniting
(EX: work, sports, church, family).

--Satan fights unity! Don't let Him have a foothold in our church family.

VIII. ACCEPT one another (15:7)
(A plea for impartiality toward each other)

V. 7

"Receive ye" = to accept or welcome; to take ot yourself (same command as 14:1)

"One another" - Regardless of nationality or maturity - Jew & Gentile, weak & strong believers alike.

In previous context, God taught us to <u>accept</u> those Christians with whom we differ about disputable matters (14:1ff).

"As Christ also received us" - our Savior is the perfect example of impartiality.

In order for Jesus to receive us, we did not have to be of a particular <u>race</u> or have a particular <u>ability</u>, or <u>prestige</u> or live at a <u>high economic status</u>.

Rather, He received us:

--Regardless of <u>race</u> (Rom. 10:12 - "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.")
--Regardless of <u>intellect</u> (I Cor. 1:26 - "Not many wise")
--Regardless of <u>ability</u> (talent) ("Not many mighty")
--Regardless of <u>worldly prestige</u> (fame and notoriety; upper crust of society . . . "Not many noble")
--Regardless of <u>economic status</u> (SEE James 2:1-9)

If Jesus has accepted someone, who are we not to?

A question to ask yourself when trying to figure out who you can and cannot fellowship with: **"Does God fellowship with Him?"**

IX. <u>ADMONISH</u> one another (15:14)
(A plea for <u>loving confrontation</u> with each other)

V. 14

"Admonish" - noutheteo - lit. to put into the mind; to confront one's thinking.

A pastor's job is to admonish the flock so that they think Biblically (I Th. 5:12).

As a man thinks, so is he.
"You are what you think."
The way you think and what you think affects every area of your life.
Your thoughts affect your emotions and your actions. Hence, Bible teaching is essential to emotional stability and Godly conduct.

The word "admonish" is used in the sense of: 1)To rebuke and 2) To instruct
"Admonish one another" - The admonishing is not only the pastor's responsibility and privilege but is expected of the laymen to be involved in reciprocal admonition. In the family of God we need to verbally encourage each other.

"Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of a friend" - Prov. 27:17

Prov. 27:6 - "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful."

We are to be encouragers!

Every Christian is to lift up those who fall, strengthen the weak, etc.

--We are to comfort those who are distressed
(II Cor. 1:3-4 - "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.")

--We are to repair (mend) those who are broken by sin (Gal. 6:1-2 - "Brethren if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.")

--We are to convert those who stray from the truth - (James 5:19-20 - "Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.")

X. WARMLY GREET one another (16:16)

(A plea to show loving affection to each other)

Beware of being cold, formal, stand-off-ish, and distant.

"An holy kiss" -
"Holy" - set apart from impurity and sin
"Kiss - lit. an expression of affection.

In the culture of the early church the men would greet the men with a kiss (they do the same in many parts of the world today); and the women would greet the women with the same.

God wants us to express our affection for each other in a manner that is not offensive or sinful.

Different cultures express friendship in different ways: Italians hug; Americans shake hands; Eskimos rub noses; and Jews kiss on the cheek. How ever you express your heart-felt affection for other believers, make sure they know you genuinely care for them.