

## Wangaratta Wesleyan Methodist Church Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2016

### The Ministry of One Another

Bible Passages: Ephesians 4:29-32; 1 Peter 1:22; James 5:13-16; Mark 8:22-25; Acts 9:17-19

#### Intro: Created to care



To nurture another is a basic instinct. It is part of God's creative order. It is God's design that the inhabitants of his world would care, love and support one another. Even the animal kingdom shares this trait.

This instinct comes from God because to nurture is an attribute of God shown first in the Garden of Eden. God lovingly made his world placing Adam and Eve in it to care for his creation. They were to, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Gen 1:28)

In other words, they were to care for it as God would care for it. They were his representatives on earth to look after his creation. They were therefore not to exploit it, waste it or spoil it rather to rule over it as God would.

God showed his nurture for Adam and Eve when despite their rejection of God's boundaries, He still chose to clothe them and care for them.

We were created to care and the bible encourages us to care. This is very evident in NT teaching. Consider the times it calls us to care for each other.

### **1. 'One-anothers' in scripture**

Do you realise there are 59 'one anothers' or 'each others' in scripture:

1. "...Be at peace with each other." (Mark 9:50)
2. "...Wash one another's feet." (John 13:14)
3. "...Love one another..." (John 13:34)
8. "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love..." (Romans 12:10)
9. "...Honor one another above yourselves. (Romans 12:10)
10. "Live in harmony with one another..." (Romans 12:16)
12. "...Stop passing judgment on one another." (Romans 14:13)
13. "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you..." (Romans 15:7)
14. "...Instruct one another." (Romans 15:14)
15. "Greet one another with a holy kiss..." (Romans 16:16)
16. "...When you come together to eat, wait for each other." (I Cor. 11:33)
17. "...Have equal concern for each other." (I Corinthians 12:25)
20. "...Serve one another in love." (Galatians 5:13)
21. "If you keep on biting and devouring each other...you will be destroyed by each other." (Galatians 5:15)
22. "Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other." (Galatians 5:26)
23. "Carry each other's burdens..." (Galatians 6:2) 28
24. "...Be patient, bearing with one another in love." (Ephesians 4:2)
25. "Be kind and compassionate to one another..." (Ephesians 4:32)
26. "...Forgiving each other..." (Ephesians 4:32)
27. "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." (Ephesians 5:19)
- . "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." (Ephesians 5:21)
29. "...In humility consider others better than yourselves." (Philippians 2:3)
30. "Do not lie to each other..." (Colossians 3:9)
31. "Bear with each other..." (Colossians 3:13)
32. "...Forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another." (Colossians 3:13)
33. "Teach...[one another]" (Colossians 3:16)
34. "...Admonish one another (Colossians 3:16)
35. "...Make your love increase and overflow for each other." (I Thessalonians 3:12)
39. "...Build each other up..." (I Thessalonians 5:11)

40. "Encourage one another daily..." Hebrews 3:13)
41. "...Spur one another on toward love and good deeds." (Hebrews 10:24)
43. "...Do not slander one another." (James 4:11)
44. "Don't grumble against each other..." (James 5:9)
45. "Confess your sins to each other..." (James 5:16)
46. "...Pray for each other." (James 5:16)
48. "...Live in harmony with one another..." (I Peter 3:8)
50. "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling." (I Peter 4:9)
51. "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others..." (I Peter 4:10)
52. "...Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another..."(I Peter 5:5)

Why is there so many references to one another in the NT? Because God considers it very important that we care for one another. It is the essence of our community. The reason we come together is to minister to each other.

There is no prizes for guessing the 'one another' that occurs the most in the bible; yes, it is to love one another. Jesus said, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Paul says we are taught by God to love one another. To me that means that part of the Holy Spirit's role is to teach us how to love one another.

Peter takes this further by saying, 'Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, love one another deeply, from the heart.' (Explain the deeper level of love here.)

- Now that you know how to love one another love each other even more earnestly. The reason I have laboured on loving one another is because all the other ways of caring for one another spring out of our love for others.

Now the purpose of these 'one anothers' in scripture is for...

## **2. Building the body**

The community of believers as the body of Christ exists to worship God and to minister to one another. It should be part of who we are. I nearly called my message, 'Ministry to one another', but I changed it to, 'The Ministry of one another'. You see we are called not only to minister to one another as if it is someone's specific role rather we are called to participate in body ministry as our innately inspired function. We are brought together as the body to provide mutual blessing to one another. It is a ministry that come out of being together.

It is important that we understand this. The church, generally speaking, has struggled to be a body which participates in mutual ministry for each other. One of the causes has been the focus and dependence on clergy doing everything. When the church became institutionalised in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD it stopped operating as a body and became a clergy led hierarchy.

This caused people to relinquish their body ministry for the person up the front. They stopped ministering to one another and left it to the clergy.

I heard of a small country church who found themselves without a pastor. They thought they had better do something considering they had no leader, so they came together and decided who could do what and soon found themselves ministering to one another out of sheer need. Things were good. They discovered gifts within their group and everyone had a part to play. They functioned very well for over a year.

Finally, a new pastor arrived and they turned to him and said, 'We are so glad you are here, we can now hand all responsibility over to you as it is your job.' The people pulled back and let the pastor do it all because that is what they had been used to for so many years. The church fell back into its usual rut.

When I heard that story I felt sad that these people had come so close to becoming a body who ministered to one another but defaulted back to old patterns.

One of the reasons church is so important is it gives us all the opportunity to perform these 'one anothers'. Imagine if we thought that church could be achieved simply by staying in our own home, around our own dinner table, we would miss out on the body ministry.

As we practice these 'one anothers' a few wonderful things happen:

- We develop connectedness with each other.
- We become accountable to those around us.
- We become motivated for action and service.
- Ministry opportunities arise.
- Fellowship becomes a by-product as we love being together.
- We can't help but see growth. There is nothing more appealing than a group of people who genuinely love and care for each other.
- And possibly the sweetest outcome from this body would be a deep sense of unity.

There is something uniquely special about the body working together. Paul says in Ephesians, 'we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup>From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I would like to focus for the rest of my message on one particular 'one another' and that is...

### **3. Building the body through prayer**

The passage we will look at is James 5:13-16. Here we read that we are to pray for each other. Well, so what, you may think, isn't that obvious! Allow me to flesh this out.

In my experience I have found the best way to get to know someone is to pray with them. When you pray sincerely with others you can't help but become vulnerable before those people. You begin to see the real uncut version as you pray with them. It seems the more vulnerable and real you become the deeper the quality of the prayer becomes.

Why is this? Well as the Holy Spirit draws us out in prayer together He causes us to love more deeply, care more compassionately, accept one another, encourage and submit to one another etc. There is a dynamic where prayer becomes the catalyst for one another ministry.

By praying together, we cause the body to become stronger.

A few examples:

- Prayer before the service
- Minister's meeting the other day

In a sense praying for others and with others is really...

### **4. Blessing one-another**

We often read where Jesus blessed people. He did this in three different ways. Firstly...

#### **a. Through words**

The words spoken by God and Jesus are very powerful. It was through words that God created the world... he spoke and there it was. God spoke blessing into people many times in the OT.

Jesus often spoke words of comfort over people. He also spoke healing into people's lives.

Don't underestimate the power of our words when we speak in the name of Jesus.

- When we pray for someone our words become agents of grace and mercy, encouragement and wisdom. When we look at the one anothers in the bible many of them are enacted through words and many can be conveyed through our prayer language.
- Next time you encourage someone or pray for someone think about how you can pray blessing over them. Say something like, 'Do you mind if I pray a blessing over you?' In this way we become a channel of God's blessing to another.

We also bless others...

#### **b. Through actions**

They say actions speak louder than words. When Jesus went to the home of Zacchaeus his actions spoke volumes to this cheating tax collector. Expand.

When Jesus washed his disciple's feet it spoke more powerfully than words could ever have done.

How are we ministering to one another through our actions? I'm sure in our community there are many acts of kindness and service that happen un-noticed by most: a timely visit, a meal, a note of encouragement, a text or call, gardening or monetary gift.

We may never know how powerful our small investment in someone else's life can be. Can I encourage us to look for ways of ministering to one another through our actions?

Another way that Jesus blessed people was...

### **c. Through the laying on of hands**

We communicate with and through our hands. We greet by shaking hands and use touch to convey our feelings. We gesture with our hands to each other and also to God.

It is no wonder we do this as the hand of God is prominent in the OT and Jesus used his hands many times to convey blessing and healing.

God obviously considers that our hands are special and as we are made in his image then let's see our hands as instruments and channels of his divine blessing.

When I was ordained in the WMC Rhonda and I knelt and the leaders of the denomination laid hands on us for God's anointing for ministry. When we commission someone or send them out we lay hands on them to convey blessing for the road ahead. When we pray for someone we often lay hands on them as we pray.

Jesus did this and the church has continued to practise this and I'm pleased that we do it here. May we see and experience how powerful this form of body ministry is. To convey blessing and healing on one another is an awesome thing.

This brings us to...

## **5. The prayer of healing**

The opportunity to pray for those who are sick whether it be physical, emotional or spiritual is a ministry of the body. It is our responsibility to one another. James says,

<sup>14</sup>Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup>And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup>Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

Let me make some observations here.

- If you are sick be encouraged to ask for prayer.
- When we ask God for anything we ask in faith.
- God is the one who heals, we are the ones who ask.
- We are encouraged to ask for physical healing however we know that not all prayers are answered the way we would like. God does heal but sometimes he doesn't.
- God has a greater desire to forgive our sin than he does to heal our physical sickness. God will always forgive sin when we sincerely ask however we cannot have the same assurance when we ask for physical healing.

So don't be surprised if when we are asking God to heal you that he reveals sin that has a greater need for confessing and healing. God is interested in healing our whole being but he is most interested in restoring our relationship spiritually.

One thing we know for sure; God loves it when we ask, so wouldn't it be awful if we limited God by not asking of him?

**Conclusion: Being Jesus to one another**

Part of Jesus' commission to the disciples at the end of Mark is, 'they will place their hands on sick people and they will get well.'

We are to be channels of the ministry of Jesus to one another.

Message by: Pastor David Lloyd