

The One Anothers (Part 5)

Selected Scriptures

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I mentioned my trip to Italy; I enjoyed the trip, for the most part. Those of you who have to travel a lot in business, you know the worst part of the travel is, of course, the airplane flight to get there. You fly in what they call “economy.” I’m sure there’s a better label for that part of the plane than economy; cattle car came to mind, a couple of other expressions that I won’t share but it’s a sad thing to be crunched into that area. I had the greatest of hopes to get a little rest and I really felt for this dear young mother who was seated a couple of rows behind me. The ten hour flight from here to Zurich, which is where I had a brief layover before I flew to Rome; that ten hour flight, this little baby cried for at least eight of those hours.

And, so, in God’s goodness, I had a lot of time to read. And I seized the opportunity to read a brief biography written back in the 1950’s by Thea Van Halsema. Van Halsema writes this, “The year was 1536, in it, the Dutch scholar, Erasmus, died at Basil. It was the year when England’s Anne Boleyn, the second Queen of Henry VIII, lost her head on the chopping block in the tower of London. It was also the year when a young traveler had to make a detour on his way from Paris to Strasbourg. He stopped to sleep one August night in the city of Geneva. The traveler came to stay a night, he planned to leave unnoticed, but God planned otherwise.” The traveler, you see, was a young man in his twenties by the name of John Calvin. He had had to flee France once he’d come to faith in Christ because of the terror of the persecution that was happening there against the Protestants. But in 1536, the French government gave a brief period of amnesty where anyone who had embraced Protestantism could return to the country. Of course their hope was they would return recant their faith and come again to the mother church. But during that time, John Calvin did return to Paris, he put his things in order and then he left never to return again in this life. He intended, he tells us, to go to Strasbourg. And there, his goal and plan was to pursue a peaceful life of writing; a tranquil life of letters. But he later wrote to a friend, “I’ve learned from experience that we cannot see very far before us. When I promised myself an easy tranquil life, what I least expected was at hand.”

John Piper reminds us the reason he found himself in Geneva was in God’s providence; there was a war going on. There was a war happening at that very time in 1536 between Charles V and Francis I. And because of the troop movements the direct route between Paris and Strasbourg was obstructed and so Calvin took just a small detour through Geneva. Piper writes, “In retrospect one has to marvel at the providence of God, that He should arrange armies to position His pastors where He would.” You see that one night that Calvin intended to stay in

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Geneva was a historic night because William Farel, the fiery leader of the reformers there in Geneva, heard that Calvin was in the city, he found out where he was and he sought him out.

It was a meeting that literally changed the course of history. Calvin tells us what happened in his preface to the commentary on Psalms. Listen to what Calvin writes, “Farel, who burned with an extraordinary zeal to advance the gospel, immediately learned that my heart was set upon devoting myself to private studies for which I wish to keep myself free from other pursuits. And finding that he’d gained nothing by entreaties, he proceeded to utter an imprecation that God would curse my retirement and the tranquility of the studies which I sought if I should withdraw and refuse to give assistance when the necessity was so urgent.” That’s the nice way of saying it. This is what Farel actually said to Calvin that night as they ended their discussion. “I say to you in the name of the Almighty God to you who put forth your studies as a pretense, that if you will not help us to carry on this work of God, God will curse you for you will be seeking your own honor instead of Christ’s.” That’s direct. Calvin later wrote of his response to those words from Farel, “I felt as if God from heaven had laid His mighty hand upon me to arrest me. I was so stricken with terror that I stopped from the journey I had undertaken. William Farel detained me in Geneva.” Of course he went on to minister in that great city. An unlikely beginning to a friendship but a beginning it was. A deep friendship grew between these two men, Farel and Calvin. And it was filled with similar exhortations. Throughout their lives these two men constantly maintained correspondence in which they encouraged and confronted and challenged and comforted one another. As I read that biography I was reminded that as we will learn this morning that is to be the pattern of our communication with each other as well. Our friendships within the church are to be characterized by those same qualities.

For several weeks we have been studying those New Testament commands that we usually refer to as the “One Anothers.” I’ve organized most of the fifty or so commands into four categories and we’ve labeled those four categories as number: one motivation. We are to be motivated by love for one another. Secondly, occupation; our chief occupation when it comes to our interaction with each other is to be to serve one another and to build up one another or to promote each other’s spiritual growth. The third word that we looked at was orientation. This has to do with our mindset; our attitude toward one another. For example, we are to be humble in our response to each other. We looked in detail at a number of attitudes.

And then two weeks ago we started to look at the fourth category which is conversation. You see, many of the One Anothers detail how it is that we are to speak to one another. They remind us of the constructive power of the tongue. The same tongue that James tells us destroys like a forest fire can also, by God’s grace, build others up. Our tongues, our speech, what we say we are supposed to be instruments in God’s hands that promote each other’s spiritual growth by what we speak.

Now, how can we do that? Well, we discovered that there are three basic commands concerning how we are to speak with each other. What our conversation is to be. And if we obey these three commands, we will edify, we will build one another up by what we say. Last time, two weeks ago, we studied the first of these three commands about our conversation. The first command was be truthful with one another or speak the truth with one another. And we looked at that in great detail.

Today I want us to look together at the other two commands about our conversation or about how we speak to one another. The second command concerning our conversation is we are to encourage one another. We're not only to speak the truth with one another; we are to encourage one another. The English word "encourage" means, literally, "to cause someone else to have courage, to fill someone else with courage." But the Greek word translated "courage" that's used throughout the New Testament is a very interesting word. It doesn't contain that idea of building courage into someone else but it's a far more complex word. The word literally means, the Greek word that's translated "encourage" in a number of places in the New Testament, literally means "to call to oneself." The best Greek lexicon identifies several distinct senses of this word and two of its meanings, two of the meanings of this word "encourage" are closely related to each other and both of them are commanded of us. So we could say it this way. To encourage one another takes two similar and yet distinct paths. Let's look at these two paths to encouragement.

The first familiar path that this Greek word takes is to encourage by appealing, pleading and exhorting; to appeal, to plead, to exhort. Several times in the New Testament we are commanded to encourage one another in this sense. Turn to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and in verse 11. Paul begins by saying "therefore"; now, in context, Paul has just finished a section about prophesy. The end of chapter four he's talked about the reality of the return of Christ for His own. In chapter 5, the first 10 verses he's talked about the coming day of the Lord and how we will be preserved from the wrath of God when that day comes. Verse 11, "Therefore" [in light of that great hope that we have I want you to] "encourage"[literally, I want you to exhort, to plead with, to appeal to] "one another and build one another up, just as you are also doing."

Paul is saying I want you to instill courage in each other by appealing to each other to be diligent in light of the hope we have, diligent to serve Christ. And to appeal to each other to persevere in your faith as you wait for the wonderful promises of the future. You see, this same word in Hebrews 3:13. The writer of Hebrews says, "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." Now those of you who are familiar with Hebrews, you know that this is a warning passage for those Jews who have professed faith in Christ but are being tempted to return to the old ways, to the old Levitical system and even to forsake Christ. Now if they're truly in Christ, of course, that

cannot happen and one way that God ensures that it doesn't happen is through these warning passages. So in this context, here's what the writer of Hebrews is saying: We can make sure that our commitment to Christ stays strong by encouraging or by appealing to one another day after day, by exhorting one another day after day. That's what the writer of Hebrews was saying, he's saying listen there are there in that assembly where you are gathered together, you Jewish people who've come to faith in Christ, there are those who are weak, we need to appeal to each other day after day to stay committed to Christ and to the faith that we've embraced because we could be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Paul Tripp in his excellent book that we're studying on Wednesday night, "Instruments in the Redeemer's Hand," he writes this, "There is something in each of us that places us in danger and because of that we need the daily ministry of others." That's what the writer of Hebrews is saying. Encourage, appeal to each other day after day. Over in Hebrews chapter 10 he makes this same basic point. Chapter 10 verse 24 he says, "let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our assembling together, as is the habit of some, but (instead) encouraging one another," [that is pleading with one another, exhorting one another] "and all the more as you see the day drawing near."

Now if you and I are going to properly appeal to each other as we're commanded to here, there are several key elements to this appealing or pleading or exhorting. Let me give them to you, number one: it should always spring from genuine personal concern, it should always spring from genuine personal concern. The literal meaning of the word is personal. It means to call someone to your side. But if you really want to see what this word looks like turn to Philemon; the little letter Paul wrote, sent with Onesimus. Philemon just before the book of Hebrews, in verse 8 of the letter to Philemon he writes, "Therefore, though I have enough confidence in Christ to order you to do" [the right thing, that is take Onesimus back] "yet for love's sake I rather" [here's our word] "appeal to you-since I am such a person as Paul, an old man, and now a prisoner of Christ Jesus." He says "I appeal to you." There's this element of personal concern in this word. If you're going to appeal to someone else to do the right thing then it must grow out of this personal concern.

Secondly it should be based on Scripture. If you're going to appeal to someone else it should always be based on Scripture. Look back at 1 Timothy chapter 6, 1 Timothy chapter 6 verse 1. He's speaking here about slaves and masters in verse 1, he continues in verse 2 with that same theme but notice the end of verse 2. This is common in the Pastoral Epistles, he says, "Teach and preach these principles." Here he's talking to Timothy. Timothy, I want you to teach and preach these principles. These principles, literally, these "things" is an expression that usually refers to what precedes it. Here probably a reference to all of chapter 5. And he says, "Timothy I want you to teach first of all."

The word teach is the simple communication of the truth. He says I want you to take the truth and I want you to set it in front of the people. What I just shared with you, you set it in front of them; you teach them. And then I want you to preach. Now, that's, I think, a poor translation of the word because it's our word to plead with, to appeal to, to exhort, to encourage. It literally means to appeal to those who have been taught the truth, to apply it to their lives; that's what it means to appeal or to exhort. You've already taught them the truth, Timothy; I'm commanding you to do, you set the truth before them and then you appeal to them to take that truth and to do something with it, to apply it to their lives. But notice that it has to be based on what's been taught, on the truth of what's taught.

So, exhortation or appealing or pleading with others springs from genuine personal concerns, secondly, it must always be based on Scripture, thirdly, it should always be accompanied by the right attitudes. Back to 1 Timothy chapter 5, here we get the feel for what this should look like. First Timothy 5:1, Paul tells Timothy how to relate to the men in his congregation, he says, "Do not sharply rebuke an older man, but rather appeal to him as a father, and appeal to the younger men as brothers." He's saying listen; don't come in, Timothy, throwing your authority around and say get in line because I'm in charge. Instead, you appeal to them out of personal concern with the Scripture to apply the truth to their lives and to do the right thing and if it's an older man, you do it as you would your own father. If it's men your own age, you do it as you would a brother. The spirit or attitude that we're being encouraged to use here is humility. If we're going to exhort others, if we're going to appeal others to apply the truth in their lives, to apply the truth they know to their lives, we have to do it in a spirit of humility.

There's another attitude in 2 Timothy chapter 4. Another proper attitude we should have. You're familiar with 2 Timothy 4, Paul is telling Timothy he's to preach the word, verse 2, he's to be ready in season and out of season. In other words preach the word when it's popular and when it's not. I also think he's saying Timothy preach the word when you feel like it and want to and when you don't feel like and don't want to. And then he says, I want you to reprove. Reprove means to convince somebody that they're in sin or in error; to correct their thinking about their choices. And I want you to rebuke. That means tell them stop. Tell them to drop the error or to stop the sin. And then notice how he ends verse 2, "and exhort"; there's our word, appeal to, plead with, "and do all of this" [Timothy] "with great patience..." Literally with all patience "and instruction." Notice the word instruction, there's always got to be content on which our appeal is based. But notice that all preaching, all reproving, all rebuking, all appealing, all exhortation are to be based on solid teaching and are to be done with great patience; humility and patience.

So, if we're going to appeal to someone we know to take the truth that they know and apply it to their lives then we must do it from genuine personal concern. We must base it on the Scripture. We must accompany it with the right attitudes of humility and patience and, finally, biblical

exhortation should always have as its goal the will. This is true exhortation, true pleading, true appealing. You're trying to get to the person's will. You're trying to say I want you to make a change. I want you to put the truth into action. You can see this in a number of places in the New Testament but turn to Acts chapter 2, let me just show you a couple of these.

Acts chapter 2, the end of Paul's sermon on the day of Pentecost, you remember they cry out "what do we do?" and he says "Repent." And then after that we're told in verse 40 of Acts 2, "And with many other words Peter solemnly testified and kept on (appealing to them) exhorting them saying, 'Be saved from this perverse generation!'" He said please take what I'm saying to heart, embrace it; he's pleading with their wills. You can see it in others ways, in Acts chapter 16 verse 9, the Macedonian vision. You remember, a vision appeared to Paul in the night and a man of Macedonia was standing appealing to him saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." He was saying Paul, I want you to make a decision and do something.

Luther, in describing this word, "exhortation" or "appealing" said, "The teacher transmits knowledge, the exhorter stimulates." We are to plead, we're to urge, we're to exhort each other to obey the truth. And although we're all supposed to do this, exhortation is even a spiritual gift that certain Christians have in a greater abundance. Romans chapter 12 verse 8 says there's somebody that has the gift of exhortation, the gift of doing this, of appealing with people to apply what they know and to put it into practice in their lives.

But this was the pattern of the early church. Let me just show you how much this this work of appealing to people of urging them was part of the life of the church. Turn back to Acts for a moment. Acts chapter 11, verse 23, Barnabas comes to Antioch and when he arrived, verse 23 says, "and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them (to plead with them; to appeal with them) all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord;" This was Barnabas' ministry to the church in Antioch; to appeal to them, to plead with them. Chapter 14, verse 22, Paul here with Barnabas, verse 21 says, "After they had preached the gospel to that city and made disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch," Verse 22 "strengthening the souls of the disciples..." How? "encouraging them..." Pleading with them, appealing to them "to continue in the faith, and saying, 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.'" This is how Paul and Barnabas strengthened the disciples for persecution was by appealing to them. Chapter 15 verse 32, "Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren" I love this, "with a lengthy message." See it's Biblical, it's Biblical.

This kind of pleading, this kind of appealing was also at the heart of Paul's ministry. Turn over to Acts 20; you see it in verse 2. Paul goes back over the regions of Asia, he's going to Macedonia, and "When he had gone through those districts and had given them much..."

Here's our word, "exhortation (much appeals) he came to Greece." There're many other Biblical examples, I've got a list here in my notes, I'm not going to take you through but what I want you to see is that this was at the heart of the ministry of the New Testament. You come to a book like Romans, when Paul finishes the doctrinal section of Romans, what does he say in Romans 12:1? "I urge you, I appeal to you by the mercies of God, present your bodies as a living sacrifice."

Same thing in Ephesians chapter 4, after the first 3 chapters of Ephesians and the doctrinal portions of the epistle, he gets to the practical portion and how does he begin? "I implore you," same Greek word, I beg you, I plead with you, "to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you've been called." A word of encouragement spoken at the right moment can change a life. You and I can have an eternal impact on the lives of fellow Christians when we speak out of personal concern with the Word of God in humility and patience appealing to their wills to respond and obey the truth. So in its primary sense, to encourage is to appeal, to plead, to exhort.

But there's a second common way we can encourage. Here's the second path encouragement takes, not only appealing but it can also mean to comfort and to cheer up; to comfort or to cheer up. You can breathe courage into someone's heart by appealing to them to stand strong. You can also do it by comforting them when they find themselves in the midst of trouble. This sense of the word refers to encouraging someone who is dealing with trial and difficulty. This week I had the opportunity to do a little reading about comforting in the ancient world. It was actually an art form of sorts. There were a number of common recommendations for how to comfort someone. What to tell them to comfort them. Here are just a few and, as you'll see, the list hasn't changed a lot in 2000 years.

Some said, well just tell somebody your troubles, recount your troubles to others and that will comfort you. Find a diversion, like entertainment. Do something else; get your mind off of it. Fulfill your normal duties and routines, just keep carrying on and over time the pain will go away. Singing, marriage or remarriage, drinking, sleeping, committing suicide – you just need to end it. Or praying. That last one gets the closest to the truth, doesn't it? Because our only true comfort is found in God. In 2 Corinthians 7:6, Paul refers to God as the God who comforts the depressed. In 2 Thessalonians 2:16, he prays, "May God comfort," same Greek word as the word we were looking at before, "appeal," it's just used in a different sense. "May God comfort your hearts." The only true comfort is from God and it will only be complete and perfect in heaven. You remember Revelation 21, when God wipes away every tear from every believer's eyes and there will only then no longer be mourning or crying or pain.

But while perfect comfort comes from God and it will only be perfect in heaven, you and I have the responsibility to provide it here to our fellow Christians. We are to comfort others. Turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 1. In verse 3, Paul begins his second letter, that we have in our Bibles to the

Corinthians and he says in verse 3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort.”

Only in God is all comfort “who comforts us in all our affliction so that...” Stop there, notice those two words, “so that,” this speaks of purpose. Here’s why God comforts us Paul says, “in order that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the same comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” Notice that God comforts us for this purpose, that we might share what God used to comfort us with others who are going through trials and difficulties as well.

Now what does God primarily use to comfort us? Turn to 1 Thessalonians 4 and you’ll see it. First Thessalonians 4, here’s how God comforts us. In verse 13 of 1 Thessalonians 4, there are a group of people in the church in Thessalonica who are deeply troubled about those who had died and their status, what’s going to happen to them. And in verse 13, Paul says “I don’t want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep so that you do not grieve as the rest who have no hope.” And then he goes on to describe the wonderful reality that Christ is going to return for His own. And after he’s done describing that, notice what he says in verse 18, “Therefore,” in light of the truth I have just set before you, I want you to “comfort one another...” How? “with these words.” You see, the only real comfort that God gives us comes to us through the word of God properly applied. Notice that true comfort in time of loss and trial is found only in the truth.

Now you have to be careful here, there are some Christians who handle the Scripture like a sledge hammer or like a one size fits all band-aid. You know they show no compassion, no sympathy. They go into the home of a fellow believer who’s just lost a loved one and they sort of flippantly throw out a verse as if that’s going to solve everything. That’s not what we’re talking about. It’s compelling that when Jesus arrived at the wake for His friend, Lazarus, He was moved with compassion on the people and He wept. Weeping with those that weep, listen to me; weeping with those that weep is crucial but our responsibility doesn’t end there. True lasting comfort doesn’t come from simply feeling their pain with them. It comes from the truth about God, about who He is about His goodness and His wisdom and His greatness and His providence and that this is within His control and that He loves them and cares for them, and He has a plan.

So we are to encourage one another and we do that in two ways. We do it by appealing and exhorting people to practice what they know and secondly by comforting and cheering up those that are in the midst of trouble and difficulty. Our conversation with one another must first of all be truthful; we must speak the truth with one another. Secondly we must encourage one another which includes as we’ve seen both appealing and comforting. The third Biblical command concerning our conversation with one another is to admonish one another; admonish one another.

Turn to Romans chapter 15, Romans 15, as Paul concludes this letter in verse 14 of the 15th chapter he writes this, “Concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.” Now, understand the context here, from verse 14 through the end of chapter 15, Paul is explaining why he’s written to the church in Rome. A church he did not found and a church he’s never visited. And so he affirms, as he does that, that it’s not because he doesn’t have confidence in them, in fact he has full confidence in their spiritual maturity so that they’re even able to admonish one another. He assumes that admonition, that admonishing is going to take place where there are committed spiritual believers.

In Colossians 3:16 we’re commanded to do it, “Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another.” First Thessalonians 5:14, “We urge you brethren, admonish the unruly.” Now here we learn the kind of person who especially needs admonishing, the unruly. The Greek word “unruly” refers to a soldier who was out of line, out of step and he needs to be warned to get back in step.

So what exactly is this responsibility of admonishing? What does it mean to admonish? Well the Greek word for admonish literally translated means to put or place in the mind; to put or place in the mind. One of the best resources for understanding the Greek language and how words were used in the ancient world writes this, “In teaching, which is another Greek word, the primary effect is on the intellect and someone qualified exercises the influence. To admonish, however, describes an effect on the will and it presupposes an opposition which has to be overcome. It seeks to correct the mind to put right what is wrong, to improve the spiritual attitude.” Now this is a basic educational function. In fact, in Ephesians 6:4, fathers are told to raise their children in the admonishing or in admonition, as the King James says, of the Lord. It does not mean to punish; rather it means through words, to instruct, to warn, and to correct in such a way as to bring a person to repentance.

Let me give you a definition, to admonish others is to show them their sin or error, to warn them of the danger, and to appeal to them to repent and to choose the right path. Let me say that again. To admonish others is to show someone his sin or error, to warn him of the danger, and to appeal to him to repent and choose the right path. One powerful picture of this word and how it was not done comes to us from the Old Testament, in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. In 1 Samuel 3:13, we read that God spoke to Samuel and He said this to Samuel, “I have told Eli that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not admonish them.” He didn’t show them their sin or error. He didn’t warn them of the danger; he didn’t appeal to them to repent.

It’s fascinating that Paul even uses this word to describe the essence of his long ministry in Ephesus, at the church in Ephesus. Turn to Acts 20, in Acts 20 verse 31, we read, as he speaks to

the Ephesian elders, “Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.” By the way, here, we learn the mindset with which we are to correct and warn others, with tears. You can see Paul doing this, by the way, this admonition in the Corinthian epistles. In 1 Corinthians 4:14 he writes, “I do not write these things to shame you, but I write them to admonish you as my beloved children.” Do you want to know what admonish looks like? Read 1 and 2 Corinthians, you get a true picture of exactly what this looks like. Where you point out the sin and error, you warn them of the danger and you urge them to turn from it and get on the right path.

This is an important responsibility of church leaders. In 1 Thessalonians 5:12, Paul even refers to church leaders as those who give instruction, is the English word; it’s our word, “admonition,” to give warning. But admonishing other Christians isn’t just my job and the other elders of this church job; it’s your job as well. You see, when a fellow Christian in our lives is in serious doctrinal error or is in sin, every one of us, listen to me, every one of us, without exception, is responsible to go to that person, to show him from the Scripture his sin or his error, to warn him of the danger of staying in on that path and to appeal to him to repent and to follow the Scripture. This is almost a daily duty in our homes. In fact, I told you in Ephesians 6:4, fathers are told to do this constantly with their children, with our close friends.

When should you admonish someone? When should you do this? Whenever you see spiritual danger ahead for someone you know. Whenever you see spiritual danger ahead for somebody you know. We are so reticent to do this though, aren’t we? You see, cultural politeness, as we looked at a couple of weeks ago, cannot only prevent us from speaking the truth to each other, but it can also keep us from warning someone who is in danger. How many times, let me ask you a penetrating question I had to ask myself this week, to my shame. How many times have we really been concerned about the spiritual danger another Christian was flirting with? Maybe we talked to our best friend about it. Maybe we talked to our spouse who is our best friend or at least mine is. Maybe you talked to somebody else about it, but you didn’t bother to go to that person, you said nothing to that person.

For 25 years, those of you in our church know this, but for 25 years I’ve had glaucoma. It runs in my family. I’ve had more than 100 laser shots to each eye. I’ve had extensive knife surgery on my right eye. I still take two drops every day to keep from going blind. Eventually, with glaucoma, what happens is the pressure builds up within the eye so greatly that it destroys the optic nerve. It usually starts with your peripheral vision and then you develop a kind of tunnel vision and eventually, left untreated, you wake up one morning blind. When I had my last surgery there was a young man in the room with me who had that very experience, didn’t even know he had glaucoma and woke up one morning blind.

This is how sin works as well. We dabble in sin and the effects of it are slow and only show up over time. So we develop a kind of spiritual blindness to our own condition. We rationalize and we justify and we excuse and then by God's grace another Christian comes along and puts his arm around us and helps us to see ourselves as God sees us. Helps us bring our sin into clear focus. Listen to Paul Tripp, he writes, "Personal insight that is understanding our own sin is the product of community. I need you in order to really see and know myself. Otherwise I will listen to my own arguments, believe my own lies, and buy into my own delusions. My self perception is as accurate as a carnival mirror. If I am going to see myself clearly, I need you to hold the mirror of God's word in front of me."

I want you to think right now about your circle of acquaintance and friends, your family. Is there anybody right now you are seriously concerned about their spiritual life, that you think is in spiritual danger? Have you ever told them? Have you ever gone to them? Let me let me appeal to you as pastor, as your brother in Christ; don't leave them alone. It's your job, it's your responsibility before the Lord to go to them and graciously admonish them. Show them the sin of their ways from the Scripture. Show them what God says. Remind them of the danger they face and urge them to turn from it and follow what Christ has commanded. This is our role to one another.

I began my message by describing the beginning of, and the character of, the friendship between John Calvin and William Farel. It was a friendship that was marked by speaking the truth, by encouraging, comforting and admonishing. And it was so right to the very end. Shortly before his death, Calvin was unable to write but he wanted to send a letter to his dear friend and so he dictated a last letter to Farel. This is what he wrote, "Farewell best and dearest brother and since God wills that you should remain the survivor remember our friendship which has been useful to the church of God and who's fruits await us in heaven. Do not weary yourself to come to me, I am already breathing with difficulty and expect every hour that my breath will fail me altogether. It is enough that I live and die unto Christ who is the reward for those who are His in life and in death. I commend you and the brothers who are with you to God. Devotedly yours, John Calvin." May God help us to be friends to one another like that. Speaking the truth in love, appealing, urging, pleading, admonishing and warning to build one another up to serve one another. Let's pray together.

Our Father, we fall so short of what we have learned together in this study of the One Another's. Lord we are so inherently selfish, we are so prone to consider only our own interests and yet You have placed us in the church, You have placed us in a body, an organism that operates only as we fill our role, only as we serve the other members. Father, I pray that You would rebuke us, confront us with our sinful selfish choices. And help us, Father, to commit ourselves to serving one another, to building one another up, being motivated by our love for each other. Father, may we have the right attitudes toward one another and may our conversation be characterized

by speaking the truth, by encouraging appealing to one another to apply the truth, comforting one another with Your word. And Father, when necessary, may we admonish and warn one another of the danger ahead. Father, help us to function as you intended the church to function, and help it to start in each of our hearts as we commit ourselves to do these things. I have a fear, Father, that we will complete the study and individually we will move on in our minds to the next thing, merely having accumulated knowledge. Don't let that happen. Lord, help us to resolve to do these things. I pray in Jesus' name and for the glory of His name and of His church, Amen.