



“Reciprocity” ~ September 8, 2019

OPEN

Once an editor who changed a sentence written by Winston Churchill so that it did not end with a preposition. But the proud Prime Minister retorted: “This is the sort of English up with which I will not put.” Today we are going to consider something foundational to the Christian journey. And the lack of this is something “up with which we should not put” and that is a lack of brotherly love in the church.

DIG

What is **reciprocity**? It is “the practice of exchanging things with others for mutual benefit” according to the dictionary definition. But in the context of following Jesus Christ, it is a term which captures the call to live out the “one another” commands of the Bible. Read the fascinating story in **John 13:1-35**.

Why is **reciprocity** important? In his book **Renovation of the Heart** (NavPress, 2002) Dallas Willard points to the fact that even in our social dimension, humanity is in need of spiritual transformation. Because of our woundedness as humans, we either deal with one another by means of “assault [attack]...and withdrawal [distancing]...They are so much a part of ordinary human existence that most people think they are just ‘reality,’ and never imagine that we could live without them.” (181)

[A] Inspiration - John 13:1-5

How does Jesus inspire us to live differently from our attack/withdrawal tendency? He did so through His self-less, practical, service. The washing of feet in His context was done by servants. In humility, Jesus took on this distasteful duty. He portrayed love that stoops. In so doing, Jesus provides the inspiration and example for us to live in reciprocal lives. You see, when we are related to God, we are related to other followers of God - we are, together, His own people (see I Peter 2:9-10).

This might seem quite difficult. After all, as the pithy poet said: “*To live above with the saints we love / That will be glory / But to live below, with the saints we know / That’s a different story.*” Let’s be honest enough to own it: relating to one another in the context of a church is messy and challenging! So what is the answer? We must look to Jesus, who originates and perfects the walk of faith (see Hebrews 12:1-3). We must also be *fully inspired* or really, *empowered* by the Holy Spirit to love one another as we should.

[B] Invitation - John 13:12-17

Jesus invites His followers to love the as He did (v. 15). In Philippians 2:1-11 we are urged to have the same servant-heart as Christ. This is possible as a result of His life within us, resulting in praise to God. Dallas Willard writes about a *circular dynamic*, “...all that is between me and God affects who I am; and that, in turn, modifies my relationship to everyone around me. My relationship to others also modifies me and deeply affects my relationship to God. Hence those relationships must be transformed if I am to be transformed.” (182)

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| 1. Love one another | John 13:34 |
| 2. Receive one another | Romans 15:7 |
| 3. Greet one another | Romans 16:16 |
| 4. Have the same care for one another | I Corinthians 12:24 |
| 5. Submit to one another | Ephesians 5:18-21 |
| 6. Bearing with one another | Ephesians 4:1-3 |
| 7. Confess your sins to one another | James 5:16 |
| 8. Forgive one another | Ephesians 4:31 |
| 9. Do not judge one another | Romans 14:13 |
| 10. Do not speak evil of one another | James 4:11 |
| 11. Do not murmur against one another | James 5:9 |
| 12. Do not bite and devour one another | Galatians 5:15 |
| 13. Do not provoke and envy one another | Galatians 5:26 |
| 14. Do not lie to one another | Colossians 3:9 |
| 15. Build up one another | Romans 14:19 |
| 16. Teach one another | Colossians 3:16 |
| 17. Instruct one another | Romans 15:14 |
| 18. Speak to one another in psalms | Ephesians 5:18-20 |
| 19. Be servants to one another | Galatians 5:13 |
| 20. Show hospitality to one another | I Peter 4:7-10 |
| 21. Pray for one another | James 5:16 |
| 22. Use your spiritual gifts for one another | I Peter 4:7-10 |
| 23. Stimulate one another to love & good works | Hebrews 10:24 |
| 24. Encourage one another | Hebrews 10:25 |

Think about it – these are not just ways to love, but they are also a means of spiritual transformation!

Notice the authentic engagement, practical service, encouragement, and even protection. Where are we winning? Where are we coming short as a church family? It is important that we understand that Jesus invites us into a new reciprocal lifestyle fueled by the first three R's – repentance, reconciliation, and regeneration!

Are these reciprocal commands difficult to do? Maybe they are not easy but they are not complicated. How do we encourage one another, for example?

Consider nine-year-old [Henry Frasca](#). Even though he is a Boston Red Socks fan, he was touched by the struggle of Baltimore Oriole's first-baseman Chris Davis, who was 0-54 in hitting – longest slump in MLB history. Henry wrote Davis a letter: "There are two things I want you to know. First, the way you play baseball has nothing to do with how good a person you are. Also, you are incredible. You play in the MLB. You've done it for a long time and everyone goes through a slump. Don't give up. We're rooting for you. Sincerely, Henry Frasca." Davis' slump ended the day he received the letter and he carried it in his Bible the rest of the season.

[3] Intention - John 13:34-35

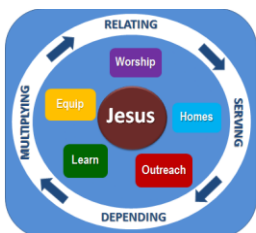
Living reciprocally is in response to the inspiration and invitation of Jesus Christ. In fact the age old command to love God and one another (see Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Matthew 22:37-40) is made new by the way Jesus has defined love by His sacrifice. In addition, it is by the intentional practice of the reciprocal commands that we testify to the freedom and joy of following Jesus! We have set before us a very compelling intention as a church family:

Cornerstone is called to impact our world by living and sharing the life of Jesus!

At Cornerstone we have identified five realms in which this can happen...



At Cornerstone we have created four stages to the pathway of following Jesus...



1. **RELATING** Please consider how you might help another in growing closer to Christ by practicing the reciprocal commands.
2. **SERVING** Please consider serving children, youth, young adults. Contact the church office for more information.
3. **DEPENDING** Please consider growing deeper in prayer. See the website for various opportunities.
4. **MULTIPLYING** Please consider being part of [Christianity Explored](#). A new course will begin on October 2.

REFLECT

The way we look at the local church will determine how we function within it? If you think of God's Church as...

...**country club**, you'll expect to pay dues in order to receive benefits and privileges.

...**religious school**, you'll brace yourself for learning many duties and obligations.

...**weekly event**, you'll approach it on the level of performance and attendance.

...**charitable society**, you'll think mostly about how much is spent and on what projects.

But if you understand the Church as *Bruder Gemeinde* ("brotherhood-fellowship") – a family – then you will be drawn into a messy but meaningful kaleidoscope of relationships. Remember looking through a kaleidoscope?

In a kaleidoscope image there is a lot going on. But let's keep in mind that Jesus is at the center of His Body, the Church! He not only inspires and invites us to love one another. He provides all the resources we need to do so!