

## One Another (Ephesians 4)

In the New Testament, there are over 60 “one another” commands (positive and negative) that direct Christians in how we are to relate to one another. Small groups are vital in “building up” God’s redeemed people (Eph. 4:11-17).

God’s redeemed saints must be maturing so they may contribute to the body of Christ within the local fellowship and be equipped for bringing the gospel to the unsaved and inviting those out from the world into God’s kingdom.

Marks of a healthy church community (among one another):

### 1. They lay aside falsehood, speaking the truth in love (4:15, 25)

Laying aside: to separate, depart, cease, or alienate from one thing only to adopt something else of better value. Paul contrasts the old way of life with the new one (v.17-24).

What is laid aside?

Falsehood (v.25): a lie is something you know to be untrue with the intent to deceive. Those who lie:

- A. desire to hurt the one whom the lie is directed toward.
- B. attempt to protect themselves, often out of fear or pride (almost always a form of sin).

What are we to do instead? Speak the truth in love (v.15, 25):

- We should not “grip” the truth, but the truth must “grip” us. If we grip the truth, we will be tempted to withhold part of it from others.
- We speak the truth in love by encouraging one another with the Word of God, exposing lies, and exhorting one another (Ps. 141:5; Prov. 27:6).
- The motive driving the truth communicated must be love:
  - Love is concerned most with the well-being of its object (from God’s vantage point).
- Two extremes to avoid as this “love” speaks:
  - A harsh abrasiveness with no redemptive impulse will “speak what is on the mind.” Putting people in their place with this mentality is more valuable than winning them to Christ.
  - A non-confrontational mindset that will not speak up, regardless of the offense, is rooted in fear of man, not love.

### 2. They are kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving (v.32)

Be kind to one another: “be” in Greek means “give birth to” or “become.”

- Paul has already assumed that God has regenerated and is dwelling/filling these saints (2:5, 15, 18; 4:3-4) and that this kindness is being wrought by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).

- Kindness: refers to usefulness, or the ability to rightly “fit something to be used.” It is the same word that Jesus uses to describe His yoke as “easy” (Matt. 11:30).

Be tenderhearted to one another: this is “bowel” language. It refers to the bowel, liver, stomach, and even heart discomfort wrought by personal concern for another’s well-being.

- It is an otherness-centered concern that places oneself in the other person’s “shoes” (as much as possible). It is the opposite of self-love and self-pity, which characterizes many.
- This concern is only possible when saints are intimately involved in one another’s lives.

Forgive one another as God in Christ has forgiven you:

- Bitterness, murmurings, and unforgiveness have plagued many relationships within local fellowships.
- Unforgiveness will often give birth to bitterness, which is likened to drinking poison, hoping the other person suffers.
- Forgiveness (canceling/pardoning favor) is in the middle/passive tense in Greek, which means that we are “carried along” and “moved” by the forgiveness we have received in Christ. It is a participatory choice to forgive because of God’s (in Christ) favor bestowed upon us.
- A forgiven man or woman forgives much because they have been forgiven.
- In human relationships, forgiveness can occur without the offending party apologizing. However, the intimacy of that relationship will not be restored until the parties at odds are reconciled.

Small groups are a means of grace through which we, as a congregation, lay aside falsehood by speaking the truth and displaying kindness and tenderheartedness to one another.

Small groups:

- are one of the outlets through which spiritual gifts are not only exercised but strengthened.
- are discipleship training grounds for future elders, deacons, ministry directors, and every other important avenue for CrossWay Church to thrive in the present and flourish in the future.
- help to “nudge” friends out of their comfort zone to enter new relationships, often resulting in pleasant surprises of communion and community.
- are one mechanism through which lasting friendships are forged.