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Being the Church to One Another

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Being the Church to One Another

Have you ever walked into a full elevator and, instead of turning toward the door, remained facing your fellow occupants?

People in elevators, like people in many other contexts, follow particular unspoken rules.

Congregations are no different, each having beautifully (and sometimes not so beautifully) characteristic ways of relating that are specific to that church. But are there ways we, as Christians, should treat each other that transcend the norms of individual congregations?

Whatever customs a particular congregation lives out, suits and dresses to Hawaiian shirts and flip-flops, scripture gives clear instructions for us to apply in our individual contexts for how we should treat each other in the Church.

Throughout the New Testament, commands that include “one another” or “each other” let us know that we should apply these words to our relationships with other believers. While passages that include this phrase don’t constitute an exhaustive list for how we should act as Christians, they do give us a solid starting place for what actions, commitments, and attitudes should characterize life together in a congregation.

The five articles that follow each focus on “one another” passages grouped according to theme.

The articles are meant to:

1. Invite you into a gracious way of living. It would be a misapplication of these passages to wield them as condemning weapons toward your congregation. Their application begins in your life and continues into the life of your church through humble modeling and conversation. It is an invitation to humbly ask the Holy Spirit to grow you and your congregation toward more vibrant Christ-likeness.
2. Invite you to reflect on passages of a similar theme. Each article lists the Bible verses related to that theme. Take the time to read each one and ask God to show

you how it applies to you and your church. Your own insight is important, so don't rush past the verses into the reflection and challenge sections that follow.

3. Invite you into conversation. These passages are perfect for communal dialogue. As they prescribe certain ways to treat one another, it only makes sense to consider them with the very "one anothers" you should treat that way!

These articles also assume a few things:

1. The characteristics that define how a congregation relates can change. It's not often easy. Or fast. But they do change.
2. You affect the life of your congregation. You do. No matter how big or small your presence, how influential or invisible your role, your pursuit of Jesus-honoring/other-honoring living will encourage and challenge those around you.
3. Sometimes characteristic ways of relating are bigger than individuals. Change happens as individuals change, but sometimes hurtful or unjust ways of relating are connected to our organizational structures, rules, or broader cultural norms. These passages apply to us as individuals but we should seek their communal applications as well.

So come, be encouraged and challenged in how you act toward one another. Who knows, maybe you'll be so excited by how you and your congregation change that you'll find yourself trying to start group sing-alongs in packed elevators.