

Believers Serve One Another in God's Family

**The Holy Spirit's spiritual gifts enable believers to keep
the New Testament 'one-another' commands**



Believers and their shepherds must form groups that are small enough for everyone to edify one another and allow everyone to take part in ministering.

Galatians 5:13 reveals that believers are to minister one to another: “For you have been called to live in freedom— not freedom to satisfy your sinful nature, but freedom to serve one another in love” [TNIV]. There are many such ‘one-another’ verses in the Bible.

True New Testament congregational body life requires believers to meet in small groups, so that they can interact and all can have a part.

- Believers must listen to each other and help each other with the spiritual disciplines that God commands. Believers are to encourage one other, pray for each other, confess faults to one another, and so on.
- The Holy Spirit enables believers, by the gifts He has given to them, to help others grow and serve.
- Even though believers are to encourage everyone to talk in small groups, but they should not force shy newcomers to talk before they are ready to do so.
- Believers are to practice the ‘one-another’ dynamics of the New Testament both within their groups and between groups. Congregational body life must not be limited to one’s own group. Believers also practice body life between groups, because a small group may not have all the biblical spiritual gifts. God often gives different spiritual gifts to each small group’s members. For example, if your group is weak in evangelism, do not simply search for another evangelism method. Rather search for an evangelist from another group or congregation, who is willing to help you. Your group or congregation would also help the other one in some way.

- Believers interact best in small groups, so organize little congregations in homes and wherever else believers can get together. During worship meetings, they may allow time for groups of two or three persons to talk with each other, to plan and to pray.

Perhaps nothing else is more powerful to strengthen believers' ministries than this kind of voluntary, loving interaction between believers and congregations.

Leaders' Responsibilities

- Mobilize everyone. As a shepherd, you are responsible to see that all members of your flock use their gifts in ministry to edify one another (Eph. 4:11-16).
- Aim for balance. Do not emphasize any one gift-based ministry more than all the rest (1 Corinthians 12:14-30). A flock's greatest weakness is usually its strongest ministry taken to excess.
- Seek to network. No small group has all the spiritual gifts it needs. New Testament group body life requires interaction between congregations. Poor Christians in Macedonia, for example, had the gift of giving and used it to strengthen the Lord's work in other places (Compare 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 with Acts 18:1-5).

New Testament 'One-another' Commands

Build loving fellowship in and between groups.

Study the commands that your flock needs to practice most urgently. Let those who attend the meetings decide which ones to study and practice first.

1. Love

- Love one another: John 13:34-35; 5:12 & 17; Romans 12:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 John 3:11,14 & 23; 4:7, 11 & 12; 2 John 1:5; 1 Peter 1:22
- Love one another to fulfil the law: Romans 13:8
- Increase our love one for another: 2 Thessalonians 1:3
- Abound in love for another: 1 Thessalonians 3:12
- Love each other deeply, to cover a multitude of sins: 1 Peter 4:8

2. Fellowship and reconciliation

- Have fellowship one with another: 1 John 1:7
- Forgive one another: Ephesians 3:13; 4:32; Colossians 3:13
- Greet one another with a holy kiss (an embrace in some cultures): Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Peter 5:14
- Wait for one another to break bread: 1 Corinthians 11:33
- Bear one another's sufferings: 1 Corinthians 12:26

3. Serve

- Serve one another with the gifts each person has received: 1 Peter 4:10
- Serve one another in love: Galatians 5:13

- Be kind to each other: 1 Thessalonians 5:15
- Care for one another: 1 Corinthians 12:25
- Bear the burdens one for another: Galatians 6:2
- Wash one another's feet as a sign of humbly serving: John 13:14
- Work with one another: 1 Corinthians 3:9; 2 Corinthians 6:1

4. Teach

- Teach one another: Colossians 3:16
- Instruct one another: Romans 5:14

5. Encourage

- Encourage one another: Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 10:25
- Exhort one another: Hebrews 3:13
- Speak the truth to one another: Ephesians 4:25
- Lay down our lives one for another: 1 John 3:16
- Spur one another to love and good deeds: Hebrews 10:24

6. Pray, confess and edify

- Pray for one another: James 5:16
- Confess our sins one to another: James 5:16
- Edify (strengthen, build up) one another: 1 Thessalonians 4:18 & 5:1 & 11
- Edify one another, each one with a hymn, a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or its interpretation: 1 Corinthians 14:26
- Glorify God together: Romans 15:6

7. Build unity with humility

- Honour one another: Romans 12:10
- Be of one mind one with another: 2 Corinthians 13:11; Romans 12:16; 15:5
- Do not criticize one another: Romans 14:13
- Do not speak bad one of another: James 4:11; 5:9
- Submit to one another: Ephesians 5:21
- Be clothed with humility toward one another: 1 Peter 5:5

8. Live in harmony

- Have patience one with another: Ephesians 4:2
- Live in peace one with another: Matthew 9:50
- Receive one another with hospitality: Romans 15:7; 1 Peter 4:9

Help everyone to know and use their gifts to serve one another

Most of the texts listed below mention a biblical person and their gift as an example to help you explain spiritual gifts.

Practice the spiritual gifts listed in Romans 12:6-8:

In the list below, put a tick mark in the brackets beside the gifts that need to be developed in your group. You will probably need to arrange for help from other groups, and have to give help to them in areas in which your group is stronger.

- Serve. Deacons, Acts 6:1-7
- Prophecy. Messages from God for strength, consolation and encouragement; 1 Corinthians 14:3
- Give. Abigail, 1 Samuel 25; guidelines: 2 Corinthians 9
- Teach. Ezra: Nehemiah 8; purpose, Ephesians 4:11-16
- Encourage. Exhort: Paul with the Ephesian elders, Acts 20:17-38
- Lead. Be a servant-leader who helps others to minister: Moses, Exodus 18:13-26
- Show mercy. David with Saul, 1 Samuel 24

Also Practice the gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 and 27-30

- Counsel with wisdom. Solomon, 1 Kings 3:5-28
- Base decisions on facts. Bereans' searching the Word, Acts 17:10-12
- Help. Aquila and Priscilla, Acts 18:1-5, 24-28
- Go, as an Apostle ("sent one"). Romans 5:20-21; Paul, Acts chapters 13-14
- Discern. Nathan, 2 Samuel chapters 11 & 12
- Heal. Peter and John heal the crippled man, Acts chapters 3-4
- Administrate. Nehemiah: Nehemiah chapters 2-3
- Do miracles. Elijah: 1 Kings 18:16-46; Elisha: 2 Kings chapters 2-5
- Speak in tongues. Cornelius' household, Acts 10:44-48. Along with the next:
- Interpret tongues. See cautions in 1 Corinthians 14
- Use faith (all need it but some stir it up in others). The leper and the centurion, Matthew 8:1-13; Old Testament faithful, Hebrews 11

Also Practice the other gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11

- Announce the Good News (evangelist). Philip, Acts 8:26-40
- Pastor (shepherd). Ephesian elders, Acts 20:28-34; 1 Peter 5:1-4.