

Preaching the New Testament One-Another Commands

by Jeff Hawkey¹

The NT contains dozens of one-another commands addressed to local assemblies of Christian believers. The expository preacher endeavoring to preach the whole counsel of God will inevitably encounter these *one anothers*.² Many preachers have preached on at least one of the one-another passages in the NT, but not many have endeavored to preach a series on all of the one-another commands.³ Perhaps they never viewed the one-another commands as a topical collection. Perhaps they never considered the importance and interrelatedness of the one-another commands. Or perhaps they never reflected on the potential benefit that preaching such a series might have for their congregations.

The central goal of this article is to help pastors and church leaders perceive the importance and high value of preaching and teaching the NT one-another commands as a topical collection. In order to identify this collection, a formal definition of what a *one another* is will be presented and the surface forms of the *one anothers* in the Greek text will be enumerated. This will lead to the discovery of the full catalog of one-another commands.

The Need to Preach the One-Another Commands

“I watch church on TV.” This statement, along with its more recent corollary, “I watch church online,” represents a growing trend of unbiblical thinking that physical church attendance is optional.⁴ But online church is a grossly deficient form. Hansen and Leeman observe, “When church is only online, we can’t feel, experience, and witness those truths becoming enfolded in the family of God, which both fortifies our faith and creates cords of love between brothers and sisters. Virtual church is an oxymoron.”⁵

¹ Jeff Hawkey is senior pastor of Grace Baptist Church in East Flat Rock, NC. This article summarizes some of the findings of his doctoral dissertation. See Jeffrey Allen Hawkey, “Expository Preaching from the New Testament One-Another Commands in a Local Church Context: Exegetical and Homiletical Strategies” (DMin diss., Bob Jones University, 2020).

² Throughout this article *one anothers* is italicized to indicate the special meaning intended herein. The *one anothers* are commands expressed in a one-another form and directed to a community of NT believers.

³ On May 26, 2024, a simple search of sermonaudio.com for sermons with the phrase “one another” in the title resulted in 5,967 hits. Among all of these sermons, it appears that only a small number of preachers have attempted to preach a full series on the *one anothers*. The author counted only ten sermon series with twenty or more sermons out of the thirty-eight possible.

⁴ Lillian Kwon, “Why Go to Church When You Can Watch Online,” *Christian Post*, June 7, 2012, <http://www.christianpost.com/news/why-go-to-church-when-you-can-watch-online-76269>. A recent trend among multi-campus churches involves adding an “internet campus” (note the oxymoron) with its own dedicated pastor.

⁵ Collin Hansen and Jonathan Leeman, *Rediscover Church: Why the Body of Christ Is Essential* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2021), 51. Hansen and Leeman lament the trend: “It’s no surprise that virtual, or internet, church is growing in popularity. It’s convenient and—honestly—it allows you to avoid messy relationships” (52).

And then came COVID-19. The Coronavirus pandemic of 2020 led to unprecedented government-mandated shutdowns. Churches in the United States were unable to physically assemble together for several weeks or even months. This precipitated a seismic shift in church-attendance patterns. Statistics from the 2022 American Religious Benchmark Survey indicate an overall ten percent drop in church participation as a result of the pandemic.⁶ Post-COVID-19 statistics from Pew Research reveal that twenty-five percent of Christians surveyed continue to watch church online with approximately a third of these admitting that they are watching without any measure of active participation in a local church.⁷ All of these data indicate the devaluation of church attendance and involvement.

Besides revealing a weak commitment to in-person church attendance, the pandemic also exposed hidden fissures in church unity. To mask or not to mask, to socially distance or not, to comply with government mandates or not—these are just a few of the many stress points that divided congregations and thus hindered the practice of the *one anothers*. James White laments the repercussions: “The basis of church unity has shifted from relationships to ideology, and the basis of that ideology has shifted from doctrine to all things politicized.”⁸ Randy Alcorn warns, “The increase in Christians bickering over non-essentials doesn’t seem to be a passing phase. And it injures our witness, inviting eye rolls and mockery from unbelievers and prompting believers to wonder whether church hurts more than it helps.”⁹ A topical series on the *one anothers* is just what the post-pandemic church needs to restore unity and to prevent future division.

Passive church attendance is nearly as deficient as non-attendance. Going to church to merely “warm a pew” and leaving immediately after the final “amen” gives no real opportunity for mutual edification and fellowship in Christian community. The advent of modern megachurches has not helped. John MacArthur observes, “As churches seek to become bigger, flashier, and more technologically savvy, they usually tend to become more cold and impersonal. Contemporary churches sometimes even seem to encourage the ‘me first’ agenda of self-love rather than the ‘one another’

⁶ “Before the pandemic, roughly half of Americans were occasionally or infrequently attending services. Now, that number has dropped to about four in 10.” Lindsey Witt-Swanson, Jennifer Benz, and Daniel A. Cox, “Faith after the Pandemic: How COVID-19 Changed American Religion,” Survey Center on American Life, January 5, 2023, <https://www.americansurveycenter.org/research/faith-after-the-pandemic-how-covid-19-changed-american-religion>.

⁷ Pew Research Center, “Online Religious Services Appeal to Many Americans, but Going in Person Remains More Popular,” June 2, 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2023/06/02/online-religious-services-appeal-to-many-americans-but-going-in-person-remains-more-popular>.

⁸ James White, “How the Pandemic Has Changed the Church,” *Outreach Magazine*, July 9, 2021, <https://outreachmagazine.com/features/leadership/68023-how-the-pandemic-has-changed-the-church.html>. White adds, “This is arguably the most demonic dynamic flowing from COVID, and it must be simultaneously denounced and opposed with the true nature of unity upheld. The foundation for Christian unity has always been orthodoxy (right thinking about matters of doctrine) and orthopraxy (right practice in light of that thinking), and the greatest evidence to the authenticity and integrity of both has been relational unity. For all three to be distorted or supplanted is nothing short of heresy.”

⁹ Randy Alcorn, “Healing a Pandemic of Disunity: The Love of Christians Is the Gospel’s Greatest Defense,” *Eternal Perspective Ministries*, Nov. 15, 2021, <https://www.epm.org/resources/2021/Nov/15/healing-pandemic-disunity>.

commands of Scripture.”¹⁰ This “me first” attitude is contrary to Scripture (Phil 2:3) and antithetical to the “others first” attitude inherent in the one-another commands.

Jesus deliberately chose the word *church* to describe the Christian community he established. In response to Peter’s great confession of faith, Jesus declares, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt 16:18).¹¹ The word *church* is from the Greek ἐκκλησία. The basic meaning of this word is “an assembly.”¹² A church, by definition, is “a local body of believers who *meet together* to worship God and serve one another.”¹³ Biblical Christianity involves both physical church attendance and active church participation.¹⁴

The biblical admonition is to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together; instead, we are to assemble that we may exhort one another (Heb 10:25).¹⁵ Passively “doing church” via TV, the internet, or by warming a pew does not fulfill this biblical admonition. More to the point of this article, passive church participation does not result in the proper exercise of the NT *one anothers*. The *one anothers* must be “incarnated” (lived out) within the community of believers. They require active interpersonal contact with other believers—ideally face-to-face.

The overall vitality of a local body of believers suffers when its members neglect the exercise of the *one anothers*. By the Lord’s design, each member of the body of Christ has a role to play in the edification of the body as a whole (Eph 4:16). Without the full exercise of the *one anothers* on the part of every member, the edification of the body as a whole is hindered.¹⁶ To state this observation more positively, the exercise of the *one anothers* is a vital aspect of church involvement. Indeed, the local

¹⁰ John F. MacArthur Jr., “Bearing One Another’s Burdens,” Ligonier Ministries, accessed Oct. 13, 2017, <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/bearing-one-anothers-burdens/>. Originally published in *Tabletalk Magazine* (Jan. 2010).

¹¹ Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version.

¹² BDAG, s.v. “ἐκκλησία.” The word is a common Septuagint rendering for לְקָהָל (*qahal*), the Hebrew OT word often referring to the assembly of the Hebrew people (e.g., Deut 18:16; Ezra 10:1). For a comprehensive list of the Septuagint ἐκκλησία passages, see Appendix 1 in Earl D. Radmacher, *What the Church Is All About* (Chicago: Moody, 1972), 385.

¹³ Wayne A. Mack and David Swavely, *Life in the Father’s House: A Member’s Guide to the Local Church* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1996), x (emphasis added). John F. MacArthur Jr. frames the problem on the back cover under the heading “Assembly Required”: “In our individualistic society, church membership, faithful church attendance, and active service in the body of Christ are often considered optional, even among professing Christians. Some, in fact, view the organized church as a hindrance to spiritual growth and freedom.”

¹⁴ Physical church attendance may not be feasible for some. Even in such cases, however, a connection to a local church ministry is crucial to a shut-in’s spiritual well-being and to the body life of the church as a whole. Moreover, shut-ins are among the best prayer warriors in the author’s church.

¹⁵ Commenting on this verse, Donald Whitney writes, “It’s undeniable that ‘meeting together’ means to worship God in the physical presence of other believers. Not only do the words themselves allow for no other interpretation, but when this letter was written to the Hebrews there was no other way they could be construed. So we cannot persuade ourselves that we are ‘meeting together’ with other Christians by watching them worship on television. There are good reasons for the broadcast and tape recording of church worship, but none includes the idea of substituting media ministry for church attendance by those who are able.” Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991), 92.

¹⁶ The Apostle Paul makes this clear: “the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph 4:16).

church is the primary venue for the practice of the *one anothers*.¹⁷ When the members of the church body are fulfilling their obligation to live out the *one anothers*, the church body as a whole is edified and the church's ministry becomes more vibrant.

Furthermore, the exercise of the *one anothers* is important to the Holy Spirit. He moved the NT writers to include dozens of positive and several negative one-another imperatives. Individual Christians need to know and practice all of these imperatives in order to be fully obedient to the Word of God. This implies that preachers need to proclaim the full catalog of NT one-another imperatives to their congregations.

The practice of the *one anothers* is to be normative in the NT church. Consider, for example, the command to “love one another.” The Lord Himself instituted this injunction.¹⁸ Paul, Peter, and John later repeated the Lord's “love one another” command multiple times.¹⁹ In addition, nearly all of the one-another commands are located in the epistolary literature of the NT.²⁰ It is clear that all Christian churches then and now are to practice all of the *one anothers*.

In order for local churches to be unified, strong, and effective and in order for individual church members to edify one another properly, Christian churches need to draw more attention to the *one anothers*, and church members need to make a more diligent effort to put them into practice. A comprehensive series of messages on the *one anothers* directly addresses these needs.

The Identification of the One-Another Commands

The logical starting point in the study of the *one anothers* is the articulation of a formal definition. A clear definition will serve to delineate between what is and what is not a one-another command. Here is a proposed formal definition that has the requisite precision: *the one anothers are NT commands expressed in a one-another form and directed to a community of NT believers*. This definition is comprised of three components: paraenesis, form, and audience. True *one anothers* will meet all three criteria.

To satisfy the paraenesis criterion, the one-another statement must be a command at some level. A wide spectrum of intensity is possible from terse imperatives to polite exhortations.²¹ The most obvious verbal expression of a command is the present or aorist imperative. But commands may also be expressed using other verbal forms such as hortatory and prohibitive subjunctives, imperatival

¹⁷ The overwhelming majority of the NT one-another commands are in the NT epistles written to first-century churches. A few in the Gospels are addressed to Jesus' disciples.

¹⁸ John 13:34; 15:12, 17.

¹⁹ Rom 13:8; 1 Thess 3:12; 4:9; 1 Pet 1:22; 4:8; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11, 12; 2 John 5.

²⁰ The only one-another command not repeated in the NT epistles is “wash one another's feet” (John 13:14).

²¹ James Boyer explains, “Commands include a broad spectrum of concepts—injunctions, orders, admonitions, exhortations—ranging from authoritarian dictates (a centurion ordering his soldier to go or come, Matt 8:9), to the act of teaching (Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, Matt 5:2, 12ff).” James L. Boyer, “A Classification of Imperatives: A Statistical Study,” *Grace Theological Journal* 8, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 36. Most works on the *one anothers* make use of this broadened sense. As an alternative to the word “command,” the definition could incorporate the term “exhortation” or “admonition” in a similarly broadened sense. Wallace's “volitional clause” is arguably an even better choice. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 713ff.

participles, participial phrases subordinate to an imperative verb,²² volitional optatives (1 Thess 3:12), and indicatives identified contextually as commands (e.g., John 15:12, 17).²³

The second criterion in the definition is that of *form*. In order to qualify as a *one another*, a command must have a direct object meaning “one another” or “one to another.”²⁴ For example, the command to “let brotherly love continue” (Heb 13:1) does not meet this criterion, whereas the often-repeated command to “love one another” does meet this criterion. Jesus’ command to “love your enemies” (Matt 5:44; Luke 6:27, 35) is not a *one another* because the direct object is “enemies.” Jesus’ command to “love one another” (John 13:34; 15:12, 17), on the other hand, does satisfy the form criterion of the definition.

The third criterion of the definition pertains to *audience*. The intended practitioners of a command under consideration must be a community of NT believers.²⁵ The command not to grumble against one another (Jas 5:9) is a *one another* because it is directed toward a community of Christian believers. On the other hand, when Jesus issued the command to stop murmuring in John 6:43, he addressed it to a group of unbelieving Jews, and its application was situational. This command is not directed to a community of NT believers. Consequently, it is excluded from consideration as a *one another*.

The *one anothers* are NT commands expressed in a one-another form and directed to a community of NT believers. This formal definition draws a clear boundary for a comprehensive study of the one-another commands. With a functional definition now in place, we now turn our attention to the discovery of the *one anothers* of the NT.

The Discovery of Potential One-Another Commands

In order to discover all the potential *one anothers* that satisfy the aforementioned definitional criteria, a rigorous search methodology is needed. It is not sufficient to search in a particular English translation for the phrase “one another.” Nor is it adequate to search the Greek NT for the reciprocal pronoun ἀλλήλων in conjunction with an imperative verb. A more exhaustive approach with the aid of Bible-study software is necessary.²⁶

²² McKay strongly affirms the validity of this category: “In most NT contexts in which participles are associated with imperatives there can be little doubt that they represent paratactic imperatives.” K. L. McKay, “Aspect in Imperative Constructions in New Testament Greek,” *Novum Testamentum* 27, no. 3 (July 1985): 225.

²³ Moule, under the chapter heading “Commands, Prohibitions, Wishes,” includes the following possibilities: the imperative, ἵνα or μή with the subjunctive, the subjunctive in the first person, the optative, the word ὄφελον, the infinitive in the imperative sense, participles used imperatively, and the future indicative. C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek*, 2nd ed. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 135–37.

²⁴ The corresponding surface forms in NT Greek are ἀλλήλων, ἑαυτοῦ, and εἰς τὸν ἕνα. See the discussion below under “Surface Forms of the One-Another Commands.”

²⁵ Nearly all the one-another commands in the NT are, in fact, directed toward believers. The two clear exceptions are John 6:43, where Jesus addresses unbelieving Jews, and Acts 19:38, where the town clerk in Ephesus addresses Demetrius and the craftsmen.

²⁶ The author used BibleWorks 9 software produced by Bibleworks LLC. The primary Greek text is the critical text UBS4/NA27 (hereafter referred to as NA27). The Majority Text is Robinson-Pierpont Majority Text Greek New Testament 2011 (hereafter referred to as BYZ). The Textus Receptus is the F. H. A. Scrivener 1894-Theodore Beza 1598 Greek New Testament (hereafter referred to as SCR).

An essential first step involves searching multiple English versions for phrases including the words “one” and “another” with two or fewer intervening words.²⁷ The search versions should include at least one translated from the critical Greek text and one translated from the Textus Receptus.²⁸ The goal at this stage is the discovery of all of the potential surface forms in the Greek corresponding to the English idea of “one another.”

Surface Forms of the One-Another Commands

The aforementioned searches produce a list of ninety-three verses containing one-another constructs in the English NT.²⁹ An examination of these verses in the Greek reveals three surface forms of the *one anothers*: the ἀλλήλων form, the ἑαυτοῦ form, and the εἰς τὸν ἕνα form.³⁰ The following analysis leads to the conclusion that the three forms are functionally synonymous. Thus, no real difference in meaning or emphasis can be inferred by a writer’s choice of one form over another.

The Ἀλλήλων Form

Greek grammars classify ἀλλήλων as a reciprocal pronoun, an exclusive category containing this word alone. The word is always plural in number and indicates an interaction among members of a common community.³¹ The lexical field of the word includes “each other,” “one another,” and “mutually.”³² It comes as no surprise, therefore, that ἀλλήλων is the dominant form of the one-another commands: eighty-four percent of the *one anothers* are in this form.³³

The reciprocal pronoun occurs an even one hundred times in ninety-four verses of the NT.³⁴ The verses are well distributed: only the comparatively short books of 1 and 2 Timothy, Philemon, 2 Peter,

²⁷ The BibleWorks phrase search criteria are “one *2 another” and “one *2 other.” Trial searches involving a greater number of intervening words yields no meaningful results.

²⁸ It turns out not to matter which of these Greek texts is used since the list of *one anothers* is identical at the conclusion of the process. The versions chosen by the author are the New American Standard Bible (1995 update) for the critical text and the KJV (1769 Blayney edition) for the Textus Receptus. The author chose these versions because of their formal equivalence to their respective Greek texts.

²⁹ These ninety-three verses include indicatives that do not meet the “command” criterion. The final list of one-another commands will exclude these indicative occurrences.

³⁰ A potential fourth form, τοῦ ἐνὸς τοῦ ἑτέρου, occurs in 1 Corinthians 4:6, which the author classifies as a marginal case. Turner (MHT 3:44) suggests ἄλλος πρὸς ἄλλον as an alternative to ἀλλήλων and cites Acts 2:12 as an example. In this case the verb is indicative, thus excluding it from consideration as a *one another*.

³¹ Lowe and Lowe put it quite well: “The term conveys a relationship between two or more people committed to one another through a common faith in Jesus Christ.” Stephen D. Lowe and Mary E. Lowe, “Allēlōn: Reciprocal Commands and Christian Development,” *Christian Education Journal* 7, no. 2 (Sep. 2010): 285.

³² BDAG, s.v. “ἀλλήλων.” Thayer’s Lexicon adds the term “reciprocally.” Romans 1:12 is a clear example of the *mutual* sense. Mutuality should not, however, be assumed in every case. This is the exegetical fallacy of illegitimate totality transfer. Chapter 4 will more fully address this concern. Lowe and Lowe (285) extrapolate well beyond the lexical categories when they declare, “The word *allēlōn* expresses concepts like mutuality, reciprocity, equality, sharing, and exchange.”

³³ Fifty-one of the sixty-one *one anothers* have this form. See details in Table 1 below.

³⁴ NA27 and SCR each contain one hundred, but they share only ninety-nine in common. The NA27 list includes Luke 20:14 (excluded in SCR), and the SCR list includes Acts 2:7 (excluded in NA27). These differences are inconsequential since neither of these occurrences involves a command.

3 John, and Jude do not use the word.³⁵ Only fifty-one of these one hundred occurrences involve commands. Many of the other occurrences are in narrative material (particularly the Gospel narratives) and are associated with indicative verbs.

The occurrences of ἀλλήλων that do qualify as *one anothers* occur in paraenetic contexts.³⁶ Seven are found in the Gospels. The remaining forty-four are in epistolary literature.³⁷ This is not surprising since these epistles are addressed to communities of believers (or pastors of those communities), and they frequently provide instruction about how members of those communities are to conduct themselves.

The ἑαυτοῦ Form

The ἑαυτοῦ form is the next most prevalent one-another form after the ἀλλήλων form. As the third-person reflexive pronoun, it is the only reflexive pronoun to occur in the plural as is necessary to convey a one-another sense.³⁸ The *Shorter Lexicon* identifies three senses of the word: reflexive, reciprocal, and possessive.³⁹ The second sense alone is of interest since it is the only sense capable of conveying the one-another idea.

There are 158 occurrences of ἑαυτοῦ in the masculine and feminine plural.⁴⁰ Every NT book except Galatians, Titus, Philemon, and 3 John contains one or more occurrences. Twenty-six occurrences of ἑαυτοῦ involve the reciprocal sense. Many of these can be excluded since they occur in narratives and are associated with indicative verbs—often involving a speech act within a group of people. This leaves just nine one-another commands with the ἑαυτοῦ form.⁴¹

An important question arises at this point: Is there a subtle distinction in meaning between the ἀλλήλων form and the ἑαυτοῦ form? There are at least three compelling reasons to conclude that the two forms convey the same meaning. First, they often occur adjacent to each another for the sake of variety. In Ephesians 4:32 the Apostle Paul exhorts the believers in Ephesus to “be kind to one another” (ἀλλήλων) and to “forgive one another” (ἑαυτοῦ). In Colossians 3:13 he exhorts his readers to

³⁵ Jude is the only NT writer that does not use ἀλλήλων.

³⁶ Wallace asserts, “One frequently finds this pronoun in paraenetic contexts, basing the exhortation on the organic connection that believers have with the risen Christ” (351).

³⁷ The historical Book of Acts, the Epistle to Philemon, and the prophetic book of Revelation do not contain any one-another commands meeting the formal definition.

³⁸ The first- and second-person reflexive pronouns (ἑαυτοῦ and σεαυτοῦ) occur only in the singular.

³⁹ F. Wilbur Gingrich, ed., *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), s.v. “ἑαυτοῦ.”

⁴⁰ The tabulations in this paragraph are based on the NA27 text. Ten of these ἑαυτοῦ occurrences do not appear in SCR. There are also seventeen occurrences in SCR that do not appear in NA27. Although four of these SCR-only occurrences use ἑαυτοῦ in a reciprocal sense, none of them qualify as commands. So once again, differences between Greek texts have no bearing on the final list of *one anothers*.

⁴¹ See details in Table 1 below. Two of the nine are in Colossians 3:16, where ἑαυτοῦ is distributed across two verbs (“teach” and “admonish”) in a parallel construction.

“forebear one another” (ἀλλήλων) and to “forgive one another” (ἑαυτοῦ).⁴² It is clear in both of these examples that the writer is using the two forms interchangeably.

The second compelling reason to conclude that the two forms mean the same thing is found in the works of respected translators. The KJV and ESV translators make no deliberate distinction in their renderings of the two terms. The NASB translators attempt to preserve the stylistic variations of the two preceding examples by rendering ἀλλήλων as “one another” and ἑαυτοῦ as “each other.” These renderings arguably have no functional distinction in meaning.

The third compelling reason that ἀλλήλων and ἑαυτοῦ mean the same thing is that grammarians who have carefully considered this question have come to this conclusion. Robertson declares that the reciprocal use of the reflexive pronoun “does not really differ in idea from ἀλλήλων.”⁴³ Nigel Turner concurs, asserting that “ἑαυτοῦ serves for ἀλλήλων” when used in the reciprocal sense.⁴⁴

The Εἷς τὸν ἓνα Form

The third and final surface form of the *one anothers* is εἷς τὸν ἓνα, employing the cardinal “one” as both subject and object of the verb. The phrase literally means “one the one” (i.e., “one the other”). This form stands out as an oddity, occurring only once in the NT. Consequently, several works on the *one anothers* fail to include this form in their lists. The apparent reason for its rarity is that the phrase in 1 Thessalonians 5:11 is an Aramaism.⁴⁵

Is there a nuanced distinction in meaning between the εἷς τὸν ἓνα form and the other forms? Again, the answer is no, and the same three compelling reasons apply. First, the ἀλλήλων and the εἷς τὸν ἓνα forms occur alongside each other in stylistic variation. The Greek text of 1 Thessalonians 5:11 contains two *one anothers*, the first using the ἀλλήλων form and the second using the εἷς τὸν ἓνα form.⁴⁶ Gordon Fee points to the change in direct object and observes, “This is almost certainly an instance of ‘elegant variation,’ where there is no difference in meaning at all.”⁴⁷ Second, the translators convey no

⁴² Turner cites these two examples as evidence that the two forms occur side by side for variety (MHT 3:43). BDF agrees that the variation in form is simply for variety and adds Luke 23:12 as an example based on the SCR and BYZ texts (§287). BDAG likewise considers the reciprocal sense of ἑαυτοῦ to be a direct substitute for ἀλλήλων (s.v. “ἑαυτοῦ,” sense 2). A few other verses contain both forms but use ἑαυτοῦ in a reflexive (vs. reciprocal) sense (Luke 9:50; 12:1; John 19:24; Rom 1:27; 12:16; Phil 2:3).

⁴³ Archibald Thomas Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1919), 690. He observes, “This is in harmony with the ancient Greek idiom. The papyri show this same blending of ἑαυτῶν with ἀλλήλων. Sometimes it occurs side by side with ἀλλήλων as if by way of variety, as in ἀνεχόμενοι ἀλλήλων καὶ χαριζόμενοι ἑαυτοῖς (Col. 3:13).”

⁴⁴ MHT 3:43.

⁴⁵ MHT 3:187. See also BDF §247.4. Why the apostle Paul uses this form here is a matter of speculation. Stylistic variation could be his only reason.

⁴⁶ The Greek text reads, Διὸ παρακαλεῖτε ἀλλήλους καὶ οἰκοδομεῖτε εἷς τὸν ἓνα. The syntactical parallelism in combination with a variation in direct object strongly suggests equivalence.

⁴⁷ Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 199n58.

distinction in meaning in their renderings.⁴⁸ Third, Greek grammarians view εἰς τὸν ἕνα as equivalent to ἀλλήλων. Moule, for example, asserts that εἰς τὸν ἕνα expresses the same reciprocal sense as ἀλλήλων.⁴⁹

Polarities of the One-Another Commands

Throughout the Scriptures, God expresses his will for his people in the form of commands. Some of his commands are negative and prohibitory (the “thou shalt not’s”) and some of his commands are positive and prescriptive (the “thou shalt”). This distinction can be observed in both sections of the Decalogue. The first four commands, pertaining to Israel’s vertical relationship with God, prohibit polytheism and idolatry and prescribe the keeping of the Sabbath. The remaining six commands, pertaining to horizontal relationships with others, prohibit murder and stealing and prescribe the honoring of one’s parents.

Since the *one anothers* are by definition a category of biblical commands, it is natural to expect this positive and negative distinction with respect to them as well. Indeed, this is the case. A significant majority of the *one anothers* are positive/prescriptive, but eight are negative/prohibitory. The commands addressed to believers in one-another form define the norms of behavior within the believing community to which they are addressed. The positive commands encourage proper behaviors that contribute to the well-being and edification of a body of believers. The negative commands restrain improper behaviors that are harmful to the life and health of the body.⁵⁰

The neglect of either category is tragic. Believers individually and churches corporately have no more freedom to pick and choose which of the *one anothers* to teach and practice than Israel had to pick and chose which of the commands of the Decalogue to obey. Sadly, however, the negative category of the *one anothers* is often neglected.⁵¹ This is not proclaiming the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). Second Timothy 3:16 declares that Scripture is profitable for reproof and correction. Shall we neglect so valuable a resource? As George Cowan insightfully declares, “The prohibitions of

⁴⁸ The NASB, ESV, and NIV translators render both forms as “one another.” The KJV translators make a slight distinction in one direction (“comfort yourselves together, and edify one another”), and the NKJV translation committee makes a slight distinction in the opposite direction (“comfort each other and edify one another”).

⁴⁹ Moule, 120. BDF (§247.4), MHT (3:187), and BDAG (s.v. “εἰς” sense 5a) all equate the two forms.

⁵⁰ Alsup reinforces this view: “The positive one-another passages enhance the quality of fellowship, while the negative passages frustrate the quality and sometimes will work to destroy the relationships among Christians so that they will no longer associate, participate, or share together.” Herbert E. Alsup Jr., *Koinonia: A Perspective from the “One-Another” Passages* (MA thesis, David Lipscomb University, 1990), 36.

⁵¹ None of Getz’s books address a negative *one another*. In the introduction to the second edition of his seminal *Building Up One Another*, under the heading of “new insights,” Getz admits to having previously “missed” the negative one-another statements, and yet he still does not address them. See Gene Getz, *Building Up One Another*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 1997), 9. Jones and Brown consider only positive *one anothers*. Thomas Jones and Steve Brown, *One Another: Transformational Relationships in the Body of Christ* (Spring Hill, TN: Discipleship Publications International, 2008). The same is true in Wayne Jacobsen and Clay Jacobsen, *Authentic Relationships: Discover the Lost Art of “One Anothering”* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003).

grace are an essential part of Christian life truth. . . . Such a body of truth is not to be relegated to an insignificant corner of practical Christian thinking and living.”⁵²

Occurrences of the One-Another Commands

Locating occurrences of the three surface forms of the *one anothers* in the Greek text and then evaluating these against the formal definition developed above produce a definitive list of sixty-one *one anothers* (see Table 1 below).⁵³ There are a few interesting facts to note about this list. First, not a single entry in the list represents an original discovery. Rather, the list for the most part validates the valiant efforts of all those who have previously researched this topic.⁵⁴ Second, seven of the *one anothers* are located in the Gospels, and all seven of these are uttered from the lips of the Lord of the Church. Works that more narrowly focus on the epistolary literature of the NT overlook this vitally important material.⁵⁵ Third, the list of *one anothers* derives from a majority of the NT writers including Mark, John, Paul, the writer of Hebrews, James, and Peter. The only NT writers not contributing to the list are Matthew, Luke, and Jude.

In terms of the list’s composition, fifty-one entries have the ἀλλήλων form, nine have the ἑαυτοῦ form, and only one has the εἰς τὸν ἕνα form. Grammatically speaking, thirty of the *one anothers* involve imperative verbs, fourteen involve hortatory or prohibitive subjunctives, eleven reside in subordinate participial clauses, two are commands by way of context, one involves an infinitive with ὀφείλω, and one involves an optative. In addition, the *one anothers* in Romans 12:10 and 1 Peter 4:9 involve elliptical verbs. This analysis makes it clear that searching for verses containing “one another” in combination with imperative verbs is wholly inadequate. The language of the NT is simply too rich for such a rudimentary approach.

The Organization of the One-Another Commands

A cursory scan of the data leads to the obvious conclusion that some of the one-another commands are repeated two or more times. A sensible first step in organizing the data, therefore, is to group these repeated occurrences together. After combining repeated commands in accordance with the foregoing considerations, the list of sixty-one one-another occurrences is reduced to thirty-eight unique one-

⁵² George M. Cowan, “The Prohibitions of Grace,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 103 (1946): 223, 225.

⁵³ This excludes seven marginal cases discussed in the author’s dissertation (see note 1 above). The term *definitive* is not used casually. Barring future changes to the Greek text of the NT, the author stakes this claim on the rigor of the methodology employed coupled with the exhaustive search capability of Bible software.

⁵⁴ It is true that some entries in the list are more often overlooked (e.g., Rom 14:19; 1 Cor 7:5; 1 Thess 5:13, 15). If these share any commonality, it is that the KJV renderings of these verses do not contain “one another” as a simple construct.

⁵⁵ In the original edition of *Building Up One Another* (Wheaton: SP Publications, 1976), Gene Getz begins well by identifying ἀλλήλων as the “unique word” that describes the “mutual and reciprocal process” enabling the body of Christ “to function effectively and to grow spiritually” (4). He adds, “In fact, *excluding the gospels*, the word is used 58 times in the New Testament” (emphasis added). Getz then proceeds to focus narrowly on twelve *one anothers*, all from Pauline epistles. Five years pass before Getz writes *Loving One Another*, a volume giving due consideration to the “love one another” commands of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels.

another commands (see Table 2 below). The largest set is “love one another” (fourteen occurrences). There are four occurrences of “greet one another” and two occurrences each of “comfort/encourage,” “edify,” “exhort,” “forbear,” “forgive,” “be at peace with,” and “serve” “one another.”

The catalog of one-another commands can be organized into groups by means of semantic relatedness: the measure of how close two words are in meaning.⁵⁶ In biblical study, the seminal work in the area of semantic relatedness is the *Greek-English Lexicon* by Louw and Nida.⁵⁷ This lexicon distinguishes itself from other Bible lexicons by grouping lexical items that are related in meaning into what Louw and Nida call semantic domains and subdomains.⁵⁸ Semantic domains are categories of broadly related meanings, and subdomains constitute smaller subcategories within each semantic domain.⁵⁹ The Louw and Nida system has at least two distinct advantages relevant to the *one anothers*: different parts of speech may be classified together, and polarities are also classified together since they share common lexical features.⁶⁰

Arranging the *one anothers* by semantic domain reveals some notable groupings. Seven one-another commands map to L&N semantic domain 25, “Attitudes and Emotions.” Nine map to semantic domain 33, “Communication.” Six others map to domain 88, “Moral and Ethical Qualities and Related Behavior.” Ten one-another commands are alone (“singletons”) in their semantic domains: “consume one another,” “consider one another,” “submit to one another,” “forgive one another,” “wash one another’s feet,” “judge one another,” “defraud one another,” “edify one another,” “wait for one another,” and “honor one another.” The remaining *one anothers* map to domains containing just two each. Higher-order groupings of small groups and singletons are possible within the Louw and Nida taxonomy since domains sharing a degree of commonality are listed in close proximity.⁶¹

Suggested Categories

A three-step process is proposed for organizing the one-another commands into categories: (1) create first-order groupings based solely on the L&N semantic domains; (2) use higher-order groupings within the L&N taxonomy to merge domains with few members into broader domains;

⁵⁶ Reda Siblini and Leila Kosseim, “Using a Weighted Semantic Network for Lexical Semantic Relatedness,” in *Proceedings of Recent Advances in Natural Language Processing* (Shouman, Bulgaria: Incoma, 2014), 610.

⁵⁷ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988). Louw and Nida use the principle of semantic relatedness in creating their semantic domains.

⁵⁸ Louw and Nida identify this as a chief motivation for their lexicon: “The most important reason for a new approach to a Greek New Testament lexicon is the necessity of bringing together those meanings which are most closely related in semantic space, that is to say, those meanings which are often regarded as partial synonyms because the ranges of their meanings tend to overlap.” Eugene A. Nida and Johannes P. Louw, *Lexical Semantics of the Greek New Testament* (Atlanta: Scholars’ Press, 1992), ix. References herein to Nida and Louw pertain to this work, whereas L&N pertains to their lexicon.

⁵⁹ Louw and Nida offer this helpful analogy: “A dictionary based on semantic domains is in many ways like a classification of flora or fauna based on families, genera, and species. One may say that the domains constitute families of meanings, the subdomains are the genera, and the individual entries are the species.” L&N, 1:8.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:x.

⁶¹ See the discussion on grouping of domains in Nida and Louw, 84. See also the domain classes listed in L&N, 1:vi.

and (3) use various ad hoc methods to determine the best categories for singletons. Step 1 groups the *one anothers* into sixteen semantic domains, three of which have three or more members. Steps 2 and 3 group the rest of the *one anothers* into larger groups. Five categories of *one anothers* emerge from this process: *attitudinal, ethical, cognitive, communicational, and social*. Table 2 below lists the *one anothers* by category.

Attitudinal *one anothers* include attitudes and emotions that influence one's thoughts, behaviors, and actions. Seven of the thirty-eight unique one-another commands in the NT fall into this category, most notably the group of fourteen occurrences of "love one another." The other one-another commands in this category are "have devoted affection," "be compassionate" (KJV "tenderhearted"), "care for," "forbear," "forgive," and "consume not" (i.e., do no harm or have a mean-spirited attitude).⁶²

Ethical *one anothers* deal with moral principles that govern conduct within a community of believers.⁶³ In general, these one-another commands involve doing good to others and seeking the good of others. This category contains seven unique *one anothers*: "be humble," "edify," "pursue good," "be kind," "be at peace," "envy not," and "provoke not."⁶⁴

Cognitive *one anothers* involve thoughts, opinions, and thought processes. This is the smallest of the categories, with only five *one anothers*: "consider," "esteem," "honor," "judge not," and "be likeminded."⁶⁵ It is logical to group these five together since all of these involve evaluative thought processes.

Communicational *one anothers* involve speech and other forms of communication. This is the largest category, with eleven unique one-another commands: "greet"; "speak to"; "teach"; "admonish"; "comfort/encourage";⁶⁶ "exhort"; "confess to"; "pray for"; and three negative commands: "lie";

⁶² L&N places all of these except "consume one another" in domain 25, "Attitudes and Emotions." The prohibition against consuming one another is contextually contrasted with the attitude of love. Louw and Nida admit that this domain is "very closely related to a number of domains including Think, Psychological Faculties, Sensory Events and States, Behavior and Related States, and Moral and Ethical Qualities and Related Behaviors." L&N, 1:288.

⁶³ The ethics of one-another relationships fits within the broader category of biblical ethics, sometimes called Christian ethics or kingdom ethics. For an extensive consideration of Christian ethics, see John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life, A Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2008). For a more concise treatment, see Arthur F. Holmes, *Ethics: Approaching Moral Decisions, Contours of Christian Philosophy* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994).

⁶⁴ L&N groups most of these within domain 88, Moral and Ethical Qualities and Related Behavior. Added to these is the command to "edify," which is an aspect of pursuing the good of others. One could argue that "be humble" is attitudinal. But in the context of 1 Peter 5:5 it governs the ethics of interpersonal behavior.

⁶⁵ L&N groups esteeming and being likeminded in subdomain 31.1, "have an opinion, hold a view." To "judge" and to "honor" have strong semantic relatedness to "esteem" and to each other.

⁶⁶ L&N does not treat "comfort/encourage" and "exhort" as separate senses of *παρακαλέω*. Instead, it classifies all four one-another occurrences of the word under domain 25, "attitudes and emotions," subdomain 25.150, "to cause someone to be encouraged or consoled." The problem with this classification is that it focuses on the sense of encouragement experienced by the recipient rather than the action of the encourager/exhorter, which typically involves a speech act (as is the case in the relevant contexts). Consequently, the L&N domain assignment is overridden by the author in the case of *παρακαλέω*.

“grumble”; and “slander.” The Bible has much to say about verbal communication, including much instruction on how believers are to communicate with one another and about one another.⁶⁷

Social *one anothers* include social behaviors and norms pertaining to relationships within the Christian community.⁶⁸ This category contains eight unique *one anothers*, making it the second largest category. The commands in this category include “accept,” “wait for,” “be hospitable,” “bear burdens,” “serve,” “wash . . . feet,” “submit,” and “defraud not.” The social *one anothers* span six L&N semantic domains, making it the most disparate of the five categories.⁶⁹

Recommended Sequence for Preaching

Grouping the one-another commands into these five categories is a significant step toward sequencing them for preaching. Before embarking on a sermon series, however, the preacher must first consider how best to begin his series. An introductory message for the series establishes the proper biblical framework for interpreting and applying the *one anothers*. Before preaching a message on the first one-another command, the preacher needs to expound the key one-another *indicative*, namely, that believers are “members one of another” (Rom 12:5; Eph 4:25).⁷⁰ By tracing the use of the body metaphor throughout the NT epistles, several foundational principles emerge: universally speaking, there is but one body (Rom 12:5; Eph 4:4); the church is Christ’s body (1:23); Christ is the head of his body (4:15); and believers are the members of the body (Rom 12:5).

After this introductory message, there are several reasons to address the “love one another” command first. The most compelling reason is that Jesus elevated the command to love others above all other commands except the command to love God (Matt 22:39; Mark 12:31). A second compelling reason to begin with this command is its prevalence: of the sixty-one one-another commands in the NT, fourteen are occurrences of “love one another.” A third compelling reason is the priority it is given in 1 Peter 4:8, “Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.” Fourth, the command to love provides a suitable foundation for all the other *one*

⁶⁷ The use and misuse of speech are dominant themes in both OT and NT. For example, “My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart: and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly” (Job 33:3); “Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile” (Ps 34:13); “The tongue of the just is as choice silver” (Prov 10:20a); “Death and life are in the power of the tongue” (18:21); “The tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things” (Jas 3:5); “For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile” (1 Pet 3:10).

⁶⁸ The category label is “social” in place of L&N’s much broader term “relational,” which might conceivably include all the *one anothers*. “Social” is one of the categories in Lowe and Lowe (287). Their category includes four of the members in the list above. Their list also includes “forbear” and “care for” (in the “attitudinal” category) and “honor” (in the “cognitive” category).

⁶⁹ The grouping together of these domains is nonetheless reasonable. Several adjacent L&N semantic domains have to do with social behavior: “A number of interpersonal relations are grouped together in the domains of Association; Help, Care For; Guide, Discipline, Follow [etc.]” Nida and Louw, 84.

⁷⁰ Joe Nieboer recognized this fact. Joe Nieboer, *One Another: A Treatise on Happy Christian Relationships* (North East, PA: Our Daily Walk, 1953), 10. Chapter 2 of his book is titled “Members One of Another.” It uses Romans 12:5 as its central passage. Hoag identifies this as the “key verse” for a study of the *one anothers*. Wayne Hoag, *The One Another Project* (Maitland: Xulon, 2012), 13.

another since love is the greatest Christian virtue (1 Cor 13:13) and the first fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22).⁷¹ Fifth, love is central to NT ecclesiology (Gal 5:13–14; Eph 4:16; Phil 1:9; etc.).

The command for believers to love one another belongs to the attitudinal one-another category. It is sensible, therefore, to next preach through all the commands in this category before proceeding to the commands in the other categories. One paradigm for ordering the remaining categories is to sequence them on the general basis of causality. Since attitudes and ethics shape thought processes and thought processes influence interpersonal communications and social interaction, it is appropriate to preach through the one-another categories in this order: (1) attitudinal; (2) ethical; (3) cognitive; (4) communicational; (5) social. The preacher may consider using contextual relatedness to influence the order within a category.⁷²

The Value of Preaching the One-Another Commands

A preacher can engender pathos in the pulpit by means of his own heart preparation. After all, a sermon without a heartbeat is dead on arrival. Rowell suggests that a preacher ask himself, “Do I believe this message will make a difference?”⁷³ Genuine pathos in the pulpit is contingent upon an enthusiastically affirmative answer to this question. Let there be no doubt in the preacher’s mind: preaching the *one another* most assuredly will make a difference in individual relationships within a church and in the overall body life of a church. The following wealth of evidence supports this claim.

Henry Admiraal taught a course on “reciprocal Christian relationships” covering eight one-another commands. Interest in the topic itself caused increased participation in his church’s fellowship groups even *before* the first lesson.⁷⁴ By the time the series ended, tangible impact on congregational life could be observed in four distinct areas: (1) a majority of the fellowship groups voluntarily engaged in “serving one another” projects; (2) the congregation responded to “pray for one another” through a dramatic increase in prayer chain activity and the public sharing of prayer requests and praises; (3) the congregation implemented “encourage one another” through the use of encouragement cards; (4) seventy-five families applied the “be hospitable to one another” command by participating in dessert exchanges.⁷⁵

Don Pahl used pretest and posttest surveys to assess the effects of a thirteen-week preaching series on the *one another*. Quantitatively, Pahl’s survey results indicated a statistically significant “increase

⁷¹ Hoag, 15. John Owen declares, “Love is the fountain of all duties toward God and man, the substance of all rules that concerneth the saints, the bond of communion, the fulfilling of the law, the advancement of the honour of the Lord Jesus, and the glory of the gospel.” *Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (1850–53; reprint, London: Banner of Truth, 1967), 13:62. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, with 1 John 4:8 in view (“He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love”), declares, “I do not hesitate, therefore, to say that the ultimate test of our profession of the Christian faith is, I believe, this whole question of our loving one another.” *Life in Christ: Studies in 1 John* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002), 420.

⁷² For example, “teach” and “admonish,” both in the “communicational” category, occur together in Colossians 3:16.

⁷³ Edward K. Rowell, *Preaching with Spiritual Passion*, The Pastor’s Soul Series (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1998), 88.

⁷⁴ Henry Admiraal, “The Preparation and Use of a Course on Reciprocal Christian Relationships in the Local Church” (DMin project, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1986), 27.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 37–39.

in the awareness and experience of the ‘one-another’ actions.”⁷⁶ Qualitatively, testimonials from study participants attested to a greater awareness of others’ needs and of participants’ own deficiencies in practicing the *one anothers*.⁷⁷

Pastor George McDearmon preached a series of sixty-seven sermons on the *one anothers*.⁷⁸ “I have come to assess the series as the most important series I have ever preached,” he exclaimed, “and, were I starting over in the pastoral ministry, [I] would have preached it much earlier.”⁷⁹ By his own assessment, his congregation became “persuaded of the high and critical importance of the application of the one-another commands, exhortations and prohibitions.”⁸⁰

Pastor Dan Brooks preached a series of forty-one sermons on the *one anothers*.⁸¹ In his view, the series matured his people significantly as they perceived the interrelatedness of the one-another commands to the overarching command to love one another. This awareness led to “deeper relational quality of the Christian life.” He also personally grew and matured along with his congregation: “God challenged so many of my preconceived ideas about love, service, and ministry,” he testified. What was Pastor Brooks’s advice to a pastor thinking about preaching a series on the *one anothers*? “Do it!” he exclaimed. “This was a powerful study, both personally and corporately.”⁸²

Pastor Daniel Jarstfer preached a series of thirty-four sermons on the *one anothers*.⁸³ He did it to address the “many false ideas on how members of Christ’s Body should treat one another.”⁸⁴ Entrenched ideas and behaviors are sometimes difficult to dislodge. Despite this human reality, Pastor Jarstfer reported that some “took the Word to heart and grew.”⁸⁵ This is a testimony to the supernatural power of the Word of God to transform lives. Pastor Jarstfer encourages other pastors to preach the *one anothers* because they are “germane to us all” and they lead to the development of better body life in the church.⁸⁶

⁷⁶ Don L. Pahl, “The Theology and Practice of Community in the Local Church: Building the Church’s ‘Socio-Spiritual Capital’ by Practicing the ‘One-Anothers’ of the New Testament” (DMin project, Denver Seminary, 2005), 168.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 163–65.

⁷⁸ “One Another Duties,” recorded May 13, 2012, through March 23, 2014, accessed May 15, 2020, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/search.asp?currpage=1&keyword=One+Another+Duties&keywordDesc=One+Another+Duties&SeriesOnly=true&SourceID=blbcsa&AudioOnly=false>.

⁷⁹ George McDearmon, e-mail message to the author, May 28, 2020.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Brooks preached these sermons at Heritage Bible Church in Greer, South Carolina. “One Another,” recorded May 9, 2011, through August 26, 2012, accessed May 11, 2020, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/search.asp?currpage=1&keyword=One+Another+%2D+2011&keywordDesc=One+Another+%2D+2011&SeriesOnly=true&SourceID=hbcchurch&AudioOnly=false&sortby=date>.

⁸² Dan Brooks, e-mail message to the author, May 12, 2020.

⁸³ Jarstfer preached these sermons at Christ Our Hope Presbyterian Church in Charlestown, Rhode Island. Daniel Jarstfer, “One Another,” recorded January 26, 2014, through October 26, 2014, accessed May 11, 2020, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/search.asp?currpage=1&keyword=Daniel%5FJarstfer&SpeakerOnly=true&subsetcat=series&subsetitem=One+Another&AudioOnly=false&sortby=oldest>.

⁸⁴ Daniel Jarstfer, e-mail message to author, May 14, 2020.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Daniel Jarstfer, telephone conversation with the author, May 15, 2020.

Dr. Rick Arrowood also preached a series of thirty-four sermons on the *one anothers*.⁸⁷ He characterized the results as “phenomenal.” “This was one of those series that I still hear conversation about from time to time. It was profitable to me as I developed them, and [to] our people as they put many of the principles into their daily lives.”⁸⁸ He recounted a particularly moving example of the impact of this series upon his congregation. After preaching on “forgive one another,” a man came forward and asked to speak with him. This man had a daughter who had broken family rules and left home to marry a man without the parents’ blessings. The family had not spoken with her for eighteen years! The “forgive one another” sermon triggered a months-long process of healing that culminated in an emotional reconciliation in the pastor’s office. Pastor Arrowood described it as one of the most stirring days in his forty-one years of ministry. Upon his retirement, many in his church identified his “One Another Principle” series as his most memorable and helpful sermon series.⁸⁹

The author preached a series of thirty-nine messages on “practicing the one anothers.”⁹⁰ Doing so has had a profound impact on body life within the church. The congregation regularly thinks in one-another categories and seek to live out the *one anothers* in their daily lives. This has led to an observable increase in mutual care within the church family.

Conclusion

The church must put the one-another commands into practice. The place to begin is with the command to “love one another.” Loving one another is the heartbeat and hub of Christian ministry, and the remaining thirty-seven *one anothers* radiate the effects of love throughout the body of Christ. As the members of Christ’s body love one another and live out the rest of the one-another commands, the body grows and edifies itself in love (Eph 4:16).

The one-another commands are an integral part of the whole counsel of God. The consistent practice of these commands is vital to the church. Therefore, they must be preached. Preaching them has the potential to transform Christian relationships and to revitalize entire church ministries. Preaching them together as a series serves to amplify the impact.

⁸⁷ Arrowood preached these sermons at Crosspointe Baptist Church in Indianapolis, Indiana. “The One Another Principle,” recorded December 28, 2016, through November 12, 2017, accessed May 11, 2020, <https://www.sermonaudio.com/search.asp?currpage=1&keyword=The+One+Another+Principle&keywordDesc=The+One+Another+Principle&SeriesOnly=true&SourceID=crosspointe&sortby=date>.

⁸⁸ Rick Arrowood, e-mail message to the author, June 3, 2020.

⁸⁹ Rick Arrowood, telephone conversation with the author, June 15, 2020.

⁹⁰ Audio recordings of the series may be accessed at https://www.grace-baptist-church.org/sermon_archive?sa_action=mode_series&sa_filter=Practicing--SPC--the--SPC--One--SPC--Anothers.

Table 1. Occurrences of the One-Another Commands

Following is a list of all the one-another passages that satisfy the formal definition proposed above. References are in canonical order. Where possible, a single word expresses the paraenetic idea of the command.⁹¹

#	Passage	Command	Polarity	Form
1.	Mark 9:50	Peace	Positive	ἀλλήλων
2.	John 13:14	Wash	Positive	ἀλλήλων
3.	John 13:34a	Love	Positive	ἀλλήλων
4.	John 13:34b	Love	Positive	ἀλλήλων
5.	John 13:35	Love	Positive	ἀλλήλων
6.	John 15:12	Love	Positive	ἀλλήλων
7.	John 15:17	Love	Positive	ἀλλήλων
8.	Rom 12:10a	Devoted ⁹²	Positive	ἀλλήλων
9.	Rom 12:10b	Honor	Positive	ἀλλήλων
10.	Rom 12:16	Likeminded	Positive	ἀλλήλων
11.	Rom 13:8	Love	Positive	ἀλλήλων
12.	Rom 14:13	Judge	Negative	ἀλλήλων
13.	Rom 14:19	Edify	Positive	ἀλλήλων
14.	Rom 15:7	Accept	Positive	ἀλλήλων
15.	Rom 16:16	Greet	Positive	ἀλλήλων
16.	1 Cor 7:5	Deprive	Negative	ἀλλήλων
17.	1 Cor 11:33	Wait	Positive	ἀλλήλων
18.	1 Cor 12:25	Care	Positive	ἀλλήλων
19.	1 Cor 16:20	Greet	Positive	ἀλλήλων
20.	2 Cor 13:12	Greet	Positive	ἀλλήλων
21.	Gal 5:13	Serve	Positive	ἀλλήλων
22.	Gal 5:15b	Be consumed	Negative	ἀλλήλων
23.	Gal 5:26a	Provoke	Negative	ἀλλήλων
24.	Gal 5:26b	Envy	Negative	ἀλλήλων
25.	Gal 6:2	Bear (burdens)	Positive	ἀλλήλων

⁹¹ “Peace,” for example, represents both “have peace” (Mark 9:50 KJV) and “be at peace” (1 Thess 5:13). The English word representing the command may come from the KJV, the NASB, or the ESV, or it may be the author’s own rendering.

⁹² This is the NASB rendering. The KJV reads, “Be kindly affectioned one to another.” The Greek term is φιλόστοργοι. Louw and Nida explain its meaning: “Pertaining to love or affection for those closely related to one, particularly members of one’s immediate family or in-group – ‘very loving, warmly devoted to, very affectionate.’” L&N, § 25.41.

#	Passage	Command	Polarity	Form
26.	Eph 4:2	Forbear	Positive	ἀλλήλων
27.	Eph 4:32a	Kind	Positive	ἀλλήλων
28.	Eph 4:32b	Compassionate	Positive	ἀλλήλων
29.	Eph 4:32c	Forgive	Positive	ἑαυτοῦ
30.	Eph 5:19	Speak	Positive	ἑαυτοῦ
31.	Eph 5:21	Submit	Positive	ἀλλήλων
32.	Phil 2:3	Esteem	Positive	ἀλλήλων
33.	Col 3:9	Lie	Negative	ἀλλήλων
34.	Col 3:13a	Forbear	Positive	ἀλλήλων
35.	Col 3:13b	Forgive	Positive	ἑαυτοῦ
36.	Col 3:16a	Teach	Positive	ἑαυτοῦ
37.	Col 3:16b	Admonish	Positive	ἑαυτοῦ
38.	1 Thess 3:12	Love	Positive	ἀλλήλων
39.	1 Thess 4:18	Comfort ⁹³	Positive	ἀλλήλων
40.	1 Thess 5:11a	Comfort ⁹⁴	Positive	ἀλλήλων
41.	1 Thess 5:11b	Edify	Positive	εἰς τὸν ἕνα
42.	1 Thess 5:13	Peace	Positive	ἑαυτοῦ
43.	1 Thess 5:15	Pursue good	Positive	ἀλλήλων
44.	Heb 3:13	Exhort ⁹⁵	Positive	ἑαυτοῦ
45.	Heb 10:24	Consider ⁹⁶	Positive	ἀλλήλων
46.	Heb 10:25	Exhort	Positive	ἀλλήλων
47.	Jas 4:11	Slander	Negative	ἀλλήλων
48.	Jas 5:9	Grumble	Negative	ἀλλήλων
49.	Jas 5:16a	Confess	Positive	ἀλλήλων

⁹³ The KJV rendering is “comfort,” whereas the ESV rendering is “encourage.” The distinction is difficult to maintain: “In the rare instances in which the verb and noun mean ‘to comfort’ or ‘comfort’ in ordinary Greek usage, the consolation is mostly at the level of exhortation or encouragement to those who sorrow.” *TDNT*, s.v. “παρακαλέω.”

⁹⁴ The KJV and NKJV rendering is “comfort.” The NASB, ESV, NET, RSV, NRSV, and NIV rendering is “encourage.” Wanamaker argues in favor of “exhort,” but none of the aforementioned English versions concur. Charles A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 189.

⁹⁵ The KJV and ESV rendering is “exhort,” whereas the NASB rendering is “encourage.” “Hebrews more than once summons readers to help one another by mutual exhortation (3:13; 10:25).” *TDNT*, s.v. “παρακαλέω,” para. F. 2., “exhortation.”

⁹⁶ The paraenetic idea expressed in the verse is difficult to reduce to a single word. In the KJV the verse reads, “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.” The main verb is the hortatory subjunctive *κατανοῶμεν* “consider” with *ἀλλήλους* as its direct object. “The Exhortation . . . centers on the responsibility of Christians to exhibit practical concern for one another.” William L. Lane, *Hebrews 9–13*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1991), 289.

#	Passage	Command	Polarity	Form
50.	Jas 5:16b	Pray	Positive	ἀλλήλων
51.	1 Pet 1:22	Love	Positive	ἀλλήλων
52.	1 Pet 4:8	Love	Positive	ἑαυτοῦ
53.	1 Pet 4:9	Hospitable	Positive	ἀλλήλων
54.	1 Pet 4:10	Serve	Positive	ἑαυτοῦ
55.	1 Pet 5:5	Humble	Positive	ἀλλήλων
56.	1 Pet 5:14	Greet	Positive	ἀλλήλων
57.	1 John 3:11	Love	Positive	ἀλλήλων
58.	1 John 3:23	Love	Positive	ἀλλήλων
59.	1 John 4:7	Love	Positive	ἀλλήλων
60.	1 John 4:11	Love	Positive	ἀλλήλων
61.	2 John 5	Love	Positive	ἀλλήλων

Table 2. Suggested Sermons on the One-Another Commands of the NT

Below is a listing of the one-another commands grouped into categories. The order in which they are listed is a suggested order for preaching. No grouping scheme is perfect. In the scheme below, the attitudinal and ethical categories, though driven by L&N semantic-domain groupings, are not entirely distinct. Nevertheless, the overall progression of the proposed order is influenced on the basis of causality.

Sermon #	Sermon Title	Sermon Text(s)
Introductory Message		
1.	Members One of Another	Rom 12:5; Eph 4:25
Attitudinal One-Another Commands		
2.	Love	John 13:34 2x, 35; 15:12, 17; Rom 13:8; 1 Thess 3:12; 1 Pet 1:22; 4:8; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11; 2 John 5
3.	Have devoted affection toward	Rom 12:10
4.	Be compassionate	Eph 4:32
5.	Care for	1 Cor 12:25
6.	Forbear	Eph 4:2; Col 3:13
7.	Forgive	Eph 4:32; Col 3:13
8.	Be not consumed	Gal 5:15
Ethical One-Another Commands		
9.	Be humble	1 Pet 5:5
10.	Edify	Rom 14:19; 1 Thess 5:11
11.	Pursue good	1 Thess 5:15
12.	Be kind	Eph 4:32
13.	Be at peace	Mark 9:50; 1 Thess 5:13
14.	Provoke not	Gal 5:26a
15.	Envy not	Gal 5:26b
Cognitive One-Another Commands		
16.	Consider	Heb 10:24
17.	Esteem	Phil 2:3
18.	Honor	Rom 12:10
19.	Judge not	Rom 14:13
20.	Be likeminded	Rom 12:16
Communicational One-Another Commands		
21.	Greet	Rom 16:16; 1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Pet 5:14

Sermon #	Sermon Title	Sermon Text(s)
22.	Speak to	Eph 5:19
23.	Teach and admonish	Col 3:16
24.	Comfort/encourage	1 Thess 4:18; 5:11
25.	Exhort	Heb 3:13; 10:25
26.	Lie not	Col 3:9
27.	Grumble not	Jas 5:9
28.	Slander not	Jas 4:11
29.	Confess to	Jas 5:16
30.	Pray for	Jas 5:16
Social One-Another Commands		
31.	Accept	Rom 15:7
32.	Wait for	1 Cor 11:33
33.	Be hospitable	1 Pet 4:9
34.	Bear burdens	Gal 6:2
35.	Serve	Gal 5:13; 1 Pet 4:10
36.	Wash . . . feet	John 13:14
37.	Submit to	Eph 5:21
38.	Defraud not	1 Cor 7:5
Concluding Message		
39.	Review	