

# The “One Another” Commands

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The phrase "one another" is derived from the Greek word *allēlōn* which means “one another, each other; mutually, reciprocally.”<sup>1</sup> It occurs 100 times in the New Testament. In many occurrences it’s just used as a description of what the people are doing (e.g., Mark 4:41, 9:34, Luke 2:15).

But in many of Paul’s letters, he uses the phrase “one another” to instruct how Christians are to behave toward each other. Paul’s usage is significant because it tells us that those of us in the body of Christ, i.e., believers, must not live in isolation but are commanded to interact with fellow believers. In fact, our spiritual growth, i.e., our sanctification journey, is worked out by interacting with fellow disciples of Christ. To not interact with fellow believers is therefore to defy the clear teaching of Scripture.

Approximately 59 occurrences of “one another” are specific commands teaching us how (and how not) to relate to one another. Obedience to those commands is imperative. It forms the basis for all true Christian community, and has a direct impact on our witness to the world (John 13:35). In addition to *allēlōn*, the Bible uses other words and phrases to instruct us how to relate to others.

With that in mind, though the following list is not exhaustive, we can see how God wants us to grow into spiritual maturity when we focus on one another.

## Positive Commands

- **Love** one another (John 13:34. This command occurs at least 16 times.)
- **Be devoted** to one another (Romans 12:10)
- **Honour** one another above yourselves (Romans 12:10)
- **Live in harmony** with one another (Romans 12:16, 15:5)
- **Build up** one another (Romans 14:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- **Welcome and accept** one another (Romans 15:7)
- **Admonish** one another (Romans 15:14; Colossians 3:16)
- **Greet** one another (Romans 16:16)
- **Care** for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25)
- **Serve** one another (Galatians 5:13)
- **Bear** one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2)
- **Forgive** one another (Ephesians 4:2, 32)
- **Be patient** with one another (Ephesians 4:2)
- **Speak the truth** to one another (Ephesians 4:25)

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<sup>1</sup> Mounce, William D. *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Zondervan Academic, 2006. E-Book.

- **Be kind and compassionate** to one another (Ephesians 4:32)
- **Speak** to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19)
- **Submit** to one another (Ephesians 5:21, 1 Peter 5:5)
- **Consider** others better than yourselves (Philippians 2:3)
- **Look to the interests** of one another (Philippians 2:4)
- **Bear** with one another (Colossians 3:13)
- **Teach** one another (Colossians 3:16)
- **Comfort** one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18)
- **Encourage** one another with God's Word (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- **Exhort** one another (Hebrews 3:13)
- **Stir up** [provoke, stimulate] one another to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24)
- **Show hospitality** to one another (1 Peter 4:9)
- **Employ the gifts** that God has given us for the benefit of one another (1 Peter 4:10)
- **Clothe yourselves with humility** towards one another (1 Peter 5:5)
- **Pray** for one another (James 5:16)
- **Confess** your faults to one another (James 5:16).

### **Negative Commands (How not to treat one another)**

- **Do not lie** to one another (Colossians 3:9)
- **Let us not pass judgment** on one another (Romans 14:13)
- If you keep on **biting and devouring** each other...you'll be destroyed by each other (Galatians 5:15)
- **Let us not become conceited**, provoking and envying each other (Galatians 5:26)
- **Do not slander** one another (James 4:11)
- **Do not grumble** against each other (James 5:9).

We are called to do all the above commands because we are, in a real sense, "members of one another" (Romans 12:5; Ephesians 4:25).