



Light from the Word

Consider One Another

Editor's Note: The Bible uses the term "one another" multiple times and it is clear God is very interested in our relationships. Jesus taught that the second greatest commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves. In 2018, we will look at several of the "one anothers" in the Bible.

"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works."

It may be common when reading this verse in Hebrews to focus one's attention on the act of *provoking* one another to love and good works. However, if we hope to be successful in provoking our brother to love and good works, it is essential that we exercise the prerequisite, "consider one another." In this context, "consider" means to "observe fully." It could also be translated that we should behold, discover, or perceive one another more deeply. In short, it means we should truly learn to know one another, if we hope to help one another become more fruitful.

How can we learn to know one another more deeply? Is it even a worthy goal to learn to know someone more fully? Jesus said, *"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."* Loving one another as Jesus has loved us is an impossible human task. It is made easier if we can learn to know one another deeply.

Shared experiences are one way in which people learn to know one another better. Whether co-worker, teammate, cancer survivor, or soldier, each can identify with and know others who have shared the same experiences. In particular, those who have suffered together as soldiers in wartime form bonds that are not lightly broken. Some of those bonds are further strengthened through personal sacrifice on behalf of a fellow soldier. In a different way, sacrifice is an element of the bond between parent and child,

but it is augmented by a connection that transcends the physical, and goes deeper than mere shared experiences. Is it possible that we could foster similar bonds in the church family?

Birth

If we, by faith, are born again, we can experience the bond between spiritual parent and child. We can learn to know God, just as Jesus knew and loved the Father. We can also experience the sibling bond with Jesus. Paul expressed it this way: *"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death."* Paul did not mean that he desired to know *about* Jesus. He wanted to *know* Jesus. To do that, Paul had surrendered all things to Jesus. He gave up his status as a ruler and lawyer and was willing to work with his hands to earn his living, while laboring "night and day" to bring the gospel to people who had no knowledge of God. Allowing ourselves to suffer the loss of all things by dying to self and being born again is a necessity if we hope to experience the love of Christ by loving and knowing one another. We can be freed from all of our destructive behaviors and perspectives. By being conformed to the death of Jesus, we can learn to know the power of His resurrection!

Sacrifice

Jesus told His disciples that He knows His sheep and is known of them. And that He knows the Father as the Father knows Him. Even from Old Testament times, God communicated His desire to His people that we would know Him. Because of that knowledge of the Father, Jesus was willing to lay down His life for the sheep. Through these few simple phrases, we begin to sense the power of knowing someone. Because Jesus knew the Father, He could trust the Father, not just

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with a few details of daily living, but with His very life. When we learn to know Jesus, we can lay down our life for Him, and for His brethren. It is in laying down our life for the brethren that we demonstrate true love.

Shared Experience

Paul encouraged shared experience across many miles of separation. He told the Ephesian church that Tychicus would make all things known to them regarding Paul's affairs and how he was doing. He further encouraged the Thessalonian church to know them which labored among them. It was the same encouragement to consider, observe, discover, and perceive what kind of people they were. He wanted the church to understand their thinking, to comprehend their motives, and to understand their sacrifice. Such understanding is only possible through the shared foundation of a new birth in Christ, a shared sacrifice of dying to self, and a shared experience of living a life of unashamed faith in Christ.

How can we put this into practice? One possibility is to share in the most difficult moments that our fellow believers face. We are taught to bear one another's burdens. That may be accomplished by sharing in tragedy. It may be by sharing financially with those who are not as well off as we are. It may be by sharing time in prayer and song. It may be by serving together in some capacity, or even simply spending time with one another.

However, to "observe fully" requires that we be willing to be fully observed ourselves. We are called to be transparent with our brothers and sisters in Christ. For them to know us and consider us, means that we must be willing to be known. We must be willing to confess our faults one to another. (*And thereby be healed.*) Although it is not human nature to acknowledge weakness and imperfection, the knowledge of Christ can enable us to acknowledge to the Body what the Head already knows. Such transparency communicates trust, and fosters mutual openness, which often leads to a deeper awareness of shared experiences.

If we consider one another, we will learn to know one another deeply. When we know one another deeply, it is not so difficult to love one another deeply. When we love one another deeply, it is not so difficult to sacrifice on behalf of our brother. More importantly, it is not so difficult to refrain from demanding of our brother unreasonably. Finally, it will become second nature to gently provoke unto love and good works—and to gently receive that provoking from the brethren whom we love so profoundly, because they are Christ's, as are we. "*Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us.*"

(Footnotes)

¹ Heb. 10:24

² John 13:34-35

³ Phil. 3:10

⁴ 1 Thess. 2:9

⁵ Isaiah 43:5-11

⁶ John 10:14-15

⁷ Eph. 6:21

⁸ 1 Thess. 5:12-13

⁹ Gal. 6:2

¹⁰ 1 John 3:17, James 2:16

¹¹ James 5:16

¹² 1 John 3:1