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Sermon Transcript

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# Caring For Each Other

In the United States, there are approximately 1.5 million abortions every year. There was a period of about fifteen to twenty years where there was at least 1.5 plus abortions. Since January the 22<sup>nd</sup> 1973 when the Supreme Court legalized unrestricted abortions, there have been over thirty-eight million abortions in the United States, and that continues to grow.

We as a nation lead the civilized world in murders. I was looking up on the computer statistics for murder and one of the latest that I found (I found one in '98 but they didn't break it down in this exact way), but in 1995 there was a total in this country of 21,597 murders. The murder rate was eight per one hundred thousand inhabitants in this country, and obviously in some areas it's higher than other areas. Now what do these statistics have in common? And perhaps this ties in with what Mike Bennett was giving when he was talking about statistics. What do these have in common? Well to me they indicate an indifference that people have to human life. Indifference, lack of kindness and concern and care that they have for human life.

Think what a different country this would be if we had 38 million additional people as far as the population is concerned. Let's turn back to **II Timothy 3:1** - we're all familiar with this section, we'll begin in verse 1 because it describes the age and the time that we're living in today. I think it gives a precise description of what we see happening around us today in society in this world.

We read here -

**II Timothy 3:1**- *"But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:*

**Verse 2** - *"For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,"* but notice, -

**Verse 3** - *"Unloving and unforgiving, slanderers, without self control, brutal,"* and on it goes. The "New King James Version" translates this as *unloving* in verse 3 as one of the characteristics that we would see at the end time, that people would not have the natural love. It also ties it in with *unforgiving*, so you have "*unloving and unforgiving*" "King James Version" of the Bible translates verse 3 - "*without natural affection.*" So not only is it talking about unloving, but in essence

in the Greek it does have this meaning; that humans do not have the natural affection, the natural tenderness and love and care and concern that they should have. The New Revised Standard Version translates it "*inhuman, implacable*," so that we see characteristics that are inhuman.

And I think when you begin to stop and you begin to analyze, who is it that is the unseen force in society, who influences mankind? You realize that it is Satan the devil, and his attitudes and approaches rub off on people all the time, and if we're not careful we can be overcome by this age, by its approach, by its philosophy, by its attitudes. It's very easy for them to begin to rub off on us, because as we live in this world, yet not a part of the world, yet we have to rub shoulders with people. We find that sometimes these attitudes can begin to encroach into our lives and into our families.

Notice what **Romans 1:24** says - it's describing here what happens when biblical standards are thrown out the window, when people just throw out the window God's way of life's standards and law.

**Verse 24** - "*Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves,*

**Verse 25** - "*who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.*

**Verse 26** - "*For this reason God gave them up to vile passions,*" it says. And so you find because standards are thrown out the windows people begin to follow their own lusts, their own desires, their own mind, they forget God. And you find that today under the guise of having understanding, under the guise of acceptance, not judging others that many of these things are acceptable in our society. Yet notice **verse 28** - (Sort of a summary statement here.)

**Verse 28** - "*Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge,*" so what happens to a society, to a group of people when they do not retain the knowledge of God, the way of God? Well God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things that are not fitting, so people's minds are affected. When you reject God's laws, ways and standards it affects your mind, you begin to reason in a different way; and you'll find there is a different spirit there that begins to influence people. Notice **verse 29**; it goes on to show what happens -

**Verse 29** - "*Being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers,*

**Verse 30** - "*backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,*

**Verse 31** - "undiscerning, *untrustworthy*," notice: unloving, "*unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful*." So again, here is a description of society, the natural outcome of rejecting God's law. But as verse 31 shows, notice what this leads to; it leads to people who are unloving. This is the same Greek word that was used in **II Timothy 3:3** that we read earlier and it means "*without natural affection*", so we live in an age, again, when natural affections, natural tenderness, love and care are stifled, and they're simply not there.

Again we see unloving and unforgiving tied together; and why would these two be tied together in the scriptures? But another element is added and it says, "*unmerciful*". As we progress through the sermon we'll see that unloving, unforgiving, and unmerciful are tied together. I think this certainly describes society around us, which reflects Satan's attitude and approach. Notice the "New Revised Standard Version" translates **Romans 1:31** this way -

**Verse 31** - It says "*foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless*". "*Heartless and ruthless*," and so it is a description too often of what goes on around us.

In **Matthew 24** beginning in **verse 9**, Jesus Christ shows here why some of these attitudes would be prevalent in the end time, and it ties in with exactly what we've read so far. **Matthew 24:9** - (talking here about the events that lead up to the time of the tribulation).

**Verse 9** - "*Then they shall deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake*."

**Verse 10** - "*Then many will be offended, and betray one another, and will hate one another*."

**Verse 11** - "*Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many*." See these are all events that take place in the age that we live in. And because, whenever you see the word because, it explains something -

**Verse 12** - "*And because lawlessness will abound*," in other words the lack of obedience to God's law, "*lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold*." So we're told because of this attitude being prevalent in society, "*the love of many will*" simply "*grow cold*." You will not wax hot, fervent, but "*grow cold*."

**Verse 13** - "*But he who endures to the end shall be saved*." So ...shows that we have to continue to endure; to grow, to the very end.

What we need to realize is lawless ways of thinking, ideas rub off on us without us even recognizing it sometimes; they begin to become acceptable. And I think how we treat one another also is affected by this. Let's notice in **John 13**, Christ described who his disciples would be in **John 13:34** -

**Verse 34** - Christ said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you love one another."

**Verse 35** - "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." So the hallmark, the stamp, the sign of who God's people are, the main characteristics of true Christians is that we would "love one another." That means that we care for one another. That we have care and concern; it means how we treat, how we respond to each other.

Brethren, we need to be aware of the influences of society in this age upon us. You know this is why God said we are not to "love the world", it's standard; because it's standards are just the opposite. God's way, His standards; we needed to be reminded of how we need to treat one another. Remember early on, the Council came up with a statement, and it might seem very simple, but being in on those meetings; I know we sat there for hours trying to digest down into one statement that would reflect why ...say what the major problem we'd been faced with as a church. And we came up with a statement that we had not always treated one another in a godly manner, and that is true.

Brethren, we need to realize that if we're not careful, that we will not have the care and concern for each other that we should. A Christian is supposed to be different. Now when I say different, I don't mean odd, or strange, but we're to live by God's standards; to be motivated to love and to serve one another. We need to make sure that our focus and our concern is on others and not just on ourselves, that our focus is on others. Let's go back to **II Timothy 3** again. Let me read this from a certain perspective, beginning here in **verse 2**. I want you to notice what it says here, what the attributes of the society around us would be, and I want you to notice what their focus is.

**Verse 2** - First of all it talks about being "lovers of" the self, "of themselves". In other words, a key characteristic of our day is people have an attitude that self comes first, that's what lovers of self is all about. Not willing to sacrifice for others, but tear others down. People are selfish, self-centered, self-absorbed, their focus is on themselves, on their needs, on their desires, and not on others. This is basically the way society as a whole goes. Then it mentions "lovers of money," lovers of money simply means people have desire for physical things, they love that; in other words that's their love, that's their motive, that's what motivates them. Wealth and physical accumulation are more important than family, friends or marriage. Remember the old saying? "He who gets the most toys wins." It doesn't matter, when you die, whoever has the most toys wins. That's the way the game is played today. So people are lovers of money, and all of these characteristics show a focus that people have that is almost totally inward instead of being outward.

What is a "boaster" except a person that has his mind on himself, and what the self has done? And he's going to tell you, you may not know, but when he walks away you'll know, because he's "gonna" boast, he's "gonna" brag, he's "gonna" tell you what he thinks about himself. His mind is not focused on the needs of others. He doesn't come up to you and try to find out how you're doing, but it's always boasting about himself. What about a person who is "*proud*"; pride exalts the self, elevates the self. Generally pride will also put the other person down because a person who is proud is thinking about himself in comparison to somebody else, so therefore it's belittling the other person, and it's also building the self up; this is what happens when a person thinks he's better than others. You know, the *Bible* tells us that we're to consider others better than ourselves, but let's not the way to bolster those who are proud.

What about somebody that's "*disobedient to parents*"? Shows the little love in our society today for authority figures, parents being one of them. Anyone who has standards today are put down. Many times children feel they know what's best, they're more concerned about their peers, they're more concerned about their friends and what they think than what their parents think.

Then it talks about being "*unthankful*". Being unthankful is an ingrate; we live in an affluent society today, and it's hard for us to appreciate what we have because of the constant comparisons that people make. People in society envy the rich; you know, you can have a brand new car, but somebody else has a Mercedes or they've got a Jaguar or they've got a Cadillac, so therefore you don't feel as good as they are. All you have to do, brethren, is go to the third world and visit some of our brethren, or just go and see how the majority of people live in this world. They'd love to have an old clunker; they're not worried if it's a Mercedes or a Jaguar or whether it's a brand new car - if they just had an old clunker. If they have food to eat, if they have a place to sleep at night, they count it a blessing, but yet the western world we'll find this attitude of being unthankful and again it's an attitude of looking to the self and comparing with others.

"*Unholy*", is another characteristic. Anyone who stands up publicly today and says that evil is evil, that wrong is wrong, that sin is sin, is made fun of, is ridiculed; he's accused of looking down their nose and again, you'll find the age that we live in. So what you find, and the reason I wanted to read these leading up to verse 3 again is it shows a focus where people tend to turn inward.

Now let's go over to **Matthew 22** and see what Christ said should be our focus. **Matthew 22:36**

**Verse 36** - Christ was asked a question: "*Teacher, what is the great commandment in the law?*"

**Verse 37** - *"Jesus said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.*

**Verse 38** - *"This is the first and great commandment.*

**Verse 39** - *"And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'."* Now how are you going to love your neighbor as yourself unless you focus on him some? If your mind is just totally on yourself, you can't love your neighbor as yourself. The word love here in the Greek means to be fond of, to love dearly. So if you're going to love your neighbor as yourself, to be fond of him and to love them dearly, then there has to be a focus where you love them as much as you love yourself. Now this means that we have to again think of others. Sometimes we tend to think of ourselves and what others do for us, or what we wish they'd do for us. We need to be thinking about others and how to care for them, how to serve them.

I think Peter back here in **I Peter 5:7** gives the key, and this is what we want to focus on here today -

**I Peter 5:7** - We read simply this - *"casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."* Brethren, God cares for us, you and I are to emulate God. He cares for us and we should care and love one another. You know one thing I think sometimes it's hard for us to realize; I know that there are a number of people probably sitting out there today who think "nobody could care for me; I mean how could God care for me"? I'm such a sinner, or I make so many mistakes, or I have so many faults, and we all wrestle with this, knowing our humanness, knowing how frail we are, knowing what we struggle with. Many times we wonder, you know, "how could God truly love me?" And yet the Bible shows that God cares for us. He cared so much that *"He gave His only begotten Son."* He sent His Son to this earth; Christ loved us so much He was willing to die for us.

It is God's divine nature to be caring. It's part of His divine nature to be caring for His creation, for His people. Caring is a God-plane relationship, attribute. It is an attribute that God has that you and I are to learn, and that we are to emulate. Caring is how God operates. God is a caring being. He is a loving being. It is the way His mind thinks; He cares for us. He loves us; he's concerned for us.

And when you stop and think about it brethren, you and I are in training for what? We're in training for the Kingdom of God. We're in training to be rulers. We are in training to learn how to live as God lives, because once we're in the kingdom, we're going to be a part of that God family. We're learning now how Gods are supposed to live, how to relate to one another. So it ties in presently with our preparation for the Kingdom of God and how we are to live in that kingdom. So what can we do to help us to focus on others, and to care for others? What is it that you and I can do? Well let's take a look - I have a few things that I've outlined

here. Let's go to **James 5:14** - and let's take a look here first of all at one thing that all of us can do. It doesn't matter what our age is, what our health is, how old we are. This is something that every one of us can do to show our care, our concern, our love for others. **James 5:14** -

**Verse 14** - *"Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord."*

**Verse 15** - *"And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven."* So again, it shows that when we're sick we're to call for the elders to be anointed, but notice as we go on here -

**Verse 16** - *"Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed."* So the first point, brethren, and how to focus on others is that we need to pray for others. When you pray for somebody, you know back on the table, we have a number of cards of those who are sick that we've learned about this week. When you take those names down and you go and you pray for them, nobody knows that you're taking of your time; nobody knows if you spend thirty seconds, five minutes, ten minutes, an hour a week praying for others; but you see God knows, and that's giving of your time. When you pray for others, you're taking your time that you could devote to something else, and you're praying for them, and it shows your concern; you're focusing on them.

And notice as it says here, we are to pray for one another that we may be healed. We will have more healings if we're praying one for another and we do it sincerely. We need to focus our attention on others and not to be selfish in our prayers. We need to think of their needs and concerns. Now again, to qualify, I think we all realize, nothing wrong with praying about our own needs, but what I'm saying, we should not do that to the exclusion of the other, that there should be a focus as part of our prayers. And if you'll go on here, you'll notice about Elijah. Let's read the last part of **verse 16** -

**Verse 16** - It says, *"The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."* You want to have clout with God? You want God to hear your prayer? Well, it says here *"the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man"*, a man who's doing what's right, and he prays with his heart, fervently, not half asleep, that God hears those prayers. Brethren, this is an area that I think that we, - I know that I have to bring myself up short all the time, go back and focus, am I letting down, am I fervent? You know, am I praying as I should?

Because notice, it talks about Elijah, that Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. He prayed again and the heavens gave rain, the Earth produced its fruit. So Elijah was a man with a nature like ours. He was a

man, he got tired, he got weary, he didn't want to pray. Sometimes he became discouraged, despondent, wanted to give up. And yet, he prayed, and he prayed fervently, and God answered his prayers. To me this is a very encouraging scripture, brethren, because it shows that people just like us are going to be in the kingdom and they prayed and God heard their prayers. God is not a respecter of persons. So brethren, one way that we can begin to develop these characteristics is begin to pray for one another.

Now **Matthew 25:34**, let's notice another way - now I'll summarize that for you as simply this, we need to spend time with one another. Spend time with each other, and again by spending our time we're taking our lives, spending and giving of your life for others. If you notice here in **Matthew 25:34** -

**Verse 34** - *"The King said to those on His right hand, 'Come you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world':"* so God has prepared a kingdom for us from the very beginning. Now it begins to show who is going to be in God's kingdom, let me summarize these. I want you to notice all of the action words -

**Verse 35-36** - (paraphrased) hungry you gave, thirsty you gave, stranger took me in, naked you clothed me, sick you visited me, prison you came. Notice all of these words, what are they? They are action; they show action. It doesn't say hungry you thought about me; thirsty, and you just hoped I got something to drink; or stranger, and you say "well, go away, I hope you find a place to stay", or you ...I was in prison and you hope somebody else would come visit me. No, these are action words that show action on the part of the individual, and here it says you were in prison and you came.

Brethren, I pastored a church once where one of our members went to prison. His wife was left there alone, and it was a very trying situation. I think he was in prison for about three years. It was a very trying situation in that his wife needed an extreme amount of help and encouragement, and I would say that this whole church rallied in two ways. They rallied around her to visit with her, to encourage her, and then to go and to visit; and on the Sabbath we would have dozens of people who would go by and visit with him. He became such a model prisoner that they gave him leave that he could go outside of the prison on the Sabbath, and he could visit. So on the Sabbath there were times that we would have almost the whole church would come, and they would have a picnic lunch with him. He'd be able to sit around on the lawn, and he was "trustee" in that sense and he would be able to sit around, have a Bible Study, talk to his friends, and then he would have to go back and be locked up. That whole church, as I said, followed this principle here, and in so doing helped this couple make it through one of the greatest trials that they had ever had to go through. This is what this scripture's talking about, the care and the concern. If they had not demonstrated



that care and that concern, I'm not quite sure that those two individuals would still be with us, but they're in "United" today, very fine friends.

I want you to focus also on the word here "I was sick and you came to visit me." Do you know what the word visit means in the Greek? It means to look upon, or to look after, in order to see how one is, to visit, to go see one, to know how the state of a person is, to look upon in order to help or to benefit; to look after, or to have care for. If somebody is sick and you go visit them, what it shows, you want to see how they're doing, but you have care for that individual. And so we should care for one another.

In **Matthew 25:36** I want you to notice: it says, again, "*I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.*" The New Revised Standard Version translates it this way: "*I was naked and you gave me clothing; I was sick and you took care of Me;*" not just visited me but took care of me. "*I was in prison and you visited Me*". Now notice -

**Verse 37** - "*The righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry'*" and so on and so on. And what you find in **Verse 41** - this is what Christ said -

**Verse 41** - "*Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels':.*" Why? He said,

**Verse 42** - "*I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink*"; but verse forty shows the difference -

**Verse 40** - "*The King will answer and say to them,*" (in other words, those who are going to be in the kingdom) "*Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.*" You find the word here "*as you did it unto the least of these*", that it's talking about ministering, or serving those people; to have an attitude of service, and actually it's the same basic word that's used for a deacon, or servant. And it shows that we ought to have an attitude of service. The word means to be a servant, an attendant, domestic, to serve, to wait upon; to wait upon table, offer food and drink to the guests; to relieve one's necessity, to take care of the poor and of the sick. And so brethren, what we find is simply this, that whenever there's a need, and many times in a local congregation there are many needs, somebody is sick and a member will come over and maybe help wash their clothes or bring food over for the family. How often do we find where someone has a baby and the women in the church get together and bring food over, so that the husband doesn't have to cook, saves that wife from having to experience his cooking and they're all taken care of. I've known many cases where women have come over and gotten the clothes of a family where there was sickness, or a health problem, or a baby who

was just born. They'd go wash the clothes, iron them, and bring them back. Two or three ladies come in and say, "can we help you? Can we clean your house," and serve in these ways. Again, this is Christianity in action. And it shows the desire, the willingness to help and to give of one's time.

OK, let's go back to **Ephesians 5** and let's take a look at another way that we can show caring for one another. So far we've talked about: we can be praying for one another, we can give of our time and of our effort; **Ephesians 5:25** talks about how Christ treats the church -

**Verse 25** - It says, *"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for" her.* So it shows that we as husbands are to love our wives like Christ loved the church. Extremely high standard for us to strive for:

**Verse 26** - *"that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,*

**Verse 27** - *that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

**Verse 28** - *"So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself."* Now all of us know that we love our own bodies. My body, if a part of it hurts, I'll guarantee that my whole attention is focused on that. Have you ever gotten up in the middle of the night and stumped your toe on the end of the dresser? ...I remember years ago, Bill Cosby had a routine about this, about the foot talking to the brain. The brain gets up in the middle of the night and the foot says, "turn on the light, turn on the light" and the brain says, "no, I know my way around here." And all at once "Ow!" and it's the toe that suffers. Well, he had a very comical routine that covered that.

But when you hurt, when the body is hurt, and not too long ago, about three months ago, I was on a ladder and the ladder collapsed and fell, and my leg fell through the middle of the ladder and skinned my shin from my ankle to my knee. And I'll guarantee you there was immediate pain there, and the rest of my body focused on that.

Well those type of things happen to us, and when they do happen to us there's great care, great concern that is exercised you toward the body and those types of situations. Well, what you find, the same thing is true, should be true of all of us. What we realize is simply this, that when you have a body, and let's go back and let's read what it says here about Christ and the church here. It says *"For husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; and he who loves his wife loves himself."* What you have to realize brethren is, we are all a part of the body of Christ; we're all a part of the body of Christ, and we're to love the

body as Christ loves the body. This church is the body of Christ. He's the head of it, He's the head, He directs and He has concern for it. And so, when one part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers. Now **Verse 29** goes on to say -

**Verse 29** - *"No one ever hated his own flesh, but (he) nourishes and (he) cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church."*

The third point I want to bring to your attention is that we need to cherish and nourish one another. As a church, as a body we need to cherish and nourish one another. The word cherish in the Greek, let me read this to you: this is taken from *Vines Dictionary of the Old Testament - New Testament*. The word means primarily to heat, to soften by heat, and then to keep warm, and it's used of birds that cover their young with their feathers. Have you ever seen a bird in the nest sitting on eggs or sitting on new hatchlings, and if it's a little cold that bird will sit on the little birds and keep them warm. I grew up on a farm and I remember many times seeing a mother hen having chickens, and if there was a threat to those chickens, or if it was too cold, she would spread her wings out and all those little chickens would run in under her wings; and she would close her wings and sit down, and she would protect them, and she would hold them close to her body, and she would keep them warm. Well that's what this word means, to cherish. Metaphorically it means to cherish with tender love, to foster with tender care, to have tender love and to have tender care. Brethren, this is the way Christ is toward the church, because it says here that he nourishes the church and he cherishes the church.

We're to do as **I Thessalonians 2:7** says, let me refer to this -

**Verse 7** - *"But we were gentle among you,"* Paul talking, even *"as a nurse who warmly cherishes her children"*. So you find here that Paul, in dealing with the church, in dealing with the membership in the church was not a harsh taskmaster. He was not one who just sort of ruled over people, banged heads together and kicked people around, but he said, *"we were gentle among you,"* even *"as a nurse who warmly cherishes her children."*

Now what this is talking about is tender care; when you have a newborn baby and that baby is first born, and you have little children; you look after them, you tenderly care for them, you hold them, a mother who nourishes a child. Did you ever see a mother who's breastfeeding her children, and holds that child very close to her breast, and looks at that child, loves that child; gently holds that child, plays with the child; the child coos, and makes all kinds of sounds. This is what this is talking about. This is the attitude; this is the approach that we are supposed to have with one another in taking care of one another. And Paul said this is the way he was as a minister in dealing with the church. He was gentle, and he cherished them.

The "Revised Standard Version" translates **Ephesians 5:29** this way: *"For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, even as Christ does the church."* The "New International Version" says: *"After all, no one hates his own body, but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church."*

We have a curse in our society today, and that curse is sometimes how one another treat each other in marriages, how one mate will treat another. Well the *Bible* says that a husband is to nourish and cherish his wife. The word nourish simply means to feed. You nourish your body; you feed your body. You take care of it. How often have I heard men say,

"Well, my wife should know that I love her."

"Well, how?"

"Well, I take care, I provide for her; food on the table, money in the bank, clothes on her back. She's got a house. She should know that I love her."

That's part of it, that's what God does for us, He blesses us; He takes care of us. But you know if that were all that there were to our relationship with God, it would truly be an empty relationship. We could say, "OK, He's out there; He's provided the physical things for us. But you know God cherishes us, He loves us, and He tenderly cares for us. And this is what is needed in a marriage, especially a husband toward his wife, and a wife reflecting it back to her husband. A wife is a reflector. If a husband generally will do it, it's going to be reflected back to him. How he treats her many times is how she's going to react back to him. And so a husband can, yes, take care of the physical needs of the family and his wife, but she's also looking for tenderness. That tender love, that tender care, and this is what we look for also from God.

Brethren, we are a small church; we have a lot of elderly; we have a lot of health problems as witnessed every Sabbath. We need to care for those who are sick; we need to care for those who are hurting, those who are going through trials, those who have needs. Because many times the needs within God's church are not just the physical needs; most of the time there are emotional needs, there are spiritual needs people are having. And there are trials they are going through and people need to know that somebody cares, that somebody loves them. That somebody is looking after them.

We need to call, we need to visit, we need to write. We need to be concerned. We need to be able to demonstrate our love. You see many times a person might say, "Well, I don't have transportation, don't have a car, I can't do anything. But how many times do you take, make an effort to make sure that you just write to the sick. Do you write to those who have needs and that you're truly praying for them in the way that you should? The opposite of love is what? Sometimes

people say, "well, the opposite of love is hate". Now I don't think so. The opposite of love is indifference; to be indifferent, just not concerned for others. Let's notice **I Corinthians 12**, where it describes the body, the church, the love and affection we should have for one another. **I Cor. 12:18** -

**Verse 18** - He says, *"God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased."* So the body is arranged as God pleases, he's put the members there.

**Verse 19** - *"And if there were all one member, where would the body be?"*

**Verse 20** - *"Now indeed there are many members, yet one body."* So the body is made up of many members. If the body were just one member, if there were nothing here but an eye, and all ...let's look at it from this point of view. If I were speaking today and all you saw was this big eye up here, and it had red veins going out, and it's looking at you. You know I couldn't speak because there wouldn't be a mouth. And I'd have to have somebody carry me and put me up here 'cause I wouldn't have legs or feet, wouldn't have hands. Obviously when God created the human body He made it in such a way that it is perfectly formed, and God made us in this way. And the body is an example of working together. The way God wants us in the church to work together, that we are able to work together. And, as it says here, God has placed us all in the body as He sees fit. But let's go on here and notice -

**Verse 24** - *"But our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it,*

**Verse 25** - *"that there should be no schisms in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another."* We should have the same care, the same love one for another. If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. So if one of us suffers, we all suffer, one's sick, we're all concerned; one's going through a trial, we're all going through that same trial. As it says here that we should have the same care for one another. Brethren, that's what God is looking for in us. And we realize that's the standard, we haven't reached it yet, but that's what God wants us to strive for. When others go through a trial or test we suffer with them. We go through it with them. Notice the same thing back here in **Romans 12:9** - **Romans 12** also describes gifts that God gives to his church -

**Verse 9** - *"Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good."*

**Verse 10** - *"Be kindly affectionate one to another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another";* and then it goes on to name a number of things here, but I want you to notice in **Verse 15** -

**Verse 15** - *"Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep."* How can you rejoice with those who are rejoicing, or weeping with those who weep unless you have a personal relationship with them, unless you know them, unless you spend time with them? How can I weep with you if I don't know anything about you, if I don't know what you're going through, if we're just sort of total strangers? You see, it behooves us to make sure that as part of the body of Christ, that we become acquainted with one another. Do you believe that I don't know that I have a corn on my big toe? You may not know that, but I know my toes, and I know what my feet look like, and since I skinned my shin up, I know what my shin looks like also. We are very much acquainted with our own bodies. And brethren, if we're part of one body; Christ is the head & we're the body, you know, our bodies should not be strangers to one another. If a hand flicks up, "Oh, whose hand is that?" We should know one another; I'm speaking metaphorically, obviously. That we should be able to have a relationship with one another and have that concern for each other. So we need to have the concern, we need to be able to take care of; we need to cherish one another.

That brings us to a fourth point that I have here. Let's go to **I Thessalonians 5:11**

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**Verse 11** - It says, *"Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you ...are doing."* The word comfort here means to encourage and the word edified means to build up. The fourth thing, brethren, that we need to be doing to focus our attention, to show that we have care for others, that is to encourage one another. Are you an encourager or are you a discourager? When you come around people, do you walk away and people ..."Oh, I'm encouraged". Are they discouraged? We are to comfort; we are to edify one another.

**Verse 14** - Now it says: *"Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all."*

**Verse 15** - *"See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all."* So we are to comfort; we are to help. The word here for encourage or for comfort means to be called alongside of, to be summoned, to be called alongside of, or to be summoned. When I think of this word, I think of it from this perspective. If somebody's running a race and they're having difficulty, then you come alongside them and you encourage them. Now there's two ways of doing this. You can be sitting in the bleachers and you can say, "don't give up, keep running," and you can shout encouragement. But isn't it much more encouraging if you're right down there with them, they're running, they're about ready to give up and you say, "look, don't quit? I'm tired also, let's keep going." And so you push on, and you encourage them. You don't know what might happen later on when you are wanting to quit they come along and say, "well, you know, you encouraged me; don't quit!" This is the attitude that we're talking about.

You and I brethren are all in the same race. We're headed for the Kingdom of God, and we're all striving for the crown, you know, to be in the kingdom, to have eternal life. And we're running the race together, and when somebody gets discouraged we have to come along and hold their hands. We have to encourage them; we have to try to strengthen them. It reminds me of a story that I think illustrates this, of a man who was in a hospital and he was about to die. He was on his last leg, and a nurse noticed that there was a man passing by and seeing some of the activity; everything that was going on in the room. And he came in and the nurse saw him and saw that it was the man's son and said "your son is here," and the man was in the process of dying, and he looked at him, held his hand, and he said "Dad, I'm here; I'm your son; I'm here for you." And the man really was too sick to recognize him, and the man sat there with him most of the night until he died. He wasn't there when the man died, but when the nurse saw him die she went out to find the son. And when she found the man, she said, "your Dad died." He said, "That's not my Dad." He said, "I don't know who he was, he was a complete stranger to me, but I saw that he wanted and needed his son. And so I was there, I just held his hand; I knew he couldn't recognize me, he didn't know who I was, but I knew he needed the comfort; he needed the encouragement."

Well brethren, that's the type of attitude that we are talking about when it comes to encouragement, to be called alongside, to take the extra mile. The word means to console, to encourage, to strengthen, to help, to be able to exhort, and this is something that we all can do. Mark Twain once quipped: "I can live off of one good compliment a week." One good compliment, it's going to give me strength to go on for a week. Encouragement is one of God's most effective antibodies, to ward off infections in the family of God, especially within the Church of God. You know wrong attitudes, discouragements, these type of things; somebody comes along and they encourage you, they hold your hand, they say "I'm in this with you. I'll pray for you, what can I do to help you?" They encourage you and what you'll find is, that just helps to build the body. It's like an antibody. When was the last time you complimented your wife, or your wife complimented you, or you compliment your children, or you encourage one another? Notice in **Hebrews 3:13**, that encouragement sometimes can help deter people from going off the track, from jumping the track.

**Verse 13** - It says, "*Exhort one another,*" encourage one another "*daily, while it is called 'Today', lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*" So how often does somebody start to go off, or maybe they become so discouraged they're wanting to give up, and someone else steps into their lives and becomes an encourager, and helps them, and helps to encourage them. We can always point out when somebody's doing something wrong. Right? We're all good at that. A wife can tell her husband, "take the garbage out." He forgets. She will remind him and, but how many times does she say, "thank you for taking the garbage out" when he didn't forget. If we forget, yeah, we need to be reminded,

but you see there's the proper balance, the proper way of doing it. We all need encouragement. I don't care who you are. You could be the crustiest individual in here and think, you know, I don't need any help like that. But I'll guarantee you, there's not a human being, because we're all made the same way, we all have emotions, we all have feelings. We all need encouragement; we all need to know that others love us and are concerned about us. So we need to encourage one another as it says here that that type of encouragement can help people lest they be "*hardened through the deceitfulness of sins.*" In **I Thessalonians 2:10**, here Paul says -

**Verse 10** - "*You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe:*

**Verse 11** - "*as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children.*" So Paul said, as a minister in the church he exhorted and he comforted everyone just as a father does his own children. So it shows us how we should be treating our children. Let me read this also to you; this is the "New American Standard" translation - "*Just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each of you as a father would his own children.*" To exhort, to encourage, to implore, to help, so we need to be doing that for one another, brethren. We need to encourage one another. I'll guarantee you there's not a one of us here who hasn't gotten discouraged at one time or another and somebody knew it and they came around and put their arm around you and hugged you and told you that they were there for you. And you know, "what can I do," or just the fact that they were willing to listen. You know, a key for you men. A lot of times wives don't want you to solve their problems, they just want you to listen. They want to be heard. They want to know that you hear, that you listen, that you're attuned to them. But you know, we men don't think that way. "OK, what's the problem? Tell me, now this is what you should do," and then we start telling them what to do. And maybe there's a time for that, but in most cases the wife just wants to be heard. She wants to know that you are there and that you will listen to her. I think to a certain extent we're all that way.

That brings me to the last point. Let's go to **Colossians 3:12** -

**Verse 12** - "*Therefore,*" Paul writes, "*as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering,*

**Verse 13** - "*bearing with one another, forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*

**Verse 14** - "*But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.*" The point here simply is this, that we need to be emotionally involved with one another. We need to be emotionally involved. Jesus Christ had compassion; Jesus Christ had mercy, and He tells us here to have kindness and



tenderness, and mercy, humility, meekness, and forgiveness. See, forgiveness goes along with showing love and caring for others. We know that God loved us first. He was willing to forgive us of our sins and of our mistakes. He extended his mercy and His grace to us, and so we should learn to have the same attitude. We should love one another, meaning we should not hold grudges, have hatreds against one another; we need to show mercy. We need to grow in God's grace. When you look at how God is, God is love. God is also grace in the sense that it describes His nature, that being willing to forgive, to extend mercy to those who repent. God's love, God's forgiveness, and God's mercy are all qualities that we need to exercise. In **I John 3:16** - we find here that we are to lay our lives down for one another.

**Verse 16** - *"By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*

**Verse 17** - *"But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?"*

**Verse 18** - *"My little children, let us not love in word, or in tongue; but in deed and in truth."* So we need to be willing to lay down our lives and not shut up our hearts. You know the story of the Good Samaritan shows this, for he was willing to give of his physical goods, to share the things he had, to be able to help the injured party. We see how he exercised, and how he showed care and love, and he was willing to have feeling. Now how often do you find that people in the world around us in society around us have problems and difficulties and it seems that nobody cares for them? People even can be attacked, you know how many times have we heard about somebody being attacked, and the neighbors just sort of close the windows and they just don't want to get involved, and people don't have that type of feeling. Well, brethren, we as Christians have been called to be able to extend mercy, show your feelings for one another. So we need to be able to focus our attention outward. We are to become more like Jesus Christ every day. He's our perfect example. We know again that God cares for us; He sent His son to die for us; He gave His Son for us. You and I need to grow in genuine love and concern for others.

The Kingdom of God, and the principles that the kingdom are going to be governed by, are based upon these principles. In the family of God, if we are privileged to make the resurrection, we will operate from the principle of loving one another, of being concerned for one another, caring for one another. We will treat one another, we will cherish one another, the family of God will live on that level. Now brethren, we're learning how to do that today. We need to pray that God will help us to truly love our neighbors as ourselves. That our focus can be more outward rather than turned inward.

What will sustain a local congregation? We as a local congregation, what will sustain us? What will strengthen us? What will help us to hold together and to be able to grow? Well, it comes down to caring for one another, it comes down to being willing to overlook faults, being willing to forgive one another. It comes down to showing mercy to each other. Caring for, forgiving, and showing mercy. This is the very nature of God; this is what we are striving for. So brethren, God has called us to care for each other. Again, this is an attribute; this is a characteristic of God. Let's make sure that we emulate that, and that we truly are, and do become more of a caring, loving body and church here. And if we do, ...as Paul talked about many of the churches that he dealt with, he said "their reputation, their way of life was an example for all." The same will be said for the headquarters church here, that we will be an example for others to follow and to emulate.