

Series: **GROWING ROOTS**
As We Love GOD And Love Others

October 30, 2011

THE ONE-ANOTHERS...

Romans 15:1-7

Speaker: Ken Davis

1. One of the things we discovered after moving to Markham was that we had history here. As we looked through some of the history books, Lori realized that she was related to all the core families—the Reesor's, Ramers, Widemans, Hoovers who moved here from PA in the late 1700s.

-See, back then—with limited communication and travel, there **just weren't that many options!** So—you would likely marry someone from the one room school house you went to—or someone from the farm next door. **[pic]** As you can see from this picture, these were **No Frills** kind of people!

-Things are just a **little** different today, right? Has anyone here heard of relational websites, like **e-harmony.com**. or **match.com**? Some of you are grabbing your I-phones about now, "What was that website?" Long distance relationships are **very** common. The problem with long distance relationships is that a person can hide the truth about themselves for a **long** time—so long that people fall in love with someone who doesn't actually exist!

- a. There's actually **no way** to develop a real, lasting relationship without **grace**—and **truth**. I remember reading about a woman who wrote to Ann Landers, "I've been dating a guy on-line—and he's coming to see me. How do I tell him that I'm 35 with 2 kids—when he thinks I'm 28 with no kids?" I'd say she's got a problem!
- b. I believe that Jesus calls us—and that the Spirit empowers us—to be the kind of people who know how to love; to be good friends. The people Jesus spent time with and left behind knew intimacy; they loved one another more than their money and stuff; they knew how to do life together! They called each other "brother" and "sister"—and it wasn't some corny religious lingo.

-Now, here's the irony. Sometimes the gatherings of Jesus' people—like this one—can be the loneliest places on earth. People come to find hope and love and a sense of belonging—and spend an hour looking at the back of someone else's head--and leave--unconnected, unloved, and unnoticed. There is something **profoundly** not right when **aloneness** exists in groups of people whose **main** calling is to love God—and love one another. I guess sometimes we need some remedial training.

-What I want to do this morning is flesh out how Jesus intended love to work. You need to know—this love is not **passive**—where our only responsibility is to

show up, open our arms, and receive. I have to ask—and you have to ask:
What's my part in that?

2. There's something you need to know about being part of a community—belonging; needing others—others needing you—is not some religious fad—and it's not a nice accessory to life. If you and I ***neglect*** this we put our spiritual and emotional health at risk. People say things like, "You know, being out in nature (i.e., on the golf course, on a lake fishing) is my ***church!***" A church is not a place for you and God to get close. A church is a ***gathering of people—a community***. And it's only when we are ***together*** that we fully represent the ***Body of Christ***. There is a ***gathering*** part of being the Church—and a ***scattering***. It takes **both**.

-And that's why the Bible is full of the ***one anothers***: 59 of them, to be exact. For example:

We who are strong must be considerate of those who are sensitive about things like this. We must not just please ourselves. We should *help others do what is right and build them up* in the Lord. For even Christ didn't live to please himself. May God, who gives this patience and encouragement, help you *live in complete harmony with each other*, as is fitting for followers of Christ Jesus. Then all of you can *join together with one voice*, giving praise and glory to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, *accept each other* just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory. (Romans 15:1-3, 5-7 NLT)

- a. When Jesus came—it was clear from everything He did and said that He was sent to us from a community—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We were created in God's image—a loving community; so we are gathered to ***live*** in community with others. It's one of the most meaningful experiences humans have: Deep, close, friendship.
- b. And Jesus didn't just talk about community. That's how He lived. Read the biographies. His followers who started the church simply copied what Jesus had been doing for them. Was Jesus small group perfect? ***Was it?*** Of course not. They had squabbles, power plays, back-biting. Some even betrayed Him. But it absolutely transformed their lives. And they offered the gift to the world that Jesus had given them. And the world has never been the same.

3. Listen to what Jesus said the night before He died:

I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." (John 13:34-35 NLT)

This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. (John 15:12-13 NLT)

-You could put Jesus' words like this: "Life on the road with me has been ***exciting***—crowds, miracles, controversy! Now, you need to stop, be friends—and present God's

offer of friendship to the world. Please understand—the **only** way they'll get it is if you are **their** friend—and if you are **true** friends to each other. **Love one another!**

-Now, I think it's pretty clear to everyone here that we, as followers of Jesus, are called to love. To belong to each other and to God—and help others belong. To love **one another**.

-The question that **always** gets raised is...**HOW?** Jesus got pretty specific when he told us to love and treat others like we would like to be loved and treated. I've grouped these into three different categories. **Accept. Serve. Encourage.**

- a. Accepting others is a huge when it comes to loving them. Has anyone here ever been rejected by someone—but still felt loved? Doesn't happen very often. **Accept one another**—just like Christ accepts you. Think about that. How many of you would agree that, in some ways, you're a little weird? How many of you think you're pretty normal, but the person *next* to you looks a little suspect? The truth about Christ is that He knows the weirdest, most embarrassing things about me--and you! Yet...He **accepts** us.

-Question—why would anyone have to be told to **accept** someone—if that just came naturally? What I think this is saying is that we will probably have to get close enough to people to get a little irritated by their weirdness. To **see** this—and not critique them, talk about them behind their back, push them away—but receive them, and defend them!

- b. Peter, one of Jesus' closest friends, calls this **sincere** love:

You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth, so now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters. Love each other deeply with all your heart. (1 Peter 1:22 NLT)

In other words—don't surface dance. Don't play games. Don't fake it.

- c. You might really **like** this next facet of loving others: The Bible occasionally tells us to **greet one another with a holy kiss**. Now, obviously, this was a cultural thing. Kiss the wrong person in this culture and you might get slugged—or sued. This is simply saying that true love, **God's** love has genuine warmth to it. Around here, we sometimes hug each other. The point is that God is not distant and cold—and we shouldn't be either!
- d. Hugs are not scary to most people—but there is a **one another** that is. These passages on love urge us to **confess our sins to one another**. This isn't about going around and spilling your guts to everyone—even a small group. This, friends, is about being authentic. See, some churches create cultures where the only way to fit in—be accepted—is to totally have your act together. If you don't—well, then you have to fake it. You may have been in one. Jesus had a word for **posers**: Hypocrites! So—does anyone here totally have your act together? If not, let's be real. Let me read the passage:

Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. (Colossians 3:12-14 NLT)

-So, let's be clear. Followers of Jesus are called to simply be **real** with each other. Quiz: What do you do when you know someone's faults? Start making phone calls? Remind them occasionally of their failure? Save it up for ammo? No. Be real. "I can identify with that!" When you're surrounded by tenderhearted, gentle, forgiving people, you don't have to be afraid to be real!

4. There's another cluster of *one anothers* that would fit under the title: **SERVE ONE ANOTHER**. Our struggle as people who live in a consumer culture is to remember that the goal of life, according to Jesus, is to **serve** more, NOT **consume** more. Jesus tried to teach this, unsuccessfully, I might add, to His little community of followers—until, on the last night of his life, he stripped down to his underwear and did the job no one else would do: Washing feet. Then he said, "Okay—you've seen me do this—now **you** do it!" He humbled Himself to do that. Servanthood **cannot** work without humility.

a. And, in serving each other, we **carry one another's burdens**. I couple of years ago, I had to put up a whole pile of drywall in a in our home. Anyone here ever done that? It's a *messy* job. That stuff is heavy! Here's my problem—I'd rather **die** than ask for help. Well, I found out that you can't put 4X12 sheets of drywall on the ceiling by **yourself**. Gary Carmichael, a good friend, came to my rescue!

-There are some messy jobs in life that you have to do alone. But there are some that, if you **don't** get the help of others—you'll probably hurt yourself and ruin what you're trying to accomplish! We as the people of Jesus need to be close enough to help share each other's load!

b. We're also told to **pray** for one another. Every other week or so, the teams around here—we call them **Roots**—meet, either to practice, plan, serve together—or just be together. Lots of stuff happens in these gatherings—but the most **moving** thing we do is pray for each other. Several years ago on the day my Dad died, the small group I was a part of prayed for me. Then one of them went with me to Pittsburgh to serve our family as we prepared for the funeral—and most of them then drove down to be a part of the funeral. When stuff like that happens--relationships go to a **whole** new level! So, I want to ask...who prays for you

5. There's third group of **one anothers**: Listen to these words.

...Encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing. (1 Thessalonians 5:11 NLT)

The word “encourage” here has a couple of different aspects to it. One is to **exhort** each other. In other words—if you see a friend headed for disaster—you **talk** to them. **Warn** them. Do you have someone who loves you enough to tell you truth that you **may** not want to hear?

-The other side of the word means to uplift—or build courage into one another. Life gets dis-couraging. Your courage tank gets holes poked in it. When we encourage someone, we patch their tank and fill it. Listen to this:

**And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but *encourage* one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.
(Hebrews 10:25 NLT)**

-Here’s the deal. You can make a **huge** difference in someone’s life—but you have to be close enough to do that! Do you have people who **fill** your courage tank? Who are **you** encouraging?

-Friends, these **one anothers** are powerful. Jesus told us to love one another—that love is on the final exam. That love is the one essential in life that **every** follower of Jesus is called to. The **one anothers** tell us **how** to love. Accept. Help. Embrace. Be real! Pray. Encourage. Be hospitable. Value one another enough to take the time to do that. But you’ll need a smaller gathering. You can’t do that with 700 people. And you can’t do it flying at mach 3—hair on fire. You have to make space and build it into your life. Make sure you don’t miss one of God’s best gifts to us!

6.. I've tried to envision what this kind of *one another love* might look like here at The Olive Branch if it truly became part of our DNA—spread out to every cell; if it became the most consistent part of our life together. I thought, "You know, it might look like home." Not necessarily a perfect home--but a real home.

-A place where people struggle, sometimes fight, but still love. Stick up for each other. A place of safety. You may get beaten up and humiliated outside--but *at home*, you're accepted and loved. You're family. I want to take you on a visual trip to the home I grew up in. Think about *your* home.

-As a kid, we lived in several houses, but the one I remember best was in Erie. 247 E. 29th Street. **[pic]** It was an old yellow frame 2 story house with brown trim, creaky floors, a big front porch, and an old wooden 1 car garage in the back that kinda leaned to one side. The Hudson's lived on one side, and the Pfeiffers on the other.

a. I remember the old porch with the peeling gray paint—cause I had to scrub it! There was the screen door that banged--and then this old wooden door. I went through it on lots of occasions--some good, some bad. I hid behind that door when riots broke out in our high school after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

-I went out through that door on my first date--and came floating back. I sulked behind the door when I got turned down by girls I liked. Behind that door, I learned to lift weights--and play a violin. I walked through that door to the

funeral of one of my closest friends--stunned, in shock—when at the age of 16 she was accidentally shot and killed—by **another** friend.

- b. On the other side of that door was the place where I belonged for the first 24 years of my life. Officially, I belonged to Clyde and Betty Lou Davis—now gone. In a stranger sense, I also belonged to my brother and sister, Clyde Jr. and Beverly.

-Belonging had it's privileges--and responsibilities. Our dog Skippy belonged to us--which meant cleaning up his messes in the back yard, feeding him, and throwing water on him in the night when he howled. I actually belonged to him. And I belonged to my little pet snapping turtle, Joe. I was responsible to feed him flies, little pieces of hamburger and lunch meat.

- c. If I were to be **totally** honest, I didn't always feel good about belonging. Belonging had privileges and responsibilities. Like when it came time to do the dishes or clean up the basement—or be held accountable for something I'd wrecked. Like the family car...but I digress. But I sure wanted to belong when it was time to **use** the family car, go on vacation, get my allowance, or have my broken heart soothed—or be told that I was **okay**.

- d. When I left for college in my 65 aqua-marine Rambler station wagon, the independence initially felt **awesome!** But over the next months this intense, homing pigeon instinct grabbed me by the throat. At Thanksgiving and Christmas--homesickness was almost unbearable.

-You know, our houses were never that great, that fancy or spacious. I found it really didn't matter--because it **WHO** I belonged to. The *people*. **Belonging** was far more important than I'd ever dreamed!

- e. I've found something out over the years. Belonging involves **both** the perks—and the responsibilities. You don't get one without the other. I found that belonging is a **verb**; you actually do **belonging** kinds of things.

-I also found out something else. As I look back on it. I found out that maturity--that truly growing up--is not related to growing sideburns, learning to drive, going on dates, choosing your own bedtime, or even getting schoolwork done. It means, at the very core, learning to **welcome!** Learning to think about someone besides yourself. *That* is specifically what takes you into the emotional and spiritual double-digits.

- f. One final thing I want to say about home that applies here. The **point** of home was not hanging with my family forever. Home was the place where I was fed, comforted, helped, loved, challenged, and taught the core values of life. We typically saw each other in the morning—then had supper together in the evening. But **then** I actually went to school, to be with friends, to work—and spent **less** time at home—and **more** time living out the values I learned there in the places I found myself.

-A **home** is intended to prepare you for making a difference wherever you find yourself. Eventually—you establish your own home—and pass on those values to your family. The point of a **home...is not the home!** It's to engage in the world—to debrief, better understand and help—others. It's a hospital where you heal up. It's a place where you figure out your heritage and identity. It's a place where you're nourished—and learn **how** to nourish. It's a place where you heal up when you're sick—and not much good in the outside world.

-And **that's** probably the new learning curve for us here at The Olive Branch; it's understanding that the point of gathering here—and gathering in little platoons or teams—is to help us engage effectively in God's mission where He's strategically placed us. To debrief on what's happening; to figure out what God's doing and join Him!

- g. Now. Here's the most important thing I can tell you about belonging—whether it's belonging to God or belonging to others. If it's truly going to be happen, it has to be **mutual**. Like a home. Think about it. If you want to *feel* the sense that God belongs to you--to call on, ask for help, feel the power of His love--*you* have to fully belong to Him--lock, stock and barrel. He's not, like, your errand boy—or personal genie. It's a Father/Child relationship.

-And if *you* want to feel a sense of belonging in a group of Christ-followers--*they* need to belong to you, and *you* need to **BELONG TO THEM**. **That** was Jesus' dream for his people—that they would love just like that!

7. Now, I could talk to you more about how living in this kind of loving context builds your heart and brings joy. I could tell you that if you're intent on growing--**that's** where you need to be. I could go into even **more** detail than I did last week about why we've given the name **ROOTS** to that part of The Olive Branch. How roots nourish you--keep you alive, keep you standing when the storms hit. But I think, deep down, you know all that.

- a. But I want to talk in closing about the biggest barrier we face in our culture when it comes to giving and receiving love—living the one another. Business is one barrier--but the biggest, for us, is **consumerism**. We North Americans are the *best consumers in the world*. The constant message from our culture is, **expect to be served well**—and **complain if you aren't**.

-How many of you would like to marry someone—who was **mainly** interested in how well you can **serve** them and make them happy? Is there anyone who **did**—by accident? Self-centeredness—the actual term for this—**destroys** marriages—or any relationship, for that matter. True spirituality is about how **you** love God—and others.

-Here's the deal; unless we **re-think life**, we will bring the same consumerism our world thrives on right into the church. To act and operate like consumers in a place intended to create **servants**. To think that our main obligation as a follower of Jesus is to consume as many **God-products** as possible.

-And if we're not careful, our first tendency in a place like this can be to kinda look around—waiting for people to serve us. Meet our needs and expectations. And that's ultimately a set up for disappointment. Know why? Because the church is, at heart, a **mission**—not Wal-Mart or the Tim Horton's drive-through window. The imagery Jesus chose to describe his people a **family**.

- b. I talked about my home; how **belonging** ultimately created some expectations for me. But that doesn't happen at first; it takes time, right? Anyone here whose baby, at 3 months, mowed the lawn and cleaned up the dishes? Shoot—some still aren't doing that at 20! When a baby is born, everyone **serves** the baby. Carries, feeds, changes, dresses, entertains. And that's a good thing!

-But over time a child grows up by learning to take care of himself. If you're still changing a child's diapers at the age of 10—**something** is wrong. Growing up, learning to love, learning gratitude, learning to be part of a household—and learning how to engage, serve, love, work **outside** the home—with the core values learned **in** the home is normal! Expected!

-The point of a family, remember, the point of growing up, maturing--is *learning to contribute meaningfully and consistently*. It's a **part** of belonging! How many of you have children. How many of you have more than one child? Think about it; who **belongs** more—the oldest or the youngest? Neither, right? Same here. If you've been a part of this community, TOB, one month—you belong here as much as those who helped start The Olive Branch 8 years ago. And I **mean** that sincerely. Cause, see, we're a family with **lots** of kids!

- c. Please listen carefully to me, okay. If you don't take anything else home, take *this* home. Love, acceptance, belonging—community is, at heart, **a gift you give to others—not a consumer product you receive**. Life is not about learning how to **take**—really well! You make yourself the center of a friendship, a marriage, a job--*anything*—and you will kill it. And this is especially true among the followers of Jesus. The goal is to become like Jesus--who didn't come to be served, but to serve and give his life for others.

-Remember Jesus words?

Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back. (Luke 6:38 NLT)

-He said this in the context of forgiving others. That when you are a forgiving person, you will find forgiveness. The same is true about love, acceptance, service, kindness and helping others belong. When you obey Jesus in this area, you find what your own heart craves. Pressed down. Running over! love, acceptance.

-By the way, living in community isn't an optional part of following Jesus. It's **how He calls us to live!** In fact, according to Jesus—it's on the final exam. Learning how to love Jesus' way is one of the most **meaningful, powerful** things you can do.

Q & A

8. The one barrier that seems to stop people dead in their tracks when it comes to living the **one anothers**: Knowing and being known, loving and being loved, accepting and being accepted, blessing and being blessed. Can you guess what it is? It's the fear of rejection. Anyone ever felt rejection? When I was in university, there was this girl I liked—and I kept calling her to try to get together. Then she said to me something like, "Can't you take a hint? I don't **want** to get together with you!" Aaaugh! Knife in the heart!

-When that happens, you feel like giving up totally on relationships. But it was only about 6 months after that that I met Lori. Think of what I would've missed if I had just given up?

-I've learned something in life. I ultimately found out is that to build a great marriage, a great friendship, a sense of belonging—to even grow as a person—you have to walk toward your fears—especially the fear of rejection. Do you get hurt? Of **course** you do! To be human is to get hurt! But if you never get out of your comfort zone and you never face your fears—well, you never find what your heart craves most; a sense of **belonging**.

-I wouldn't be at all surprised if some of you need to face some fears and hang-ups that are robbing you of community. A fear that it won't work. A fear of loving—and being loved. Fear of setting aside some of your busyness and building time for community into your year. Will you take one step this morning toward community? Will you decide to at least check out the opportunities? Will you open your heart—maybe even open your home—and give love a chance? Will you do it? That's the question. Will you **choose** to love, accept and belong to God and others? You've gotta take action—walk toward it!