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## *The One Another Druthers: Live in Harmony with One Another* Romans 12: 9-21

Well...I hope this morning is a little sad for you. We are concluding our series on the "One Another Druthers." **Doesn't** that make you sad? Say, "Ahhh. I'm so sad." Make a pooky face. It has been fun and good and instructive, hasn't it, reviewing just some of the "one anothers" in the New Testament. Can you remember a few? The Big Kahuna? "Love one another." "Greet one another with a holy kiss?" Spur one another on to love and good deeds, encourage one another, submit to one another, bear with one another, speak to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. That's our list so far!

But there are 36. Want to hear a few more? (Remember these...you'll need them in a moment!) Accept one another, instruct one another, agree with one another, serve one another, be kind and compassionate to one another, forgive one another, admonish one another, offer hospitality to one another, fellowship with one another, bear one another's burdens. Stop passing judgment on one another. Do not slander one another.

Wow...what a list. Too bad it's spread all over the New Testament. Too bad there's not one passage that sums them up...one passage that we could read and memorize that would remind us of how God wants us to treat one another. Wait a minute! There is such a passage. In fact...by golly...it's our concluding text for the morning. **In fact**, there are three more "one anothers" here that we haven't touched on yet! It's a treasure hunt!

So here's what I want to do. I want you to teach me this morning. As we read our text we are going to pause after each verse...and you are going to shout out a "one another" that it represents, okay? [Read verses 9-16: 9=love (agape); 10=love (different word-philadelphia); 11=spur one another on; 12=bear one another's burdens; 13=be hospitable/greet one another; 14=bear with one another/forgive one another; 15=be kind and compassionate, Speak to one another in psalms, etc.; 16=submit to one another, stop passing judgment.]

Great job! You are good teachers! Now, your assignment: Go home and do all of them. Every one of them. A little daunting, isn't it? If this is all up to us...if it's up to us to remember all 36 "one anothers" and actually do them instead of talking about them...we are doomed, aren't we? You know, that is the summation of what it means to be Jewish or Muslim: **Be good!** Remember the rules and keep them. If you do...**maybe** God will look favorably upon you! But the Christian mandate is something very different: **Be transformed!** It's not about us remembering and obeying every rule; it is about us inviting the Holy Spirit to take captive more and more of our lives...and change us from inside out.

This list is not meant to discourage you. But it is meant to remind you! Every time you realize you are treating your brother or sister differently than you ought to, it's a reminder to

say, "Oops...I better surrender more of myself to Jesus. I need more transformation!" And if you don't see many or any of these qualities in your life...it might be an indicator that you don't really know Jesus at all...and it's time to surrender!

This morning, to wrap things up in a nice bow, I actually want to go back one week. Remember our theme? "Speak to one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs!" The question is...**what kind of a song are we singing together?** What kind of music are we making? Does it sound like this? [Dissonant organ] Or this? [Harmonious organ] This brings us to our final "one another" in verse 16: **"Live in harmony with one another."** Last Sunday, we ended our worship service with an extended time of singing and I cannot tell you how many of you came up and said, "That was one of the greatest worship experiences I've ever had! Let's do it again!" (We will.) There **was** something powerful about that experience, wasn't there? And here's the deal: we could never have done that alone. We needed each other to fill the sound and add the harmonies and the octaves and make that experience as powerful as it was.

**Live in harmony with one another.** What would that look like? One way we might understand it is to look back over the list we just read. Maybe "harmony" is a summary of what it means when we do all of those things: love and serve and hope and share and bless and rejoice and mourn with and humble ourselves. But **remember**, this is a series on the "one anothers." There are two more in this text. And it strikes me that those other one-anothers might be essential for harmonious living. Did you see them?

Verse 10: **"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love."** We've already heard that we are to love one another...many times. That word is "agape." It is sacrificial love; the kind of love that is willing to serve and suffer and die for another. Like Jesus' love for us. Agape love—serving, selfless, sacrificial love—is central to our faith. But there is **another** kind of love... "phileo" (philadelphia) ...which is warm and affectionate and intimate. "*Phileo*" is the love between dear friends...and family members. In fact, the word "*devoted*" here is specifically the affection that parents have toward their children.

So what would it look like if the members of Chapel Hill were as devoted to each other as we are to our children? This week, a member of my Life Group sent out the word that his wife's mom had had a bad heart attack and they needed to travel to her quickly. I wish you could have seen the Body of Christ at work in that moment. Guys scrambling to make arrangements to take care of kids... Did you hear that ladies...guys making arrangements to take care of kids! I know; it's a miracle! Phone calls, emails, ongoing prayers, text messages that said, "What can we do...we'll take care of this...who's got that covered!" These guys are learning what it means to be devoted to one another! Because our LifeGroup has come to love and enjoy each other with brotherly love.

Do you have that? Do enjoy each other? I'm so glad that part of living in harmony with all of you means that I get to enjoy you! I am willing to "agape" you...to serve you...out of obedience and devotion to Christ. But what a drag it would be if I couldn't enjoy you some, too. Two weeks ago when we had communion and I got to watch as you came forward for the Lord's Supper, I leaned over to Pastor Jim and said, "I love these people." And I do. And I sense your love in return...for me and for each other. Most of you. ☺ **And when you have that kind of devotion...**it means that you stand together. You defend each other. You speak well of each other. And when there's stuff you don't know about each other, as Bill Robinson says, "You fill in the gaps with good." **Chapel Hill...be devoted to one another out of brotherly love!**

There's another one-another that also helps us live in harmony with one another. Did you see it? Also verse 10: "**Honor one another above yourselves.**" What do we call it when we sing alone? A solo. What does "harmony" require? **Others!** There is no harmony in solos. It is only when others add their voices to ours that harmony is possible. And if you've ever sung with a choir, you know that what makes music interesting and wonderful is when the melody line passes from one part to another to another. Sometimes, I sing the lead. Sometimes, you sing the lead. Living in harmony with each other means that we share the spotlight...it means that we pass the lead around. At times, our voice will be heard above the others. At times, we sing quietly in the background, providing the support and texture that allows someone else to shine.

When we are devoted to each other...when we enjoy being together and practicing living God's way together...and when we honor one another more than ourselves...when we are willing to share the spotlight and pass the lead back and forth...that's a pretty good definition of **living in harmony with each other**, isn't it?

How many of you have you heard of the Pan Am Games? Thirteen countries from North and South America compete in our version of the Olympics. Could I see a show of hands: how many competed in this year's Pan Am games in Mexico City? Anyone? Really? You did, Bryse? You'll recognize Bryse as the clarinetist in our worship band. But Bryse is also a world class canoeist. And last week, Bryse represented us in the canoe competitions in the Pan Am games...and he and his team brought home a bronze medal! I'll bet Bryse can teach us something about living in harmony!

"Live in harmony with one another." Let me ask this: how are we doing at living in harmony with one another? How harmonious is our life together here at Chapel Hill?

Three and a half years ago was a painful defining moment for my ministry here at Chapel Hill...and for all of us as a congregation. Without going into too many details, I was proposing that we move ahead with another building project and, for the first time in my 20 years here, you said no. It was loud and clear. And it was painful for me to realize how out of touch I had become with this congregation—and, as I have since reflected upon it—how out of touch with the Lord and **His** will for our future as a church.

We were not in harmony...at least your pastor and you were not in harmony. I'm not sure we were even singing off the same page. There was a deep concern about debt, a lack of confidence in leadership, a sense that we were not being entirely transparent with you. You said you felt disengaged; you enjoyed our programs and services... but you did not feel that this ministry belonged to you; that you had a voice in the future of your church. There was also a sense that we had turned our attention so inward that we were focused almost entirely upon ourselves... and there was a deep longing to care more about the needs of the world around us.

I have to tell you... this was a point of personal crisis for me. Even despair. It was also a time of crisis for the congregation. It's no fun to be out of harmony with a pastor and leaders that you love and count on. I know that many of you must have wondered whether your pastor and his team would "get it" about what was not right. And some must have wondered whether we could do it—whether we could find a way to get back on the same page again, even with God's help. But we set out to try—prayerfully—to really try to get back in harmony with each other. We brought in some help, we worked at it in every way we could, we prayed our hearts out.

So...I wonder ...how do you think we are doing today? Does it seem to you—as it does to me—that we are in a better place? I hear things from you make me think we **are** in a better place—more on the same page. Go Sunday has been a chance for our congregation to turn our hearts outward; so has been Men's Mexico. Does it seem to you, as it does to me, that we are less self-centered as a church than we were three years ago? I hope so.

Not only did we not take on any debt to build more buildings, we began to set aside more savings, even through a painful recession. We are doing more with less, people are volunteering more vigorously and, through the generosity of about 35 families, we have refinanced a big chunk of our mortgage. This will save \$400,000 over the next five years which we will use to reduce our principal. And the Session is determined to eliminate debt as soon as the economy allows and the Lord gives permission.

We have also tried to be more open with our communication. We have tried town hall meetings to discuss things such as the mortgage issue and Sunday service times. You recommended that we continue with two services instead of three...and that has given us the chance to practice our one-anothers with each other every week; to eat and fellowship and enjoy and and plant slobbery holy kisses on each other rather than rushing quickly through the Doors of Amnesia and out to our cars on Sunday morning.

We have 45 new LifeGroups that started this year, adding to the core of Cove Groups that have existed for years. A whole new mid-level of lay leadership has risen up that is ministry-oriented and member-driven. One Saturday morning every month, all Life Group leaders gather at the Huddle for training...along **with any person at all** who **wants** to be a better leader. And I am convinced that as more of this congregation meets in Life Groups around the reflection upon scripture, being led by well-trained leaders, that the harmony we sing together will only grow sweeter and richer.

So...I think we **are** living more harmoniously today. I wonder if you agree. I wonder if you've even thought much about it. This last week in Spokane, my dear buddy Pastor Rick Murray and I walked and talked together every morning before our board meetings. This is one of the ways I stay connected to my accountability brother. And at one point on our Friday walk, Rick said, "You know, Mark...you have more spring in your step than you've had for three years. You seem happier. What's going on?"

Well...I think it's you...and us. I think we paid attention to the shaking that God gave us 3 years ago and we are in a better place...I as your pastor, your staff and elders... and we as a congregation. I am more excited than I've been in a long time. I feel like I'm looking forward again, playing offense again, I feel like WE are looking forward again and focused on the things that change lives and change our community and change the world. I think we are singing off the same page again...in harmony. And I love the sound of it. I hope you do. I hope the Lord does. And I pray that we continue to live in harmony together.

## SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- **Reflect & Apply Individually:** Each person take 5-7 minutes to circle words or phrases that jumped out at them; jot down your reflections; check the notes in your Study Bible for insight or help. Grapple with what the Spirit is saying to you, your group, the church—write down some applications.
- **Reflect & Apply Together:** Share your thoughts. Don't teach! Listen and reflect on God's word together; grapple with what God is calling us to do and be through this passage.

● **Pray together:** tell the Lord one thing you are thankful for and lay one concern before the Lord.

**Dig deeper**

1. How many of the “one-anothers” can you recall? As you read through this text, can you see them “poking through” these verses? Read the passage verse by verse and assign the appropriate “one-another” to each of Paul’s admonitions.

2. What do you think Paul means by “live in harmony” with one another? Look at verse 10; why are the 2 “one-anothers” there essential for harmonious living?

3. Every believer has some sour notes. Identify one or two of yours from this list. Is improvement here just about our will power? If not, how do we as Christians believe that we’ll behave more like what is described?

4. Will you commit to reading this passage daily for one week? Memorizing it?