

They first gave themselves to the LORD

We are doing a study on the essential attitude for preserving the unity of the body of Christ as we operate in our spiritual gifts. It is the attitude of humility. NOT I.

And we have now completed our study of the NOT I BUT CHRIST life.

This morning, we will continue to see in the scriptures how /the NOT I BUT CHRIST life leads to the NOT I BUT OTHERS life\.

And since we are all united as one body, it is also lived as the /NOT I BUT ONE ANOTHER\ life. We are members one of the other.

/Living for Christ leads to living for others.\

We died with Christ, and we have been raised with Christ. This demands that we live a new life in a new way.

He died so we who have eternal life might no longer live for ourselves, but for Him, who died and rose again on our behalf (2 Cor 5:15).

/No longer for ourselves, but for Him. That's first.\

/But then, no longer for ourselves but for OTHERS.\

Christ died so that we may live. Death works in us so that life may work in others.

This is what the love of Christ is all about.

/ Love means sacrificing for the benefit of the one loved.\

That of course is what Christ did. He tells us to follow His lead. And so we continue with the scripture we started last Sunday.

*John 15:12-14*

*12 "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.*

*13 "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. 14*

*"You are My friends if you do what I command you.*

/When we do what Jesus commands us to do, we are living as a friend to Him.\

John, in his first epistle, takes what he heard from the Lord and lays it out plain:

*1 John 3:16-18*

*We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.*

/The NOT I BUT OTHERS life has several key proving grounds.\

As we shall see, the life of the congregation is one of the most significant proving grounds for living this life. Family life - really, our daily living with those who are closest to us – is another one.

And as we see here in 1 John, a very important – and challenging- one is /how we use the resources the LORD has given us, particularly financial resources.\

/The most extensive teaching on Christian giving is found in 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9.\ It has it all, the principles that we have learned. Let's turn there now.

2 Cor 8:1-15

*Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, 2 that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.*

/Here we have the life of love: giving sacrificially so others may have a better life.\

When we are doing this, we living as a friend to the LORD.

/Notice the partnership, the close intimacy, between abundant joy and deep poverty. \ When we participate in the sufferings of Jesus, being conformed to His death, we come to know Him better – and we see the power of His resurrection at work. Rejoice in the Lord always, in good times and in bad.

/Notice how from their affliction came an overflowing wealth of care and concern and assistance for others.\

*2 Cor 8:3 For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, 4 begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints,*

Now think about this for a minute. They gave freely, of their own accord – that means voluntarily. They were gracious. /This is how God gives – freely, graciously.\ In other words, they practiced imitating God.

Wow. Now can see how this is a great example of the kind of love that Jesus commanded us to have for one another?

/Love is giving sacrificially for the benefit of the one being loved.\

But we need to consider one more thing. It's not stated outright here but it's here nonetheless.

They gave beyond their ability to give. Sacrificial love, to be sure.

/They gave money that they needed for their daily bread.\

Therefore, they had to rely on the one who gives seed for the sower and bread for food. The one who promised to meet all their needs, and beyond their needs.

*2 Cor 9:8*

*8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;*

/The choice to do it – the willingness, the desire, the resolve to give sacrificially do come from us.\

/The power and ability do not come from us. They come from the LORD.\

SO the NOT I BUT CHRIST can only be lived by faith in the Son of God who gave Himself up for us. Let's go back to 2 Cor 8 and pick up with verse 5.

*2 Cor 8:5 and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God. 6 So we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well.*

/They learned the right order!! \ We live no longer for ourselves, but for Him.

/Christ first – then others.\ Christ is the source of this life. He loved us first. He showed us what real love is.

First, they looked to Christ. Then that gave them the power, the motivation, the strength, the confidence, the hope, and the joy, to freely give to others.

/NOT I BUT CHRIST must come first. NOT I BUT OTHERS will follow.\

*2 Cor 8:7 But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also. 8 I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also. 9 For you*

*know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.*

Though He was rich – you can't be any richer than being God the Son in heaven –  
For your sake He became poor – not I but others

You can't get any poorer than being naked, penniless, and dying the death of a common criminal.

So that you through His poverty might become rich.

/Death worked in Him so that life could work in us.\

/We are so rich! We have every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies [Eph 1:3].\

/The riches of the glory of Christ's inheritance in the saints [Eph 1:18].\

/The surpassing riches of His grace [Eph 2:7].\

/The unfathomable riches of Christ [Eph 3:8].\

And we have Christ **in us!**, the hope (certain expectation) of glory. [Col 1:27]

/All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Him [Col 2:2-3]!\



RICHES. We are SO wealthy.

It's all through Jesus Christ. His death brought us life.

/Truly, through His poverty, we have been made exceedingly RICH!!!\

Let's head back now to 2 Corinthians 8, as we pick up in verse 10.

*2 Cor 8:10 I give my opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this, but also to desire to do it. 11 But now finish doing it also, so that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability. 12 For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. 13 For this is not for the ease of others and for your affliction, but by way of equality — 14 at this present time your abundance being a supply for their need, so that their abundance also may become a supply for your need, that there may be equality; 15 as it is written, "HE WHO gathered MUCH DID NOT HAVE TOO MUCH, AND HE WHO gathered LITTLE HAD NO LACK."*

At the present time, your abundance being a supply for their need,

So that their abundance also may become a supply for your need

/Here we have the principle of NOT I BUT ONE ANOTHER. One another. We bless others - and in turn and in time, we are blessed by them,\

And this is certainly the case in the Spirit's design for our spiritual gifts.

/Here, NOT I BUT CHRIST leads to NOT I BUT ONE ANOTHER.\

We find this principle again and again in the New Testament scriptures.

*Eph 4:32-5:2*

*32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.*

*5:1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; 2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.*

/When we put our eyes off ourselves and onto Christ, we see once again how magnificent He is. \

Magnificent that Christ loved us. /It's magnificent that He gave Himself up for us.\

And since He did, we ought to walk in love. /We ought to be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another.\

After all, God in Christ has already forgiven you.

See how it works? It's really simple when He puts it that way, isn't it?!

That's all the time we have for today. Next week we will dive into the NOT I BUT ONE ANOTHER life with a series of "one another" scriptures.

Next week, we will see how this works in the life of the body of Christ. We are members one of another. UNITY!

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As we close today, I want to show you one more passage that shows how /NOT I BUT CHRIST leads to NOT I BUT OTHERS.\

*John 21:17*

*17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep.*

Jesus asked Peter the same question 3 times. One way to look at the question is as follows:

/Am I more important to you than your own life is?\ Yes.

You said this before .... “I will lay down my life for you”. Are you sure now? Yes.

Are you completely sure?

/OK Good. So you are all in for the NOT I BUT CHRIST life.\ Now watch this:

Feed My Sheep!

/Turn this into the NOT I BUT OTHERS life.\ Some special others – Christ’s sheep.

In the time remaining, let’s consider two more of them, in the book of Ephesians.

All right. Let’s proceed now to verse 22 of Ephesians 5.

Now this gets really practical. The not I but Christ life leading to the not I but others life – /this principle is proven out in our daily living with those closest to us.\

*Eph 5:22-6:4*

*22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. 24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.*

Now ladies, the only reason I lead with you is because Paul did! It's short enough: 3 verses. Wait til we get to the husbands. 9 verses for them!

Here's how this works. /When you live the not I but Christ life, it has implications for your marriage.\

If we are truly subject to the Lord, putting aside our own will and living according to his, then certain things follow.

One of them pertains to wives.

/Since you are subject to the Lord, you ought to also be subject to your husband.\

To say it another way, you are called to see that standing between you and your husband is the Lord. /You are to be obedient and respectful to your husband, not because he deserves it, but because Christ does! \

OK, that's all we have time for this morning. Next week we will continue looking at these intimate family relationships

/For now, keep recalling this simple principle: the NOT I BUT CHRIST LIFE leads to the NOT I BUT OTHERS Life. \

Next week it will be the husbands' turn....

*25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. 28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; 29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but*

*nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, 30 because we are members of His body.*

*31 FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.*

*32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.  
33 Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.*

*6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), 3 SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH.*

*4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

But that's for next time. For now, remember the simple principle: the NOT I BUT CHRIST LIFE leads to the NOT I BUT OTHERS Life.



