



ONE ANOTHER
Eastertide Devotional 2022

EASTERTIDE DEVOTIONAL SCHEDULE

The number of the Devotional is in the circle, the date is in the corner.

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INTRO: “ONE ANOTHER”

In our first year of marriage, there were a number of difficulties Melissa and I had because we came to our marriage with different expectations. When it came to celebrating birthdays, my family always observed the celebration on the nearest convenient day. Say a birthday fell on a Tuesday where we had a baseball game or something, we would bump the family celebration to the following Friday. So, when Melissa’s birthday rolled around during our first year of marriage, I planned something that Friday evening. I quickly found out that she was disappointed because we had not planned on anything on the day of her birthday. We discovered a host of these issues our first year of marriage—celebrating holidays, eating and cleaning up from dinner, how and when to pay bills, etc. Growing up in our own families, we tend to think that how we had done these things growing up was the best, possibly only, way to do things. Most of the time it is not a right or wrong issue as long as we are on the same page.

This spring we are journeying through the Bible’s teaching on the church: what is it and how does it work? This is more of a controversial series than it may seem because everyone comes to church for different reasons and with a variety of expectations. While a certain range of variety in the church is both natural and healthy. This was a significant issue for both Jesus and his apostles. In John 17, Jesus even staked the reputation of the church on our unity:

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you...so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (v20-21, 23)

Paul also counseled the church in Corinth to pursue unity:

1 Corinthians 1:10 I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. (1 Corinthians 1:10)

This idea of unity of the local church is echoed throughout Scripture but it seems like an ideal that is beyond our grasp.

Yet, as we discovered last Easter through our series on our Union with Christ, we are not only joined to Jesus as our head, but this joins us to each other as well with bonds that run deeper than even biological relationships. This is the reality of our relationship with Christ and the church is the venue through which we express that reality. Through this series we will explore many aspects of the church: what are elders? How should we give? What about church discipline? But the purpose of all this digging through God’s Word is to be united to Christ and each other. Our situation differs from my first year of marriage because many of our differences in the church come with a manual: the Bible. While the sermon series aims at outlining God’s design for the church, this Eastertide devotional is designed to highlight our relationships within the church. It is part devotional and part homework guide. I pray that each week this devotional will challenge you to connect with the people in our church family on a deeper level.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

John 13:34

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

As an avid fan of forensic shows, I am constantly curious about the “why” behind crimes. People commit murder for a variety of reasons however, I think the common assumption is that these reasons are all variations on the emotion of hate. After the detectives have sorted through the crime scene, processed the forensic evidence, more often than not, the suspect is a close family member or friend of the victim. When the detectives get them “in the box,” they interrogate them and discover that most motives that lead to murder stem from love and not hate. This begs the question, “is this actually love?”

This command may be the most powerful and most misapplied “one another” because it is dependent on our understanding of the word “love.” Everyone develops an understanding of love from their experience of love, however our experience may not be a great guide. This is why the Bible goes to great length to define, explain, and demonstrate God’s love—our standard of love. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 defines love as

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

While this is commonly read at weddings, the context of this passage is the use of spiritual gifts which build up the church. It is not aimed at romantic love (though romantic love certainly is not less than this), but the love that members of a church are supposed to demonstrate. Notice, Paul does not frame love in terms of merely being nice to someone or “loving on” someone. Instead, it talks about doing many of the things we intentionally avoid in church settings, patience, trust, hope, and forgiveness. That is love.

HMWK: Go through the church directory and ask yourself if you have demonstrated 1 Corinthians 13 “love” to them. If not, pray for them and yourself and look for an opportunity to be patient, kind, trust, hope, and forgiveness without envy or self-seeking.

BE DEVOTED TO ONE ANOTHER

Romans 12:10

Be devoted to one another in love...

I am devoted to the Boston Red Sox. Have been ever since I was a kid. This means I occasionally will spend some money on a ticket or a t-shirt, I will sit down many days at 7:05 and watch them play, I will listen to sports talk radio discussing the inner workings of the team. Being devoted to the Boston Red Sox means that I get to share in their successes (unlike the fair weather “pink hat” crowd). It also means I suffer with their defeats. It means that I have the right to criticize them whenever they are not playing up to my standard; yet it also means I defend them when outsiders criticize them for the same thing.

I think the Biblical idea of “devotion” involves many of these same things. It means spending your time and resources for someone else’s benefit, it means celebrating and mourning with them. It occasionally means correcting them when they need it and defending them from others. The Greek term for “devotion” used in this verse is “philostorgoi” which is a combination of two different Greek words for love: “phileo” which means brotherly love and “storge” which is more familial love. Some translation render this “kindly affection” though I am not sure how helpful that rendering is (I keep thinking of “kindly affection” as stroking someone’s hair which, if I did to Bill Burkey, might be awkward). I think the idea of “devotion” is a great way to render this word because it carries with it the ideas presented in 1 Corinthians 13 as a love which “always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”

Therefore, be devoted to one another as we are devoted to the Boston Red Sox...or whatever heathen team you root for.

HONOR ONE ANOTHER ABOVE YOURSELF

Romans 12:10

...Honor one another above yourselves.

I remember the first academic “shout out” I received. A close friend of mine wrote a book on early American history in which he cited my work as a source. I was humbled by this inclusion, but I was even more stunned when he credited me with a major idea in his newest book in an academic conference. This was an honor I am not sure I deserved especially since I was applying his methodology in the first place. But that simple act bonded us together and continues to bond us to this day. However, in an odd way, his habit of expressing academic humility does more to form his reputation in academic circles than his research which is excellent in itself.

In the academic and, I suspect, other areas of work, humility is difficult because we are in a constant state of proving ourselves. In the academy, the goal posts are always being moved: you complete your doctorate? Great, now you need a tenure track position then a fellowship, then, then, then. Many of us are caught in cycles of constantly proving ourselves. But Paul tells us, in the church, to honor other people above ourselves. This is possible because one of the few areas in life where you don’t have to prove yourself is in the church. In fact, you can’t prove yourself. If acceptance in the church is dependent on your performance then the only thing we prove is that we fall short. We fall short of God’s standard, we fall short of other people’s standard, and we fall short of our own standard. This is what allows us to stop proving ourselves and show humility by honoring others above ourselves: Jesus, though God who lacks nothing humbled himself and “made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant” and “becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:7-8). Jesus has already given us that which we could not gain for ourselves: obedience to the law and acceptance to God. Since Jesus has already secured these things, we don’t have to prove ourselves.

C.S. Lewis claimed that humility wasn’t thinking less of oneself, but thinking of oneself less. Humility doesn’t require rejecting the gifts and abilities with which God has created you. Instead, it is understanding that you need the gifts and abilities of others. Honoring others before yourself is one of those values that allows us to not only exercise our personal gifts but exercise them in community with others in our church.

QUESTION: How can you honor others in our church?

LIVE IN HARMONY WITH ONE ANOTHER

Romans 12:16

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

My brother and I used to fight. Not because we didn't love each other, honestly, I can't even remember half the things we fought about but I am pretty sure they were stupid. I remember on one of his birthdays, I went out for a run and loped past the field where he was playing football with his friends for his birthday. For some reason I thought it was a good idea to steal the ball and punt it on top of the roof of the adjacent school. Why? Who knows. Spite I guess. The day my relationship improved with my brother was the day I moved out. It is amazing how a bit of distance improves so many family relationships.

If you were an ancient Roman, it would be hard not to be conceited. Romans had not only conquered much of the Mediterranean world but had absorbed its culture. Those who did not speak Latin were known as barbarians because, to the Roman ear, they simply babbled "bar, bar, bar." Rome developed both wealth and power which created a social hierarchy. As the gospel spread throughout the Roman Empire in the first century, people from all over the hierarchy came to Christ. Contrary to the caricature of the spread of Christianity, it was not a movement of poor, uneducated people but involved and even depended on the conversion of social elites (see Rodney Stark's *The Rise of Christianity*). Paul demonstrates this here in Romans 12 by calling on those social elites to put aside their hierarchical attitudes and include everyone from across society in worship.

Living in harmony with other people is not a little matter. When we live in community with one another, it requires a restriction of our freedoms. It means we can't always talk about the things we like, do the things we like, or sleep with the TV on (as I discovered). The fact is, we don't always want to restrict our freedoms. However, it is also important to note that the idea of "harmony" is not the same thing as "monotony." Being monotone means we all sing the same melody, we all conform to the same note. Harmony requires a differentiation of notes that fit together. In other words, we don't all have to like the same things or do the same things, but our behavior and attitudes have to "fit" with one another. Living in harmony with one another, even for those of us that live together as the family of God here at Union Church, is hard work which requires patience, forgiveness, and dedication. Or what John 13:34 calls "love."

BUILD UP ONE ANOTHER

Romans 14:19

Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

I have developed an overactive “flattery meter.” Coming out of the military where everyone is direct, the civilian world has adopted alternate approaches to correction that I have not yet come to appreciate. Many people have been encouraged to use what is called the “sandwich” technique when trying to offer a critique. One is told to couch a criticism in between two compliments. When done with authenticity, this can be an effective method. However, in my experience, those who rely heavily on this method do so because they do not like confrontation and they have to rely on their training to manage conflict. Under these circumstances, the critique may not come off as genuine. This is one of the fountains that can feed my cynicism, when flattery is used as a means to correction.

When the Bible exhorts us to “build one another up,” it is not talking about flattering someone but strengthening someone. This is why, in the 1 Thessalonians passage, “encouraging one another” is listed alongside “building each other up” because there is a difference between the two. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 14:12 tells us that spiritual gifts are given specifically “for the building up of the church.” The same Greek word used in 1 Thessalonians 5 and Romans is the same Greek words used in 1 Corinthians 14: “oikodomeo” literally meaning “building a house.” When the Bible commands us to “build up one another,” it is not a call to flatter people with words, but to strengthen them with your words, gifts, and actions.

QUESTION: What are your spiritual gifts? How can they be used to “build up” others?

BE LIKEMINDED TOWARDS ONE ANOTHER

Romans 15:5

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had,

I remember the first youth group trip I chaperoned. It was billed as a “student led” trip where the students got to vote on what happened. It was so divisive that it resulted in the youth group splitting into three groups: two chaperones escorting one student, two chaperones doing something by themselves, and eleven students wandering the Inner Harbor of Baltimore unescorted. Even though there was a central purpose to the trip, only three of us actually participated in that purpose. It was clear early on that we all went on this trip for different reasons and it was disastrous.

If the other “one another” commands seem difficult to live out as a church, this one poses an even bigger obstacle. It is one thing to make sure that our behavior works “in harmony” with others, but Paul three chapters later tells us that even our thinking should be likeminded. This is problematic because in any church that has more than one member will display a variety of opinions on everything: sports, politics, the proper color of the paint on the walls, how much one should give, etc. I think that diversity of opinion is healthy because, if we examine this verse more closely, we are to be likeminded in specific ways and not necessarily in all ways. Paul explicitly states that our likemindedness is aimed at how we treat and think about one another. Furthermore, the standard for how we treat one another is how Jesus thought about us and treated us. Paul actually explains this very concept in Philippians 2:5-8

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

What was Jesus’s mindset? To serve. Even though he was God, he did not consider that to be a good enough reason to not humble himself and serve us. What is the mindset that we are to share according to Paul? To humble oneself in service to others. Why? Because this is how Jesus treated us.

ACCEPT ONE ANOTHER

Romans 15:7

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

When my family lived in Richmond VA, we ended up attending a large church during my doctoral studies specifically so we could blend into the background. Our kids were little and I was essentially working full time and pursuing doctoral studies full time and did not have the resources to serve in the way I was accustomed. This is not to say we ghosted our church family. I remember when Melissa tried to attend ladies (lady's?) bible study, she showed up at the time and place announced, but apparently, the ladies were in the habit of getting there early, arranging themselves around the round tables. Melissa was the only one who didn't fit at the table so she spent the study sitting by herself, not knowing anybody, at a nearby table. I believe that was a one-time experiment with ladies bible study. While she participated in the study, she was not really accepted there.

It is unfortunate this idea has been complicated by contemporary notions of "acceptance." Our culture tells us that acceptance requires an affirmation of everything about the person. But the structure of this verse tells us that Paul had something different in mind. First, the context of this verse makes clear that our acceptance extends to members of a church. In this case, the members of the church in Rome are the recipients of this command to "accept one another." Second, we are commanded to accept one another in a specific way. Paul's instruction to accept people "just as Christ accepted you" does not simply mean we should accept people *because* Christ accepted us, but we are to accept people *in the same way* Christ accepted us. *So how did* Christ accept us? Through his sacrifice that we participate in through faith. Therefore, we are to accept others that participate in the body of Christ through faith as Christ accepts us: broken and flawed. It is also important to note that, through our participation in Christ we are "predestined to be conformed to the image of the Son" (Romans 8:28). In other words, God accepts us as we are but he loves us too much to let us stay this way.

This sounds awfully exclusionary to modern ears, so allow me to provide a context. This is not to imply that we are to "reject" unbelievers or members of a different church. The one does not imply the other. But our acceptance of those outside the church has a different model and justification for our acceptance of those inside the church. Furthermore, we accept them in a different way. We are not to practice these "one another" commands generally but within the family of God for reasons that should become clear as we proceeded. The practice of these "one anothers" requires a level of trust and interdependence that does not exist in the world.

HMWK: Invite a church family member over for dinner with whom you have never shared a meal.

INSTRUCT ONE ANOTHER

Romans 15:14

I myself am convinced, my brothers and sisters, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with knowledge and competent to instruct one another.

I remember when I learned to drive a stick shift vehicle. My college roommate had a manual car and needed me to drop him at the airport, so he took me out a couple times and I got the hang of it. However, after I dropped him off at Newark airport, I can remember getting the toll ticket on the New Jersey Turnpike and bucking that little Toyota Corolla with smoke coming out of the undercarriage. It was a steep learning curve. By the time I returned to my campus in Nyack NY, my nerves were fried. I remember calling my dad and he told me one thing that changed my ability to drive stick: let off the clutch slowly until you see the RPMs dip. Give it some gas and after you get rolling, ease all the way off the clutch. My dad was a five-hour drive away and that little piece of advice has kept me from stalling or holding up New York traffic ever since.

Paul, at the end of his letter to the Romans talks about instructing one another. Paul talked about our theological condition in chapters 1-11 and, beginning in chapter 12, he continued to discuss our response to this condition. He talked about obedience to human authority and our spiritual gifts. Based on everything Paul discussed, he closes his instructions with this encouragement for the Roman Christians to instruct others. Two considerations should be observed here. First, Paul was not talking about instructing people on how to drive stick. He had in view instructing people about the very things he had presented in his letter. Second, Paul was not unleashing instruction without qualification. The way this command is framed, those who instruct should be “filled with knowledge and competent.” At the same time, Paul was not claiming that an instructor had to know everything, although they did need to be competent in what they taught.

Even though this command to instruct others does not include things like driving stick, my father’s advice is a great model. It was advice based on experience that reflected how the car was designed. Similarly, we are to instruct others out of our experience of applying the Word of God.

QUESTION: What areas of the Christian life are you competent at? How can you instruct others? Conversely, what are you not competent at and who do you know is that can instruct you?

ADMONISH ONE ANOTHER

Colossians 3:16

Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

I love to hike and enjoy using maps and exploring new areas. When I had the opportunity to hike St. Cuthbert's Way in the UK in 2016, eight miles in I followed what I thought was the trail. The path I took seemed to be marked with the trail blaze and it fit with what I saw on the map. However, a half mile in, I ended up in someone's backyard (which in Britain is not unusual due to their "right of way" laws). But the couple I stumbled upon realized I was trying to follow a different path and called out, "Are you looking for St. Cuthbert's Way?" (The wise guy inside of me contemplated responding "Any way I go is St. Cuthbert's Way!") I responded "yes." They showed me on my map where I had gone wrong and how to get back. If it weren't for them, who knows how long I would have hiked thinking I was somewhere else.

Offering correction is never an easy thing though it is necessary. In fact, in 2 Timothy 3:16 we learn that the Word of God has four purposes: "teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training." Half of the purpose of the Word of God is to point out when we go off course. Paul, in this command to admonish one another, draws on several truths to ensure correction is a productive thing. First, teaching and correction go hand in hand. If the couple had merely yelled at me for going off the trail, I would still be lost. Instead, they instructed me on how to return to course. Second, both correction and instruction flow from the "message of Christ" dwelling richly in us. We are not commanded to correct people based on their personality traits we don't happen to like, but to throw ourselves in front of the bus when it is hurtling towards a cliff. Thirdly, this correction can come through a variety of mediums. Paul says that we correct people through singing. This is not the only way in which we do so (see the parallel verse below), but by singing what is true about God, we confront people with their misunderstandings and poor attitude.

Correcting others as Christ corrects us is always an act of service rooted in love. It is never an act of self-service. It is not done for the benefit of the person correcting even though it might make his or her life easier. Correction is always done for the benefit of the one who has strayed off the path and redemptive in purpose.

HMWK: read other passages on correcting brothers and sisters in Christ: Matthew 18:15-17, Galatians 6:1; 1 Cor. 5:1-3; James 5:19; Titus 3:10-11; 1 Timothy 5:20; Romans 16:17.

GREET ONE ANOTHER

Romans 16:16

Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings.

I remember when my children used to be excited when I came home from work. Whatever they did stopped and they ran yelling “Daddy!” Man I miss that. I will admit, when I drag myself through the front door at the end of the day, I am not always in the mood to flip the switch into fun dad mode. But there are things that you definitely miss when that attitude is gone. Not that my children aren’t happy to see me, but as teenagers, I have to pursue them, which I am happy to do.

In this command, Paul states that we should greet one another with a holy kiss. I am hesitant to discard any passage of scripture, but here is one I would like to think was specific to the first century. Not that greeting was specific to the first century, but how one greeted—with a kiss—was more of a cultural expression. I am not really a hugger much less a kisser so maybe this is my own sinfulness steering my interpretation. Please nobody try and correct this for me.

The command to greet implies that church is not the place where you sneak in, get out of it what you can, and slink away. It implies that church is not just a place you serve and then go home. You serve *with* people, you learn *with* people. Not people who just happen to sit next to you as *you* learn or people who just happened to serve alongside you while *you* serve. No. Greeting one another intimately means that you are in church to be with these people. To do life together.

HMWK: For the next three weeks, greet and introduce yourself to two people you do not know.

CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER

1 Corinthians 12:25

so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.

We have all experienced toxic work environments. There are some managers who think, in order to climb the corporate ladder, they have to shove others down. They intentionally cause competition where none need be, they turn employee against employee to isolate people and impose their will. One person's stumble is seen as an opportunity for someone else. If you have never worked in such an environment, consider yourself lucky. The church is supposed to be explicitly and publicly different.

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 12, is introducing the church as members of one body. Each one of these members has specific gifts and roles and each member must work together as the various organs in a single body. Dividing the church is as fatal to its life as splitting the human body in half. So what is the remedy? The members of the body should have equal concern for one another. Therefore, our concern for others in the church should not be limited by how much they agree with you, on how much you get along, or on how long you have known them. James warns us against favoritism:

My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism... If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. (v1, 8-9)

It is understandable some people get along better than others. Paul's instruction does not mean we all have to become best friends. However, it does mean that we show equal concern for one another's well-being, spiritually and physically.

HMWK: Is there anyone in the church you KNOW you have not shown proper concern for? If so, confess this to God and ask forgiveness. If you are really brave, you can practice another "one another" command and confess that to the person you wronged in order to restore that relationship.

SERVE ONE ANOTHER

Galatians 5:13

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

Freedom is loaded word. Our country was founded on the ideal of freedom, but most people provide their own definition of what they think freedom should involve. We must always remember that freedom is always both a freedom *from* something as well as a freedom *for* something. The patriots of the 1770s and 80s did not only fight for freedom from Britain but for self-determination. Had anarchy ensued after the Revolution, our country would have failed. While we would have achieved freedom from Britain and, presumably, the right to do anything, that is not the freedom for which we fought. We are free from the tyranny of other nations but we have discovered we are also equally enslaved to the tyranny of the masses.

Similarly, the Bible frames the idea of freedom in terms of freedom from sin and freedom for Christ. If we only talk about what salvation untethers us from, then we have not described salvation. True salvation is not only an untethering from sin but a tethering to Christ. This is why, in Ephesians 6:6, Colossians 3:24, and 1 Peter 2:16 we are described as “slaves to Christ.” Paul, in the Galatians passages discusses that our freedom does not extend to indulging the flesh. Why not? Is this simply a favor God asks as repayment for the free gift of salvation? That wouldn’t make the gift free. Instead, it draws on this understanding that our freedom is a freedom to be conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:28). Freedom is not understood in the absolute sense of freedom to do anything but freedom to do something specific.

I am afraid many Christians might find this understanding of freedom disheartening. That grieves my soul because it demonstrates a lack of understanding of who God is and the salvation he provides. Slavery to God is the vehicle to true peace, love, hope, and joy. Jesus explicitly said that his yoke is easy, and his burden is light. This doesn’t mean that he expects little of us. Instead, it means that the tough road God places before us is the only road to peace, love, hope, and joy.

Do you want happiness? Then serve one another. Do you want joy? The serve one another. Do you want peace? Then serve one another. Only then can you discover the value of being free to be slaves to God.

BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS

Galatians 6:2

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

This is a concept that any soldier or hiker understands. When someone in your group is struggling to carry the weight in their pack, then the other members of the squad will lighten his ruck and distribute the weight evenly between them. This allows your buddy to either finish the hike or complete the mission. Why do you do this? Because someday you are going to need their help.

One of the most damaging cultural contributions of American society to the church is the "I am an island" mentality. Self-sufficiency has been engrained in us since before the days of the Lone Ranger. The idea that we should all be self-sufficient cannot be supported by the Bible or by history. In fact, in the early church, the disciples were known for sharing all things in common and making sure no one was in need. Even Jesus leaned on his disciples. As perfect as Jesus was and as flawed as they were, Jesus still humbled himself and depended on his disciples. If Jesus needed it, news flash, so do you.

From time to time, I will confess to my congregation that I am not feeling well or that I am struggling with getting through the sermon for whatever reason. Maybe it makes me look like a whiner, self-absorbed, or weak. That's OK. The Bible tells us that in our weakness Christ's strength is made perfect. It might look weak through the lenses of our culture, but sharing my burden with you all is something that we are commanded to do (NB: sharing one's burden is different than unrestricted venting).

There is an inherent danger in pursuing this command. Usually, you cannot simply take someone else's burden, they have to give it to you. It is wise to consider to whom you give your burden. Not everyone is equally trustworthy with our burdens. This is one of the reasons why gossip is destructive in a church. It understandably prevents people from sharing their burdens. But this danger is not, in itself, a reason to ignore the biblical command to share one another's burdens

Another clarification is in order. If someone shares their burden with you, understand it is not on you to solve that problem or fix the situation. It is your joy and opportunity to go through it with them. There are times where we defend others, but most often, our duty is to just stand next to people as the world throws rocks at them.

HMWK: Choose someone you trust in the church and share one burden with them.