



**ONE ANOTHER**  
**Eastertide Devotional 2022**  
**Part B: Days 9-22**

# EASTERTIDE DEVOTIONAL SCHEDULE

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

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
		MARCH	2 <b>1</b>	3 <b>2</b>	4 <b>3</b>	5
6	7 <b>4</b>	8 <b>5</b>	9 <b>6</b>	10 <b>7</b>	11 <b>8</b>	12
13	14 <b>9</b>	15 <b>10</b>	16 <b>11</b>	17 <b>12</b>	18 <b>13</b>	19
20	21 <b>14</b>	22 <b>15</b>	23 <b>16</b>	24 <b>17</b>	25 <b>18</b>	26
27	28 <b>19</b>	29 <b>20</b>	30 <b>2</b>	31 <b>21</b>	1 <b>22</b>	2
3	4 <b>23</b>	5 <b>24</b>	6 <b>25</b>	7 <b>26</b>	8 <b>27</b>	9
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17 EASTER						

## 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.

## FORGIVE ONE ANOTHER

Colossians 3:13

*Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

I, like all people, have been on the fuzzy end of other's sinfulness. From time to time, out of either carelessness or maliciousness, people have deeply hurt or offended me. Some of those actions or comments stick with you. They become the voices in your head when things aren't going well. Most of the time there are two choices we have: we can carry that around with us until the end of time or we can forgive. Paul tells us here that we need to forgive

Often, our understanding of forgiveness is molded by cultural voices more than the Biblical voice. So what does the Bible say about forgiveness? First, forgiveness is a legal concept whereby the victim of an injustice does not hold the crime of another against them. When God forgives, he considers Christ's perfect and holy life instead of our sinful lives when we are judged. In our experience, when we practice forgiveness, we do not treat others how we have been treated. Instead, we do not count their sins against us against the. Therefore, secondly, forgiveness involves mercy. Instead of acting out of a sense of justice—giving someone what they deserve—forgiveness allows us to act out of mercy, in other words, treating others with love and patience despite their actions.

Interestingly, the command to forgive one another presupposes that there will be things to forgive. Whenever one lives in community with others, our lives should be intertwined to the point where it will occasionally cause problems. While there is a time and a place for justice, the saying, "an eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind" is helpful within the church. If we constantly hold other's transgressions against them within our church family, we will be constantly alienated from one another. This is not how the church is supposed to operate, therefore, forgiveness is a core skill in living as the people of God.

What makes forgiveness so hard? Sometimes it is because of the degree of injustice we encounter. It is one thing to forgive someone when they forgot to call and cancel an appointment, but it can be a very different experience when we forgive someone for hurtful gossip. Secondly, forgiveness is hard because mankind defaults to postures of pride and not postures of humility. When we are wronged we feel as if someone owes us something. We assume that it is the responsibility of the offending party to mend the relationship. This is not the process outlined in God's word. When the situation warrants a discussion, Matthew 18 makes it clear that the burden is on the offended party. However, repeatedly in Scripture, it is the offended party's responsibility to forgive.

**HMWK:** Read the parable of the unmerciful servant (Matthew 18:21-35). In light of this parable, why is refusing to forgive others perilous to our own selves?



## BE PATIENT WITH ONE ANOTHER

Ephesians 4:2

*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.*

Colossians 3:13

*Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone.  
Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

Patience is a virtue for which few are willing to wait. Lack of patience can come with a price tag: when you have determined an item to buy, whether it be a coat or car, those who just go out and buy it without investing the time to research and find the best price will inevitably pay more. Lack of patience can come with other more severe consequences. Those people that go out on hikes and adventures for which they are not prepared can put their lives in danger. Those who want to climb Everest spend years climbing other mountains first. Patience is not a virtue as much as it is a necessity.

But the good news is, you don't have to simply wait as if it is a gift magically bestowed on people out of the blue. Patience is something one develops over time usually through difficult experiences. James, in the first chapter of his letter, tells us to "let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (v4). This means that we, from time to time, should not look to escape a difficult situation but to "let perseverance finish its work." Patience especially in the face of hardship is the mechanism by which we change.

As mentioned several times already in this devotional, and something that will be revisited repeatedly, is the need for these "one another" qualities in the context of a church. The church, by definition, is made up of broken, sinful people. Bad news for anyone reading this, God has a history of using improbable and unfit people as vessels for his glory. If anyone participates in the community of the family of God with the expectation that there will be no conflict or hard times, then their expectations need to be adjusted. I require your forgiveness and patience on a regular occasion as does anyone who follows Christ.

**HMWK:** Make a mental list (please not a physical list) of people with whom you have a hard time showing patience and pray for those people.

## SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE

Ephesians 4:15, 25

*Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ...Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.*

I have a relative that really wants to make it as a singer. One problem...he can't sing very well. His family has made sacrifices so that he can pursue a musical career but, unsurprisingly, this has not improved his singing ability. He has been chipping away at a musical career for twenty years now and no one, apparently, has had the courage to speak up and tell him, in love, that this is not his future. I am not all that close with him, so I have never had the opportunity to speak "truth in love" into this guy's life. I could have made the point by poking fun at him but that would probably cause more harm than good.

One challenge in practicing this command is the temptation to use "speaking in love" to criticize instead of building up. The Biblical expectation to speak the truth in love presupposes a couple things. First, note the three elements of this command. We are to "Speak," that is communicate with our words and not passive aggressive actions. We are to speak "the truth," that is the truth of God's Word. We are to "speak the truth in love," that is for the welfare of the other (see 1 Cor. 13). Second, it presupposes a foundation of trust with the recipient of your truthful speech. Many people take this command as an excuse to bulldoze people in the name of "speaking the truth in love." Peter's injunction to speak "with gentleness and respect" applies to our speaking truth. Third, it presupposes the truth we speak is Biblically centered. This command does not necessarily extend to highlighting other's personality flaws. The love we express through our truth should build up the other person, not make our life easier. When other's personalities grate on us, it is up to us to "bear with one another" and "be patient with one another"; it is not their job to change for us.

Failure to practicing this command results in the alienation of the body of Christ. When we see others sin, when we see others fall short of our Biblical expectations, and we allow them to continue unimpeded, then we fail one another. We allow them to drift into the darkness from which we were rescued. Love one another well enough to not allow those in our church family to drift away. However, in doing so, we must display the love, gentleness, and respect with which God has treated us.

## BE KIND AND COMPASSIONATE TO ONE ANOTHER

Ephesians 4:32

*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

Kindness and compassion was not the common currency of middle school in the 1980s. I know middle school is never an easy stage of life regardless of what decade one experiences it. However, the 1980s were an especially territorial period as reflected in movies like the Breakfast Club or Back to the Future. Any sort of deviation from the fictitious social expectations of the 80s were met with verbal or physical correction. I can remember racing home, ducking into bushes and cutting through backyards because people thought my shoes were stupid or my hair wasn't fashionable.

God's Word tells us to be compassionate which means, literally to "suffer with" another. The Greek term used in this verse, *eusplachnoi*, carries the idea of being "tender hearted" (cf. 1 Pt 3:8). It is a turning of one's heart towards one another which is why it is closely connected with the idea of forgiveness. When sin comes between people, it stands as a barrier preventing one's heart from being turned towards another. So, forgiveness is the necessary prerequisite to showing compassion and kindness.

If you are like most people, all of this sounds very spiritual and good until we bring up specific people. People who have hurt us or offended us beyond our current capacity to forgive. I think if we are honest, we all have those people and not for no reason. But the end of this verse demonstrates a deep seeded problem with this experience. We are commanded to extend kindness, compassion, and forgiveness to others in the same way that Christ forgives us. If we understand the character of God properly as well as our own sinfulness, we realize how important this command is. Our sinfulness has done more to offend God than anything we have done to one another. If God has extended us kindness, compassion, and forgiveness then where is our excuse to deny that to others?

## SPEAK TO ONE ANOTHER WITH PSALMS, HYMNS, AND SPIRITUAL SONGS

Ephesians 5:19

*speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord,*

When I was in college, I fell in love with musical theater. *Les Mis*, *Ragtime*, *Titanic*—they were all able to communicate with music that which words alone couldn't. Most musicals begin with an "overture" one way or another. This is the melody which is woven through the fabric of the musical, reappearing in different ways. Overtures which present as happy and light can reappear as gloomy and foreboding later on. In *Les Miserables*, for example, the theme for "Do you Hear the People Sing" which appears before intermission, drives the song about political revolution in 18<sup>th</sup> century France. It is hopeful, expecting a new world where injustice is abolished. This theme reappears at the end, with the death of the protagonist, Jean Valjean. However, this song uses the same inspirational melody to present a different revolution: Valjean's entrance into heaven where he will experience injustice no more.

This command to "speak to one another" in song is not a command to turn our lives into musicals, singing to one another. Instead, it means that when we sing in church, when we publicly proclaim God's glory in song, we instruct and encourage one another. It is one thing to state your belief in something. But even today, singing out truth is reserved for only a special class of our beliefs. Biblical worship is not primarily geared towards making ourselves feel good. Instead, worship through song is important, first, because God deserves it. It is not for the aggrandizement of God, but the recognition of who he is. This verse tells us that another purpose is to encourage one another.

Often, we assume that worship should be driven by our personal preferences.

The Bible mentions singing 158 times but only appears in the New Testament 15 times. This is a sobering ratio in light of all the grief shed over worship styles in the church. This is not to downplay the importance of singing but to bring into focus the function of singing in the corporate worship of the church.

## SUBMIT TO ONE ANOTHER

Ephesians 5:21

*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

I fear when people think about the word “submit,” they conjure up images of drill sergeants barking orders. My drill sergeant did a fair amount of that. I arrived at basic combat training two days before my first wedding anniversary. I spent that day (and the next eight) getting yelled at for nothing. Within a week, one of my drill sergeants yelled at me to take off my wedding ring. I was under the impression it was permitted so I told him I preferred to keep it on. He pulled me aside and in a rare moment of man-to-man discussion he explained that he was not trying to punish me or be a jerk, but a wedding ring is a safety hazard. I responded that I preferred to keep it on. For the next four weeks this drill sergeant brought more and more heat down on me to try to persuade me to take it off. I always had to carry the extra weight; I always had to wake up early for details; I always had to “lead the way.” I was determined to bear it all without complaint. However, a couple weeks in, another married soldier was hopping out of the back of a truck and caught his wedding ring on the side, tearing off his ring finger right in front of me. I took off the ring that day. By the end of my time in basic training I realized all the bluster was an act of love designed to keep me safe in dangerous situations.

Submission is not about weakness, it is about humility and respect. Ultimately, submission is about love when done correctly. To submit to one another does not mean we follow everyone’s whim blindly. Instead, it means that we serve each other which, from time-to-time, means that we place our will under the will of others even when we don’t want to.

Why is submission commanded? Because Christ himself submitted. Within the persons of the Trinity, Jesus—God the Son—has chosen to submit himself to God the Father. He came down specifically to do the will of the Father (Jn 5:30, 6:38). While on earth, he did not get to choose the timing of his ministry (Jn 7:30, 8:20) nor did he know when he would return (Mk 13:32). When Jesus’s time did come, he wanted to know if that could be changed, but it couldn’t (Mt 26:45). But maybe the most explicit passage explaining Jesus’s submission comes in Philippians 2:7-8 “He made himself nothing taking on the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness, in being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death even death on a cross.” If Jesus, God himself, did not think submission was a form of weakness, neither should we.

Submission is intimately connected to the issue of pride, the belief that you are exempt from this command to submit. Pride is assuming that this only applies to others, especially when it comes to submitting to you. It is connected with honoring others above our selves; it is connected with serving one another and being patient with one another. Submission is intimately connected to all the “one anothers” Jesus commanded.

## VALUE OTHERS ABOVE YOURSELVES

Philippians 2:3

*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,*

I have been privileged to work with many outstanding athletes from all over the world but I have been most active working with Kenyan runners. I had the privilege of working with brothers Julius and Emmanuel Bor at my summer running camp ten years ago. They traveled the states by bus winning \$500 here and \$1000 there, but lacked a career plan. They eventually ended up joining the US Army and competing for the Army's World Championship Athletic Program. In 2016, the third brother, Hilary qualified for the Olympics in the steeplechase (a 3000m track race with several barriers and a water jump) but his Army unit was scheduled to deploy that summer making Hilary ineligible. In an act of selfless service, Hilary's brother Julius volunteered to deploy instead of Hilary interrupting his training so his brother could compete. Hilary finished seventh and Julius never quite got back on top of his training.

I find that many people misunderstand this verse. Many take this verse to mean one should think others have greater ability or accomplishments than yourself simply for the sake of appearing humble. I am not sure this is the best way to understand this concept of "valuing others above yourself." Instead, I believe this command moves us to look to the success of others before our own success. Paul, in Romans 12:3, tells us to not think of ourselves more highly than we ought, instead, we are to think of ourselves with sober judgment. Notice, Paul doesn't encourage us to think more lowly of ourselves, but to think of ourselves as one "ought" using "sober" judgment. Pushing ourselves down doesn't automatically lift up others. God has given us each gifts, abilities, and accomplishments that, while they are rooted in the love and grace of God, are owned by us. To discredit those things given to us by God dishonors God. Instead of disowning our skills, we should use those skills for the advancement of others.

I worry that too many Christians get this concept backwards. They disown the gifts God has given them yet still work for their own ambitions. I believe what God is calling us to through this command is to own and acknowledge our gifts and abilities yet use them for the success of others. Julius didn't disown his athletic ability, he applied it to a military deployment instead of his own career so that his brother could compete in the Olympics. It is helpful to note, that before the Rio Olympics, Julius was considered the more accomplished runner.

**HMWK:** Do you know what gifts and abilities you have? Make a list and think of how you can use them to work towards the success of someone specific in our church family.

## WASH ONE ANOTHER'S FEET

John 13:14

*Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.*

The first time I took a trip to Scotland I had but a little time and less money. To see as much as possible, I booked a three-day tour of the highlands spending a day on the Isle of Skye, one of the three places in the world you can find me if I were to ever disappear. I was one of only four English speakers on the trip, the other eleven traveling companions were young women from Japan. As we were rolling alongside Loch Ness, keeping a keen eye for Nessie, the poor young lady behind me vomited all over my left arm. Because I travel light, that was my sole sweater for this adventure. But before I turned my attention to remedying that situation, I realized there was a mess of nastiness flowing down the central aisle of the bus. I flashed a look around and no one moved to clean it. I had served as a Chemical Operations Specialist in the Army and figured I was the one with the knowledge of decontamination procedures and universal precautions, so I hopped to and took care of the mess (to our tour leader's great relief). It was a kindness that was quickly repaid (a story for another time).

Vomit seems a far cry from what Jesus was discussing, but maybe not as far as we would like. In ancient Palestine, sandals were the footwear of choice which exposed the feet to the dust and grime of Israel's byways. The practice of washing one another's feet was intended to remove this dust and to keep the house sanitary and tidy. Whenever this context is presented in polite company, it goes no further. But it is useful to remember that the streets of Galilee were covered by more than dust. First century beasts of burden, like ours today, have a habit of taking care of their business wherever and whenever they see fit, covering the roads. So the practice of washing ones feet was a far messier act than removing some dust.

Jesus used this everyday practice to illustrate something spiritual. In the same way Jesus condescended to care of the grossness of our lives, we are to do the same for others. The context suggests that this is more than just a polite act of tidiness, instead, it involves exposing ourselves to the grossness of others. Why? Because Jesus did that for us.

**HMWK:** Make a mental list of all the grossness Jesus has washed off from us and thank God for each one. Pray that God would bring someone into your life for which you can do the same.



## STOP PASSING JUDGEMENT ON ONE ANOTHER

Romans 14:13

*Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.*

I attended a Christian high school that considered dancing to be demonic. If they could only see me dance, they would understand that for most teenagers, dancing is not an act of demonic glorification but self-humiliation. On that basis, I think my school for their draconian policies, but their theological reasoning has been left wanting. Paul, in this command, instructs a Christian to not judge within a certain context. This passage discusses things that are considered clean or unclean. In the ceremonial law, there were certain foods and practices that were considered “unclean” which from which all Jews had to abstain. Since Christ made the ceremonial law obsolete, believers no longer were identified by this practice. This was hard for many devout Jews who followed Christ to accept (and even harder for the ones who didn’t follow Christ). Opinions flew about the early church about whether so-and-so was eating properly or other such customs. So Paul, in Romans 14, is making the case that adherence to the ceremonial law was no longer a proper standard by which to judge someone. Instead, as Jesus suggested in Matthew 7, one’s fruit is a valid (if not absolute) standard by which one can judge.

Here is another commonly misused Scripture. It is fashionable to claim that the Bible prohibits any form of judgement. In Matthew 7:1-3, Jesus tells us not to judge by any standard we are not willing to hold ourselves to. This is different than claiming this is no standard that can judge anyone. This is illustrated by the fact that Jesus continues to discuss how one can differentiate between a believer and an unbeliever. A believer is one that asks and the door is opened (Mt 7:7-8). A believer is one who travels through the narrow gate (Mt 7:13-14). Most explicitly, Jesus said that one can judge a false prophet from a true one by his fruit. While we have an ability to form provisional judgements, only God judges the heart (1 Kg 8:39, 2 Sam. 16:7). Therefore, Christians are empowered to exercise a type of judgement based on whether or not their fruit reflects that of Christ (the fruit of the Spirit is a useful summary).

So, according to Paul in this passage, we should not construct obstacles for our fellow Christian that Scripture does not explicitly warrant. Paul, in 1 Corinthians, warns “no to go beyond what is written.” What God has permitted, no man can prohibit. However, in 1 Corinthians 6:12, Paul states, “‘Everything is permissible for me’ you say, but not everything is beneficial; Everything is permissible but I will not be mastered by anything” In other words, while things in themselves is permissible, it will not produce the proper fruit in everyone. When I hear these words I think of things like alcohol, specific types of music or movies, and the pursuit of wealth as examples. According to Paul in Romans 14, we do not have the right to pass judgement simply because someone is engaged in such acts, but we can speak up if we see evidence that it is not beneficial or if someone is being mastered by something.