

Three Key One Another Commands

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[0 : 00] Well, this past week was our annual week of corporate consecration. For the past about 25 years as a church, we have taken a week in January, to the past week, and he has been faithful over the years to meet us, and he has done that once again this year. I'm grateful to those who participated this week, in particular those who were able to come out and did come out to the nightly gatherings where we sang and where we prayed together. I'm also grateful for those who were not able to come out, but nonetheless participated in a time of corporate consecration, though not gathering on a nightly basis. And in particular, I'm grateful for the persons on the worship team in the sound room who were out night by night, and they served us, and they served us well. But this morning,

I do have a concern. And my concern is not a new concern. It's a concern that I've had over the years as we would go through corporate consecration and even other corporate activities that we do as a church. And the concern is that there are some who consider themselves to be a part of the church.

And even though at times, like last week, our church would be entering into corporate activities, they do not participate, even though they are able to. And so for last week, as we went through corporate consecration for many, and perhaps I should not say many, I should say some, it was business as usual.

So we announced it weeks in advance. For some, there was no interest, there was no plan, there was no desire to participate to any degree. There was no plan to fast even a meal or a modified fast if they were able to do that because it was not mandatory that we do that. No plan to pray more, no plan to read God's word more, no plan to run out of God by putting away some optional activities that we could perhaps put away so that we may together seek God's face as a church as we embark upon a new year.

I have a concern for those who would be a part of this local church but don't identify themselves in such a way that they participate in the corporate life of the church.

[3 : 30] And this word corporate means body. It speaks in our case to a group of people who are joined together like a human body and they are experiencing life together. They are experiencing life together in a particular setting and in a particular context.

And so in corporate consecration, it is something that we seek to do together to whatever degree that we're able to do that. And I am wise enough and aware enough that our lives are different. We are in different seasons of life.

Our circumstances are different. I'm aware that some were sick this week, quite a number sick. But the concern is that when we do not participate in the corporate life of the church and yet say I'm a part of the church.

And brothers and sisters, that's an inconsistency. It's an inconsistency for my arm to say it's a part of my body and my arm is over there somewhere. I'm not being a part of my body.

I know that there are different reasons for the inconsistency. But I believe one of the main reasons for the inconsistency is a lack of understanding of the local church.

[5 : 06] And not understanding that the local church is a body of believers whom God has joined together, that God has joined them together. Beyond our individual choices to be a part of this local church, God has sovereignly brought us to this local church.

Just as much as He has sovereignly put you in the family that you're in and given you the parents that you have and just as sovereignly as He has you in the job that you're in even though you may have applied and gotten that job, God has sovereignly brought you to this local church in the midst of all the circumstances that have brought you here.

and He's joined us together as a local church. But when we don't have an understanding of the local church, what happens is we end up professing to belong to it and yet we believe it's perfectly fine to live very much the way the world lives with an attitude of individualism, an attitude of independence, an attitude of I will do my own thing and I don't consider the impact of that on those to whom I profess to belong.

Brothers and sisters, individualism is a foreign attitude in the church as seen in Scripture. As a matter of fact, it is such a foreign attitude to what we see in Scripture that some who profess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and do not share in the corporate life of the church may not be believers. I'm not saying they're not believers, but I'm saying they may not be believers. If they're able to say I belong to Christ, but in reality I don't necessarily belong to His body, that is a foreign mindset to Scripture and such people don't give evidence that they belong to Christ and there's a good possibility that they may be gravely deceived and in fact may not belong to Christ.

[7 : 35] I don't want us to be deceived. I don't want us to be deceived as a local church that that kind of mindset is biblical and it is normal.

That kind of mindset is unbiblical. That kind of mindset is subnormal. It's not what we see in Scripture. And so this morning I want to make a case for the local church.

I want to talk to us about the local church as a place where God places individual believers joins them together as members of one another makes them a spiritual family where He is their Father and they are brothers and sisters in Christ.

And the truth is that God does not just call us together and say you're a big family you're brothers and sisters and sends us on our way. He doesn't do that. He tells us how we're to live together. He gives us house rules as it were.

And in Scripture one of the ways that we see how God has called us to live together in the local church is in what we call the one another Scriptures.

[8 : 49] When you look at the New Testament there are 59 one another Scriptures. and there are Scriptures that can only be obeyed and lived out in the life of the local church.

They can't be obeyed or lived out somewhere on a corner somewhere detached. They can only be lived out in the life of the local church and those who take these Scriptures seriously.

And brothers and sisters many of them indeed most of them are commands. they're not optional.

They are commands. And so people who are in the church with individualistic attitudes cannot obey and experience the one another Scriptures.

Just this morning we reviewed a Scripture that we've been memorizing for the past three months.

John 15 12 through 14. This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you.

Greater love has no one than this that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. That's a command brothers and sisters.

[10 : 10] Not a verse that we just kind of read and populate our minds with. That is a command from God and it is one of those one another Scriptures He says I command you to love one another.

We can't do that if we're all individuals in silos and not interconnected and not having the context in which we can actually live this out.

one another commands. And so this morning the Scripture passage that we come to is one that has three of these one another commands.

It's a very unique passage because it is the only section in the New Testament where you see three one another commands strung together in consecutive verses.

you can find somewhere you'll see two of them there's one that's similar but they're not all commands they use the word one another but they're not all commands.

[11 : 13] This is the only one in all of the New Testament and indeed all of Scripture where you have three one another commands connected together.

It's a very unique occurrence in Scripture. And when we think of the fact that Scripture is inspired of God that's not accidental.

We don't have a haphazard Bible these are here by divine design and divine intent. And this morning I want us to consider these three one another commands from 1 Peter chapter 4 verses 7 through 11 so if you have not turned there please turn there and let us read and hear God's word together this morning.

1 Peter chapter 4 beginning in verse 7 The end of all things is at hand therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers above all keep loving one another earnestly since

love covers a multitude of sins show hospitality to one another without grumbling as each has received a gift use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace whoever speaks is as one who speaks oracles of God whoever serves as one who serves by the strength that God supplies in order that in everything God may be glorified through

Jesus Christ to him belong glory and dominion forever and ever amen would you pray with me father would you in this moment speak to our hearts from your word convict us where we need to be convicted encourage us where we need to be encouraged cause us to grow where we need to grow Lord and most of all may you be glorified in the preaching and in the heeding of your word we pray in Jesus name amen letter first Peter was written by the apostle Peter and he wrote this letter from Rome and in this letter in chapter 5 verse 13 he symbolically calls Rome

[14 : 06] Babylon at the time that Peter was writing the ruthless Roman emperor Nero was ruling Nero was very hostile to Christians to be a Christian in the time of Nero's emperorship was almost certain death some historical accounts of the early church tell us that Peter himself would soon be put to death at the hands of Nero although the recipients of this letter were living far away from Rome they were living in an area that is now modern day Turkey they were part of the Roman empire just like Peter was and they faced like him persecution and pressure to conform to the world around them even as they sought to be faithful to

Christ Christ and Peter is aware of them he is aware of these scattered saints living in a hostile world and he is aware that they can forget easily forget important truths that are critical for us to remember as we seek to be faithful to God and so from the very outside of his letter what he does is he calls those to whom he writes elect exiles and by doing so he was reminding them that they belong to God by calling them elect and that this world is not their home by calling them exiles and what Peter said of them is true of all of us this morning who belong to Jesus Christ we are elect exiles we belong to God and this world is not our home and those two truths should cause us to live differently in this world we belong to God this world is not our home and brothers and sisters life is binary life is one way or the other life is it's not this big multiple choice that we tend to think about life is you belong to God and if you don't belong to God you belong to the kingdom of darkness and the one who rules over it and this world is your home or this world is not your home and you are passing through and so in this world there are these two communities that are living in contrast and they're living in tension and what

Peter is doing in this letter and indeed what he does in these five verses that we're considering this morning is he's calling God's people to live differently he's calling God's people to live in a way that is in dire contrast and drastic contrast to the world and one of the ways that we live differently from the world is how we treat one another how we treat one another as brothers and sisters how we relate to one another in this individualistic me centered world and so what we see Peter saying to God's people in these five verses before us is this as God's elect exiles demonstrate mutual love mutual hospitality and mutual service and the unspoken part of that is that in this world mutual love is not practiced naturally and mutual hospitality is not given naturally and mutual service does not happen naturally and so he's calling us to exhibit that to one another in the house of

God in drastic contrast to the world around us when we think of this word mutual it speaks about something that is experienced or done between two or more persons towards one another it's mutual it's not one way it's mutual and the mutual love and the mutual hospitality and the mutual service that we are called to are captured in three one another commands in these five verses so let's consider the first one mutual love the call to demonstrate mutual love is seen in this first one another command that we find in verse eight look at it again for me above all keep loving one another earnestly since love covers a multitude of sins I think we can rightly call this the mother of all the one another verses this is the first one another command the command to love one another is the mother of all the other one another commands it is the command that is mentioned most among the one another there are 59 of them and 15 of them say we are to love one another 15 times we read this and all the others in terms of their repetition they fall far below none of them will be more than five all the others in terms of repetition and this command to love one another is the basis for the rest of the one another commands because if we do not love one another brothers and sisters we will not obey the other one another commands it is this command that is the fountainhead for all the other one another commands indeed if we love one another we will do all the other one another commands all the other one another commands in a sense you can call them illustrations they are illustrations of what it means to love one another and so if we don't get this one

right we won't get the others right it's kind of like button up a shirt when you are buttoning your shirt you know that if you don't get the first button in the first button hole and you get all the other buttons in all the other button holes the shirt still isn't buttoned up right because that first button must be in the first button hole if we will have a chance of getting the shirt buttoned up right this command to love one another is the first button that must go in the first button hole if we do not truly love one another earnestly we will not faithfully fulfill the other one another commands now how do we know that we are committed to loving one another earnestly how do we know that what Peter tells us he says love one another earnestly since love covers a multitude of sins the implication is that even as we are

God's people living together we do and we will sin against one another and Peter says that our love is to act as a blanket and to cover a multitude of sins that can disrupt Christian community and fellowship and that could derail our mission together as a local church this is not speaking about corruptly covering up sin it's not speaking about that at all the Bible makes it very clear that sin is to be exposed doesn't mean that we ignore sin we do have to confront one another in our sins but earnest love is forgiving those sins and covering them it's the kind of love that doesn't hold wrongs it covers a multitude of sins all kinds of sins love is able to do that earnest love from the heart is able to do that can I tell you that there is no sin that earnest love cannot cover there is no sin that you or I can commit against one another that earnest love cannot truly cover and so

[23 : 34] Peter says to us he says you are to love one another earnestly since love covers a multitude of sin we are not called to forgive once or twice or three times we are called to forgive a multitude of times lone ranger Christians those who profess to know Christ but are not connected to a local expression of his body living in community with those individuals cannot experience what it means to love one another they cannot experience what it means to earnestly love one another from the heart because they're not in a context and in a setting where they can where it is possible that they would even offend someone sin against them or be sinned against to be able to be the recipient of earnest love or to be the giver of earnest love and so I want us to think about this this morning think about the mother of all the one another's in the context of this local church and how do you view it how do you love your brothers and sisters in this local church do you love them earnestly from the heart so much that maybe your experience is that you have forgiven that your love has covered sin and indeed a multitude of sin and see I want to hear this this morning this is not to Christians everywhere in truth right next door we have a church

New Lively Baptist church this is not applicable for us towards them we don't know their faces we don't know their circumstances we don't relate to them this is not connected to them it's connected in our setting where we are called to love one another earnestly from the heart we're called to do towards others they're called to do towards us and that is because we live in community in this local church and brothers and sisters I think we all know this the church is not exempt from sin no more than your workplace no more than your home no more than the community we are saints but we are also sinners we sin sometimes those sins are intentional sometimes those sins are unintentional but earnest love will cover a multitude of sin and we are commanded to do this we are commanded before a sinful watching world where the only love is self love as God's elect exiles in this world we are to demonstrate what it means and what it looks like to love one another earnestly from the heart that's the first key one another command in this passage the second is in verse 9 it's a call to demonstrate mutual hospitality look at how Peter says it in verse 9 show hospitality to one another without grumbling it's a twin command it's a command to show hospitality but it's also a command not to grumble so it's not enough to show hospitality to be able to obey this command we must do it without grumbling hospitality speaks about receiving and welcoming others into our hearts and lives and since we spend the most significant parts of our life in our homes both in time and in quality the highest expression of hospitality is when we invite others into our own living space into our lives over a meal or perhaps to stay with us for some period of time and when we consider that this command to show hospitality to one another is also accompanied by the command not to grumble

I think it helps us to see in general that in extending hospitality it doesn't come naturally it doesn't come easy sometimes it entails! It entails some sacrifice it entails adjustments in different ways perhaps if you have someone over for a meal you may spend more time with the meal eating it than you would if you were by yourself and that means that other things that you would have been doing they get pushed to the side and those of us who do extend hospitality would know yes it does entail

some adjustment it does entail some sacrifice and it entails thinking about the time together differently than when we are doing it by ourselves because it causes us to think about others and not just ourselves our focus changes from just ourselves and it turns to other people Peter's original audience that heard these verses didn't have church buildings like we do and so like a morning like this morning where we can all come to a neutral space that's been prepared for us and we can sit without any effort for them to meet someone had to receive them in their home and we don't have a whole lot of data about what that looked like and we understand that typically it was at someone's house and we see references in the book of Acts for example of meetings in a particular home and logically if a home was larger that would probably be an ongoing meeting place but it could very well be that maybe they had to do rotations and so they're to show hospitality in a way that is a greater burden than it is for us when we gather they didn't have hotels or inns that were safe that people could go to and so many times they would have been called upon to show hospitality bringing someone into their home to stay with them and so we can see how Peter would add without grumbling to this particular command but we are called to it and more than called to it we are commanded to do it in Christian community and when we do it brothers and sisters it is on display for watching world see listen if we did this naturally we wouldn't have to be commanded!

[31 : 36] to do it if this was something that we just did like breathing we would not have to be commanded to do it and we certainly would not have to be told don't grumble when you do it and might I say something else this is a true mark of biblical Christianity and sadly it is the disappearing mark now on this one another command I thought about how I should get us to think about this and sometimes when I want us to try to apply scriptures I would ask questions like how are we doing on this one I have a pretty good idea how we are doing I thought about this

I reflected upon it as I reflected upon it I would say that my assessment is over the last seven years we have really fallen as a church in this area I would say that from 1990 when this church started one of the strengths of this church has been biblical hospitality but we have fallen it doesn't mean that it doesn't happen it does happen and there are some in the church who still do this well I think of Clarence and Demetria they model biblical hospitality well and they do it well even though they have a young family they lead busy lives they model biblical hospitality in an ongoing way and I will be honest with you and say I was not looking for anything but I really sensed as I pondered this the Lord helped me to see what I think was the starting point of our regress in this area of biblical hospitality as I reflected on this somebody came to mind it's a person that many of us know a single mother who's a part of this congregation for approximately 13 years and she passed away at the end of 2013 and I'm referring to Calva

Poitier many of you know her Calva modeled biblical hospitality many of us in this room have frequented her home and been recipients of her generous hospitality I recall those years when it would be rare on a Sunday where there was not a meal happening at somebody's home whether it was Keva's home or our home or Lyndon and Shelley's home or Adobit and Karen's home when they were part of the church or Clarence and Demetria's home more later we regularly got together we regularly shared fellowship with one another and I think as

Keva I remember that last year she was so sick and off in the hospital and not up to things just kind of fell to the side I remember vividly Keva passed I think the day before two days before the end of the year and we were scheduled to have our social time after the New Year's Eve gathering and I think some of you remember that no one had an appetite for it nobody we just we skipped it and that was unusual we just didn't want to do anything we did nothing we ended the meeting and we went home Keva I believe served a unique role in this church as someone who not only like the rest of us or like all believers are commanded to show hospitality I think she had a gift of hospitality and she fertilized that gift in this church in the years that she was a part of this church but we have fallen and it's not about we need somebody else with the gift of hospitality no because we are called to this we are called to show hospitality to one another but as

[37 : 11] I think of what our journey has been and where our regresses started my assessment would be that it started and continued about seven years we need to show hospitality to one another we have persons in this church who are relatively new to the church been here for months some some longer and we're not extending ourselves and I think brothers and sisters we should know this and I believe that you would agree with me when new persons come among us the burden is on us to go to them to reach out to them to invite them in to include!

them in to show hospitality to them that's what Christ calls us to he commands that we do that and when we do that we are on display for watching world and they see something that is lacking in the world out there!

And this is not about being nice it is nice to include people it is nice to welcome people who are new in our midst this is a command this is a command and it is a command that comes to every single one of us you know when we think about these one another commands without polling you or polling any group of Christians I can tell you that we take more seriously the command to love one another we would be concerned if maybe we are not loving one another in some way more than show hospitality to one another we kind of just brush that to the side okay

I'm not that's not my personality or whatever the case may be but I don't think that we take this command as a serious command as we do the command to love one another earnestly covers a multitude of sin but I say to us this morning we must take it seriously this is God's word and this command is as bearing upon us and binding upon us as the other command to flee sexual immorality to not lie to one another to love one another from our hearts and

I encourage us to embrace it it's not optional and no one is exempt you know sometimes the ideal congregation is a congregation with all kinds of people rich poor different races different nationalities male female old young it's that kind of grouping those are the best expressions of what the church looks like some who are poor some who are in between some who are rich and do you know that the poor are not exempt from extending hospitality ensuring hospitality they're not hospitality will look different for different people but all of us are called to show hospitality to one another and

[41 : 37] I want to say to us this morning and I know we're at different places but I want you to think about this in your own life your own circumstances your own situation and ask yourself am I showing hospitality as I'm commanded to do I'll tell you something some of us you can come here for months see a person maybe even greet them during the greeting time you will never know them as much as you can over one meal one meal an hour two hours I believe the reason the Lord calls us to show hospitality to one another he knows it is the glue of community it is that which knits us together in a very practical and real way that's the way we learn about needs in one another's lives that's the way we get to serve one another in particular ways because we know them they're not just a distant face or someone we see at church every week and we say hi and bye there's someone we know we know the struggles in the family because maybe they felt comfortable to share them we know the struggles at work because they were comfortable to share it we know the health concern because they were comfortable to share it over a meal and maybe sharing it at church just was not practical brothers and sisters let us extend biblical hospitality to one another and let us not say

I love my brothers and sisters earnestly from my heart and that we're not extending hospitality to one another it's a contradiction because to show hospitality flows out of to love one another I pray after us is that biblical hospitality will thrive once again in this congregation and not because it depends on someone with a gift but because it comes to repentance obedience and it comes through obedience and that we would obey not the command only to show hospitality but to do it without grumbling to do it with joy the third key when another command that we find in this passage is in verse 10 it's a call to demonstrate mutual service look at verse 10

Peter writes as each has received a gift use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace the call is for us to serve one another and it's based on the fact that we have all received the gift there's no question about this there's no asking about this that we know what that gift is or not is irrelevant the starting point is to know God has given every member of his family at least their gift and the gift not for themselves a gift to be stewarded for the body for the people who they're connected to so you know what it is to actually receive a gift and God gives the gift to every one of us he doesn't give us the gift because we're connected in community he gives us the gift because we're connected to him and then he puts us or calls us to community so when God gives me a gift as a steward for the community and I am by myself over here disconnected to the community you know what that is that's actually a breach of stewardship it's like someone entrusting something to you that you're supposed to give to somebody else and you don't give it to them the gifts that we have are not for us they're not for us they're to be stewarded for the body and Peter helps us to see it's varied it's all over the place there are many different gifts that God gives the word that Peter uses for gift is the same word that Paul uses for gift in 1 Corinthians 12 when he

talks about the gifts of the spirit Peter doesn't give us a long list like Paul does but he refers to God's varied gifts and so no doubt they would have included the list that Paul identified and more would certainly include the gift in the list in Romans 12 as well and I heard someone some years ago just talking about this and he was actually saying and there's no indication that necessarily the gifts that they listed were the exhaustive list of gifts God is sovereign and free and able to bring gifts in different settings and at different times in the life of his people over time but this idea of stewardship means if we're going to be accountable for this before God whatever gifts that he has given to us so if we take the gifts that God has given to us and we use them for ourselves that's a breach!

[47 : 46] for ourselves or for anybody else and so in verse 11 Peter talks about whoever speaks and whoever serves and notice I want you to see this because it's very important to see how he is saying this and what he's actually saying in verse 10 he says as each has received the gift use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's very grace then he says whoever speaks as one who speaks oracles of God whoever serves as one who serves by the strength that God supplies when you think of the gifts the ones that we see in scripture for example every single one of them can be put in one of two categories they're speaking gifts or they're serving gifts and what Peter is doing is Peter is capturing all of these gifts and he is saying that God has given these gifts you're to serve one another with these gifts and he says if it is a speaking gift then you need to recognize that you are to speak as one who's carrying the words of God not the inspired words of

God like this is but one who is mindful you know what if I'm going to speak on God's behalf I want to give God's word I don't want to give my own word I don't want to give my own ideas and then as those who serve whatever gift that God has given to us that we want to serve in such a way that we help people to recognize the gift is from God and the strength to carry out this gift is from God he supplies the strength to do whatever service we offer whatever gift we have and we are serving in that gift God not only gives us the gift but he gives us the service the person who speaks God gives them the speaking gift and then he gives them what to say they say that in his name and so we're serving one another in this way every single one of us called to do it again think about this we can't do this at a distance we can only do this when we are connected together in community and he says the reason that is designed this way is in order that in everything

God may be glorified through Jesus Christ to whom be glory and dominion forever we serve one another with our gifts ultimately pointing back to the giver of those gifts not pointing to ourselves but seeking to bring glory to God now I wanted to ask you how do you think about your spiritual gifts how do you think about the gifts of other people are you using your gifts to serve the body to serve one another are you receiving from others when they deploy their gifts!

And we can see how love is so important to govern this as well because one of the things that can happen for us is we can become competitive we can become desirous of a gift that we don't have and diminish our own gifts and this is why we need the mother of all the one another to love one another earnestly from the heart and we trust God in the sovereignty and in his distribution of his gifts and we receive and we give love they're all expressions of love now why should we live this way Peter gives us two reasons the first reason he gives us is in verse seven he tells us the end of all things is at hand therefore be self controlled and sober minded for the sake of your prayers the motivation for us to live this way is the

Lord's soon return and that we want to be found obeying him we want to be found living out his commands to one another we want to be found in this community doing what the Lord has told us to do you know these words are more real to us than they were when Peter wrote them to his original audience he told them that the day was at hand all things the end of all things was at hand 2000 years ago this is more true today than it ever was and so we should be earnestly loving one another from the heart we should be showing hospitality to one another we should be serving one another with our gifts mindful of the Lord's return mindful that it is closer today than when Peter wrote these words and it is an expression of our sober mindedness and our being self controlled and being prayerful when we do this love one another show hospitality to one another and serve one another and the second reason that we should do this is in the latter part of verse 11 when the redeemed people of God living mindful of Christ return love one another and show hospitality to one another and serve one another with the gifts that

[54 : 07] God has given to them with the strength that God supplies God is glorified but Peter doesn't stop there Peter doesn't say that God is glorified in a vacuum he says God is glorified

through Jesus Christ and the reason that God is glorified through Jesus Christ is it is the transformation of Jesus Christ in our lives by his atoning sacrifice that makes this possible brothers and sisters only those whose hearts and lives have been touched by the Lord Jesus Christ can truly do this can truly love from the heart can truly serve one another can truly extend hospitality to one another without grumbling God has to transform our hearts a divine work has to be done in us and when that happens in this world is the contrast to the world and it brings glory to God because he sees the reward of his son sacrifice we live like this we vindicate in a visible way the savior coming into this world and living his life on this earth and going to the cross for us that we may be saved and we may be redeemed and we may be his people in a dark and a perverse and crooked generation and God is glorified in that he is glorified in that and so Peter rightly concludes by saying to him belong glory and dominion forever and ever and that's what our lives are to be and God gets that glory when we do this toward one another in the local church loving one another showing hospitality to one another and serving one another and may this increase brothers and sisters in our midst and may we take these one another scriptures seriously and the starting point for taking them seriously is to humbly acknowledge I cannot do it in isolation from the body I can only do it when I am actively and faithfully participating with my brothers and sisters in the community that God has joined me to and when we do that the world watches and God is glorified let's pray father thank you for your word help us this morning in light of the fact that the end of all things is at hand and Christ is soon to return help us to be self-controlled help us to be sober-minded for the sake of our prayers and help us to earnestly love one another help us to show hospitality to one another without grumbling and help us to serve one another for your glory we pray amen