



# Light from the Word

## Exhorting One Another to Love and Good Works

**Editor's Note:** The Bible uses the term “one another” multiple times and it is clear God is very interested in our relationships. Jesus taught that the second greatest commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves. In 2018, we will look at several of the “one anothers” in the Bible.

Theme verse: *“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”*

Reflecting on the cumulative effect of “*so much the more as ye see the day approaching*,” such a continual increase over nearly 2000 years should give us pause to consider whether we are sufficiently exhorting and provoking one another in love today. In a previous article, we learned that to “consider one another” is to learn to know and understand one another. One purpose of this deeper awareness of one another is to be better able to nudge one another to love and good works by knowing the heart of our brother.

Why should we provoke one another to love and good works? The simple answer is because God is love and desires His children to love. And because He has created us for the purpose of doing good to others. These things are the very reason for our existence and the fruit of regeneration. However, they easily take a back seat to our human nature if we neglect to prioritize the spirit over the flesh. With gentle encouragement from our brothers and sisters, we are called to set our affections on things that are above.

This may look quite different to believers in various situations. Let's consider the different ways in which our station in life may impact the kind of exhortation we need and our ability to see the need of our brother.

A brother who lacks material wealth may face temptations that a brother with sufficiency does not face. He may feel the need to work rather than assemble with other believers. He may resent his wealthier brothers and struggle to love them. Even if he does not resent his wealthier brethren, he may be embarrassed by his poverty and avoid fellowship with them. Although he probably does not struggle very much with the temptation to spend idle time in costly entertainments, material poverty can bring discouragement so strong that one's faith in the Lord is diminished.

A brother who lives in a land that persecutes believers may appear to have similar challenges. However, they may be quite different. A persecuted brother may find it risky to assemble with other believers—not knowing if the authorities will raid the meeting. He may be tempted to avoid calling any attention to himself whatsoever and thereby miss opportunities to show love to others. This might all be made more difficult by his love for his family and desire to shelter them from persecution. It may be very hard to love his enemies because of their open hatred for believers. Such challenges can leave a believer wondering “Where is God?”—and faith can wither if one is not encouraged by others.

A new believer just learning the Word may neglect assembling with the saints purely from a lack of awareness. She may not understand the profound calling to love and good works. She may absorb false doctrines that appears to be good Christian teaching that she found online or in a book. Perhaps through hurtful experiences in the past she believes that her relationship is with Christ and not with the church and thus feels no need for fellowship. Actively nurturing new believers and encouraging them is a wonderful way to fulfill our calling to feed Christ's lambs and prevent a slow disconnect from fellowship.

# Continued Articles

## Exhorting One Another ...

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A mature believer who has been prosperous in the things of this life may face completely different obstacles to love, good works, and fellowship. We read that the cares and riches of this life can spring up and render such a one unfruitful. The sense of success may inspire a false sense of importance and one can believe that he does not need other believers. The ability to afford costly entertainments brings temptations that poorer brethren never face because they don't have that option. The duties of a successful job may seem more important than opportunities to serve others and love wanes as self-centeredness grows. Such carnal success can diminish one's perceived need for the Lord causing faith to lose out to self-confidence.

To avoid such disastrous results, we are firmly taught to *"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be*

*hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."* He articulates clearly why we need this frequent mutual encouragement, reminding us that we are made partakers of Christ if we continue in faith until the end.

Can exhorting one another and provoking one another to love and good works really keep us from being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin and falling slowly into the grip of unbelief? Yes! Similar to the way that the foolishness of preaching is God's way to share the good news of salvation, the simplicity of fellowship in the Spirit perpetuates saving faith in those who believe. In neither case should we be haranguing others, but rather gently sharing the encouragement and truth found in the Word of God. To exhort is to gently implore. It is a nudge, not a shove—an invitation, not a demand.

Whatever our station in life, we have need of each other—and others need us. Your gentle encouragement is needed in the church. Your presence is needed in the church. Your spirit will be

strengthened and enlivened when you strengthen and encourage others. Love and good works foster more love and subsequent good works. Carried out in the love of Jesus, those who are born again can exhort one another to grow in grace and faith until the end. And so much the more as we see the day approaching.

*"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."*

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Hebrews 10:24-25
- <sup>2</sup> 1 John 4:16
- <sup>3</sup> 1 John 4:21
- <sup>4</sup> Ephesians 2:10
- <sup>5</sup> Colossians 3:2
- <sup>6</sup> John 21:15
- <sup>7</sup> Mark 4:19, Luke 8:14
- <sup>8</sup> Hebrews 3:12-14
- <sup>9</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:21
- <sup>10</sup> 2 Timothy 4:2-4