

## Weekly Devotions: LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER 19

### Pursue UNITY; Avoid DISSENSION

Churches have split over matters like how to worship and what version of the bible should be used. Members also quarrel over debatable issues like whether it is okay for Christians to drink wine or to have a vase with a dragon motif. There is nothing wrong with having different opinions & points of view but we must recognize the potential harm our strong positions can bring to the community. When we insist that things be done our way, this will lead to tension & conflict in the church. Our opinions & preferences may cause dissension and become walls that divide.

John Wesley, in his book *Christian Perfection*, said that we should guard against schism and a dividing spirit. He said; "Do not run down anyone. Do not also exalt anyone above the rest lest you hurt both him and the cause of God... Just because someone does not agree with everything you say does not mean that he / she is sinning. Nor is this or that opinion essential to the work of God. Be patient with those who disagree with you. Do not condemn those who do not see things just as you do, or who think it is their duty to contradict you."

**Pursue unity. Resist anything that leads to dissension. Stand firm only on God's word & for God's Name.**

### Read Romans 14: 1-23

The Roman Christians were arguing over issues like eating, whether one should eat anything or to avoid meat (2); drinking of wine (21) and observing certain festive days (5-6). Paul exhorted them not to let these matters divide the Church and they should not judge nor look down on those who differ. They should guard against pride, prejudice and being judgmental of those whose views were different.

The guiding principles for our actions should be that what we do glorify God (6) and done out of love for one another. If our action were to stumble anyone then we should refrain from doing it (15). Paul said God is the Judge and we will have to account to Him for our actions (4, 10-12).

#### *Questions to ponder*

1. How should we respond to those who differ from us in opinions & practices (1, 3, 13, 15, 19 & 21)? Which of these exhortations do you struggle with and which would you try to live out?
2. When the bible is not clear about an issue how should we decide whether it is right or wrong? Is there something you will avoid doing because it may stumble fellow believers?

Prepared by Rosalind Chen