

Loving Your Inner Circle

Applications of the 65 "Togethers" of Scripture
to the Christian's inner circle of Christian friends and family.

(what God has commanded His people to do for and with one another)

[1] Place God at the highest place within your closest circle of Christian friends and family. In these closest of relationships, do your best to keep behaviors honoring to God's praise and glory. Be very aware that you are always in His sovereign presence. Bow down your lives together before Him. (Together #1: Worship God Together)

[2] Let God decide how you interact together and what you do together. Let God have His way. (Together #2: Submit to God Together)

[3] Keep in mind what Jesus Christ might be doing in the lives of each of these closest loved ones. Together you are being led by Jesus, sculpted into what He wants each of you to be. And you each are a part of the process in the others. (Together #3: Together Be Led by Jesus Christ)

[4] Together listen to what God has to say to you through Bible study. Talk together with Him in prayer. Show your love for Him through obedience when you are together. In this way you all will be in constant communication with God, a main reason for your relationship. (Together #4: Communicate With God Together)

[5] Whenever together, serve God as a team. Be aware of opportunities to participate in what God is doing around you in the world. These are great privileges. (Together #5: Serve God Together)

[6] Deny yourselves often for those in your closest inner circle of family and friends – and for God's sake. "Agape" love is self-denial for the good of others. Faith, hope and love are all eternal – and the greatest of these is love. (Together #6: Love One Another)

[7] Keep in mind what is happening in the lives of your closest Christian friends and family. Those in your inner circle belong to you. They are a part of your life. Their hopes, dreams, opportunities and struggles are in some part also yours. (Together #7: Belong to One Another)

[8] To a reasonable extent, devote yourself to the lives of your close Christian family members and friends. Set aside time to pray for and help them. Spend precious time with them so that through your relationship with them they will not be lonely. (Together #8: Be Devoted to One Another)

[9] Accept and encourage each of your inner circle to be genuinely themselves as God created them to be. Appreciate their God-given differences and praise God for His design of them.

(Together #9: Accept One Another)

[10] Bear with one another's faults, insensitivities, and quirks. Respond with grace. God does the same with each of us – continually. In this way, be like God. (Together #10: Bear With One Another)

[11] Spontaneously forgive one another without requiring apology or request. Help those closest to you to treat you better – but after you have forgiven them. Avoid with all your strength judging others and usurping God's role. (Together #11: Forgive One Another Without Being Asked)

[12] Bend over backward to find activities and solutions that meet everyone's needs. If necessary, especially to be fair or for "higher purposes", let the other's have their way. (Together #12: Submit to One Another)

[13] Always be ready to serve your closest Christian friends and relatives. They can always use your help with something from time to time. Let them know you are ready when they need. (Together #13: Serve One Another)

[14] Identify and implement the values, desires and ways of dealing with people that, being the ways of heaven, are radically different from those of secular culture. Your relationships with your Christian friends and Christian relatives should be "heavenly" distinctive from secular culture. Jesus tells us as recorded in John 13:35 that the very different love of the kingdom is the sign to the world of His disciples. (Together #14: Live as Citizens of Heaven, as Foreign Ambassadors)

[15] Don't let life get so busy that you have too little time for your closest friends and family members. Being together is absolutely critical to spiritual growth in Christ. But this is not just for Bible study, prayer, and superficial social interaction. The instructions of the Bible, especially the New Testament, make it clear that there is much God expects us to do together as delineated by these 65 Togethers of Scripture. (Together #15: Meet Together Regularly)

[16] Be joined together by your relationship with Jesus, even more than by blood or friendship. With that as the primary reason for your bond, nothing should separate you. Also, it is not even necessary that you always like one another. Loving is another story. (Together #16: Live Together in Unity)

[17] When you disagree, avoid arguing. Instead, take time to dialogue until you both fully understand the other person's viewpoint. Bring in other Christian friends and Christian relatives to help you avoid quarreling. Also, apply other applicable Togethers to keep peace. (Together #17: Live Together in Peace)

[18] Never talk or act like you are better than your friends and relatives. In humility consider the others a bit more important than yourself. Remember that even if you are more obedient, next to God's holiness you only have slight advantage. And without humility, that edge suddenly disappears. (Together #18: Be Humble With One Another)

[19] Take the challenge of finding out how you and your closest Christian friends and relatives in various configurations form teams to work harmoniously together to do things for the Lord. Discuss each of your distinctive contributions to the work of God taken on by your “team”. Think of yourselves as being an athletic team or a local band trying to find out what sport in which to compete or what kind of music to play. (Together #19: Live Together in Harmony)

[20] Give lots of undeserved kindnesses to your closest friends and relatives. Progress toward unconditional love for each of them. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a clear picture of how you receive kindness from God because of Jesus Christ’s death for you. Don’t even think of being owed back. Perhaps the Golden Rule will be followed; perhaps it will not and you will not receive reciprocal kindness. Nevertheless, your treasure awaits you in heaven. (Together #20: Show Mercy and Be Compassionate With One Another)

[21] Periodically check to see that those in your inner circle have enough food, adequate clothing for the weather and employment requirements, as well as sufficient shelter, including heat in winter. At some time in the lives of those in your Christian inner circle, these things might be needed. But, some of your close friends and relatives might be unnecessarily ashamed to tell you or ask for help. So, be very observant. And let them help you when you have a need. (Together #21: Meet One Another's Needs)

[22] Open your home on a regular basis for those in your inner circle. Feed and entertain them so that they feel special. You never know how important this is to those who were left out as children or were not popular enough to be included in school. (Together #22: Be Hospitable With One Another)

[23] Treat each of your friends and relatives with equal importance and value. Of course, you will be closer to some, as Jesus was with his disciple John. But, try to never be disrespectful or withhold love, no matter how you are treated. As you do this to those who like you and those who like you less, you are ultimately doing it for God. (Together #23: Treat One Another Equally)

[24] Generously make available the possessions God has given you to those in your inner circle as they might have need. Don’t be passively willing, but as you recognize a need, actively offer to let someone use something you have that they need. The inconvenience of not having a tool or kitchen item for a few days is offset by the joy of worship that you are acting like God who shares with you everything you have. (Together #24: Share With One Another)

[25] Let God’s grace in the form of supernatural spiritual gifts flow through you for the benefit of your Christian friends and relatives. This occasional special treatment by God using you is very important for what God is doing in those of your inner circle. Enjoy being God’s outlet. What a privilege! (Together #25: Administer God's Grace to One Another)

[26] Be truthfully helpful in a depth that is not possible outside of the closest of trusted

relationships. Only close friends and relatives who have paid the high price of selfless love are likely to be listened to. Only in such relationships can questions be asked and honest answers given that are helpful but might hurt. (Together #26: Speak to One Another Truthfully and Helpfully)

[27] Place courage into your close Christian friends and relatives so that they can do what God has asked of them. So much does not get done because we lack courage to act as prompted by God and His Word. Probably the most important reason to get together as Christians, according to Hebrews 10:25, is to place courage into one another. This is not saying nice things to one another – it is actually effecting courage in one another. (Together #27: Encourage One Another)

[28] Honor the victories and accomplishments of your closest Christian friends and relatives by compliments, celebrations, rejoicing, and other means. Especially treat difficult spiritual-growth accomplishments as significant and worthy of joyous recognition. (Together #28: Honor One Another)

[29] Recommend those in your inner circle to one another as well as to those they might bless in the name of our Lord. Because you are so close in relationship, you know what each of your friends and relatives has to offer. See to it that they get many chances to serve others and shine for the glory of God. (Together #29: Commend One Another)

[30] Lovingly exhort those in your inner Christian circle to do loving things and good deeds. In some cases they are resisting, but in most cases they are waiting for someone to believe in them. This prodding may take multiple repetitions, and that is just why this command of Scripture can best be done with your closest friends and relatives. (Together #30: Spur One Another on to Love and Good Deeds)

[31] Share in the pain of those with whom you are close. It is almost unbearable for them to hurt alone. Let them know that you hurt because they are in pain. This is not a one-time verbal expression for those in your inner circle. You need to go with them the full distance from hurt all the way to recovery. (Together #31: Hurt With One Another)

[32] Offer comfort to those in your inner circle as life hurts them. Do something helpful that will ease the pain. Because you are close to the person, you have the best chance of knowing what is most soothing – whether that be a hug, cooking a meal, a drive in the country, staying the night or something else. (Together #32: Comfort One Another)

[33] Confess your sins to your inner Christian circle of friends and relatives. And, make it safe for them to do the same with you. Unconfessed sins keep on hurting and destroying life. Healing starts with confession. This absolutely requires the proven loyalty of the closest of Christian friends and relatives. (Together #33: Confess Sins to One Another)

[34] Help pay the consequences of sins and help correct mistakes of your closest Christian friends and relatives. Often the aftermath is just too much for them to deal with alone. This is a

very great privilege in that you will worship God by reflecting Jesus' great payment of the sin's penalty. (Together #34: Carry One Another's Burdens)

[35] Doubt comes from time to time. As necessary, quickly do whatever you can to restore your inner circle in the faith. Because of your close relationship, you can often see doubt and lack of trust coming and can act soon to avert deterioration of faith. (Together #35: Restore One Another in the Faith)

[36] Investigate the largely unexplored kingdom of heaven with your inner circle of Christian friends. Together find the excitement of discovery about the nature of God's kingdom and the behaviors of its citizens. Together renounce the ways of your culture that conflict with your heavenly society. (Together #36: Together Seek the Kingdom Together)

[37] Strive for holiness when you are together. Your fellowship can be perfect even while individuals are sinful and imperfect. Present to God the righteousness possible when two or three are together with Jesus Christ and function harmoniously. Your meetings are where he can use his different disciples to create perfect and holy "relationship moments" for the praise and glory of God. (Together #37: Pursue Holiness and Perfection Together)

[38] Carefully analyze the fine distinctions of the faith of each of those in your inner circle. It is likely that no one else is close enough or together often enough in relationship to do this. Together, determine to grow spiritually when the Holy Spirit helps you find where faith can develop further. (Together #38: Examine One Another's Faith)

[39] Regularly discuss various truths from the Bible and share with each other your understanding in order to teach one another. Don't rest in superficial understanding of God's written Word to you. Grow together in deeper and deeper understanding of Scripture. (Together #39: Teach One Another)

[40] Give counsel to those in your inner circle as life challenges them – when and how the Holy Spirit directs. As much as possible, base that counsel on God's point of view. Consider what are "the ways of the world" and how your Christian friend or relative might be receiving and attracted to such counsel. (Together #40: Counsel One Another)

[41] Live out your strongest faith visibly in front of your closest friends and relatives because your relationship enables great influence. Your inner Christian circle often sees the real you, even if just subconsciously. Because your relationships are close, you have tremendous leverage on their thinking and behavior. (Together #41: Disciple One Another)

[42] Do what you can to help those in your inner circle be obedient to their parts in the work of God. You will often see the critical part each of your closest Christian friends and relatives have to play in your discussions and activities, as well as in their other involvements. There is so much God wants to do through his people. Don't let those in your inner circle miss the eternal rewards that

come with obedience to their heavenly responsibilities. (Together #42: See That Each One Does His or Her Part)

[43] Be there with your closest people when God's correction and discipline comes, as surely it will from time to time. God's refinement of his people is likened to fire. Like Daniel's 3 friends, stand in the furnace together and see to completion the work of God in each of you. (Together #43: Face Discipline and Judgment Together)

[44] Whenever together with your closest Christian friends and relatives be especially aware of the needs of those who do not believe. Together be concerned for them and let them see you work together on their behalf. Be the salt of the world when you are together. (Together #44: Be Salt Together in a Bland, Tasteless World)

[45] Help your closest friends and relatives have the wisdom of God in dealing with all of their secular situations. Help them be in the world but not of it and face difficulties with non-Christians in supernatural love and the other fruit of the Holy Spirit. (Together #45: Be Wise and Win the Respect of Outsiders)

[46] Take time in your fellowship times with close Christian friends and relatives to pray for missionary efforts. Perhaps together you can do something that will raise money for or affirm the work and lives of specific missionaries. Don't relegate this to just larger Christian gatherings. (Together #46: Uphold the Gospel Messengers in Joint Prayer)

[47] Be very aware of each person's non-believing friends and contacts. Plan a few activities where you can invite them to examine how Christians love one another heaven's way. Be careful not to tone down your Christianity so much that it is almost invisible. (Together #47: Proclaim the Gospel and Be Light to the World Together)

[48] Listen carefully and pay attention to how Satan might be trying to deceive your closest Christian friends and relatives, especially by twisting the truth. The devil's subtlety is usually only noticeable to those very close to us. When appropriate, examine Scriptural truth in relation to questionable teachings. (Together #48: Contend for the Faith Together)

[49] Understand and take into your lives the armor of God described in Scripture. Identify when any one of your closest Christian friends and relatives does not seem to be conscious of the armor available for the battles of life – or of its necessity. (Together #49: Arm Yourselves)

[50] Since you can bet your life that Satan is trying to harm those in your inner circle, keep your eyes wide open and watch each other's back side. Warn them as early as possible because it will likely get worse. And don't forget to advise against passivity, pushing each other to assertively resist evil. (Together #50: Warn and Admonish One Another)

[51] Because temptation is never to be faced alone, make absolutely certain that you join the

fight of each of your inner circle against the seductions they face. Even minor temptations are probably designed by the evil one to have disastrous hidden results. (Together #51: Battle Temptation Together)

[52] Satan will usually attack your friends when they are alone. Rush to their side and join the battle. Don't ever let your inner circle be attacked by Satan alone. Whenever Satan attacks one of your Christian friends or relatives, the devil should be facing at least two believers. Although we should usually be on the offensive against evil, we often need to be on the defensive as well. (Together #52: Stand Up to the Devil at One Another's Side)

[53] Put the thoughts and convictions of your inner circle to the test of solid Christian doctrine to make sure that the substantial foundation of their lives comes from God. Dark angels are active behind the scenes in the spiritual realm to tempt and deceive. (Together #53: Test the Spirits Together)

[54] Together with your closest friends and relatives learn the joy of being on the offense against Satan and his demons. You and your inner circle can easily find places to fight evil. Too many Christians ignore that we are to march against the gates of hell. Satan should be on the run from us! (Together #54: Together Hate Evil and Defeat It)

[55] In your interaction with those you are closest to, take whatever risks love requires without regard for your own security or how other people will think of you. Your closest relationships will occasionally require you to lay down your life, a great privilege somewhat mirroring what Jesus did for us on the cross. (Together #55: Die for One Another)

[56] You will need to occasionally go in and rescue someone in your inner circle who is actively doing the work of God. Get them out of their situation, heal them, and send them back in. Following the Lord into church and secular society is not meant to be easy or risk-free. Living obediently in the faith will result in wounds for you and your friends and relatives. (Together #56: Rescue and Restore One Another)

[57] While apart, be present with every one of your closest Christian friends and relatives by praying for them consistently. Through prayer you can walk with them wherever they go and participate in whatever they are doing. God invites you to communicate with Him on behalf of your inner circle and so take part in their long-term success and perseverance. (Together #57: Pray for One Another)

[58] Be involved in the faith of your inner circle of friends and relatives for the long-term. Even though in our mobile society you might not be around each other until death, be there for each other as if you will be. Do your part for that part of the race you are privileged to share. Remember that email and the Internet has extended the length of years you can run the race of faith with your closest of friends and relatives. (Together #58: Run the Full Race Together)

[59] As a responsibility of your close relationships, make sure that everyone of your inner circle has solid hope. Bad situations and disappointments threaten hope and suck Christians down. It is up to their Christian close friends and relatives to combat this threat. (Together #59: Preserve One Another's Hope)

[60] Whenever those in your inner circle face really hard things, step up to help them. Obedient Christian living produces hardship. So, do the trials of life. Let's not tell our friends to rely on God without encouraging them to rely on us as well, since God Himself has said in Scripture that we are part of His help. (Together #60: Face and Endure Hardship Together)

[61] Help your closest friends and relatives to take hold of the truth we know from the Bible – by putting it into practice. Don't let them settle for knowing "enough" truth and coming to a standstill. Since the Greek word for the "know" that sets us free (John 8:32) is truth practiced and proven, make certain that you help your inner circle keep on trying new behaviors of faith. This will stretch their sanctification. And, insist that they return the favor so you can persevere and grow in your own faith. (Together #61: Hold to the Truth Together)

[62] Mention to your close Christian friends and relatives how they can take better care of themselves. Many have trouble looking out for their own good and need your watchfulness and, sometimes, intervention. Many actually need your comments that help them feel permission to not do so many things or to take better care of themselves. (Together #62: Look Out for One Another's Good)

[63] If you see any of your inner circle mistreated, speak up for them. Whenever possible, get involved when you see the first signs of possible injustice or exploitation. (Together #63: Forbid Mistreatment of One Another)

[64] Help those in your inner circle see money in its proper perspective. Especially keep your friends and relatives from both living to make money and spending it excessively. The love of money is endemic in our affluent society, even among the poor. It is a root of much evil and must be resisted. (Together #64: Keep One Another From the Love of Money)

[65] If ever any of your Christian friends and relatives think revenge, stop them. Help them depend on God to effect justice in His time and for His purposes. Revenge is the natural response to being hurt, but we Christians have a supernatural answer – love that is fueled by God's undeserved love for us. The Holy Spirit's indwelling presence gives us the power to love in place of revenge. (Together #65: Keep One Another From Revenge)

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