In what was probably Paul's first letter - the epistle to the Galatians, he contrasted "the acts of the sinful nature" with "the fruit of the Spirit." Paul wrote:

For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other [allelon] (Gal. 5:17).

In this instance, Paul used the "one another" or "each other" concept to show the marked difference between people who follow the "sinful nature" in their relationships with "one another", and those who "live by the Spirit" and "keep in step with the Spirit" (5:25). Throughout this entire passage, Paul was speaking "relationally" - not just regarding personal attitudes and actions. This is why he used plural pronouns to describe the way that the "acts of the sinful nature" are manifested among non-Christians and conversely, the way the "fruit of the Spirit" is reflected in the lives of Christians as they relate to one another.

This introduces us to a very fascinating dichotomy regarding the way the "one anothers" are outlined in the New Testament. They can actually be grouped under "the acts of the sinful nature" and "the fruit of the Spirit." When they are, we can see immediately what Paul had in mind when he stated that these two manifestations conflict with one another (5:17).

"The Acts of the Sinful Nature"

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies and the like (Gal. 5:19-21).

Following is a list of negative "one another" statements that appear in several New Testament letters. Generally, these statements appear as they are translated in the New International Version. However, they are at times paraphrased in this list to demonstrate consistency and clarity, but without changing the specific meaning in the original text. These statements are as follows:

- lusting for one another (Rom. 1:27)
- judging one another (Rom. 14:13)
- depriving one another (1 Cor. 7:5)
- biting one another (Gal. 5:15a)
- devouring one another (Gal. 5:15b)
- destroying one another (Gal. 5:15c)
- provoking one another (Gal. 5:26a)
- envying one another (Gal. 5:26b)
- lying to one another (Col. 3:9)
- hating one another (Titus 3:3)
slandering one another (James 4:11)  
grumbling against one another (James 5:9)

"The Fruit of the Spirit"

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal. 5:22).

The following statements are positive "one another" exhortations. Again, they are at times paraphrased to demonstrate consistency and clarity, but in each instance reflect what the New Testament authors meant. Notice how these exhortations reflect the fruit of the Spirit:

members of one another (Rom. 12:5)  
being devoted to another (Rom. 12:10a)  
honoring one another (Rom. 12:10b)  
being of the same mind toward one another (Rom. 12:16; 15:5)  
loving one another (Rom. 13:8; 1 Thes. 3:12; 4:9; 2 Thes. 1:3; Heb. 10:24; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:11, 23: 4:7, 11, 12; 2 John 5)  
edifying one another (Rom. 14:19)  
accepting one another (Rom. 15:7)  
instructing one another (Rom. 15:14)  
greeting one another (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thes. 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14)  
waiting for one another (1 Cor. 11:33)  
caring for one another (1 Cor. 12:25)  
serving one another (Gal. 5:13)  
carrying one another’s burdens (Gal. 6:2)  
bearing with one another (Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:13)  
being kind to one another (Eph. 4:32)  
submitting to one another (Eph. 5:21; 1 Peter 5:5)  
esteeming one another (Phil. 2:3)  
encouraging one another (1 Thes. 4:18; 5:11, 14)  
confessing sins to one another (James 5:16a)  
praying for one another (James 5:16b)  
offering hospitality to one another (1 Peter 4:9)  
fellowshipping with one another (1 John 1:7)

One thing is very clear from these two lists of biblical statements. A church that is manifesting "the fruit of the Spirit" is practicing the "one another" injunctions that build up the body of Christ and lead to one-mindedness and unity. A church that is reflecting the "acts of the sinful nature" is carnal and is practicing the "one anothers" that keep the church worldly and in a state of disunity. Drawing on a New Testament example, this kind of church can be called a "Corinthian church" (1 Cor. 3:1-4). To quote Paul, the believers in Corinth were acting more like non-Christians than Christians. This is what Paul meant when he asked the question - "Are you not acting like mere men?" (1 Cor. 3:3).
Our Personal Responsibility

How can your church – and mine - become a mature body of believers, reflecting “the fruit of the Spirit”? The answer is clear in Scripture. All believers must “live by the Spirit” and “keep in step with the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25) To do this, we must practice the “one another” exhortations that build up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:16) rather than destroying and dismantling it (Gal. 5:15). We must obey God’s Word. In no instance are these exhortations qualified, such as “if you feel like it,” “if it’s convenient,” “if it fits your personality,” etc. These exhortations form a profile for doing the will of God! All Christians are to be involved. We must be committed to looking for opportunities to carry out these positive “one another” injunctions in our personal lives. At the same time we must avoid practicing the negative “one another.” This is the essence of love!