

Series - We are the Family of God

Love that binds us together in the Family of God

John 13:33-35, Romans 12:9-13

On the final night with his disciple Jesus told them He was giving them a new commandment

Dear children, I will be with you only a little longer. And as I told the Jewish leaders, you will search for me, but you can't come where I am going. ³⁴ So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. ³⁵ Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." John 13:33-35

With those words God established a new group. There are many groups in the world, and they identify themselves in any number of ways: by skin color or ethnic makeup, by uniform, by shared interest, by alma mater, etc. One group has tattoos and piercings; another group abstains from meat; yet another group wears fezzes—the ways people categorize themselves are endless. But the Family of God is unique. For the first and only time in history, Jesus created a group whose identifying factor is love. Skin color does not matter. Native language does not matter. There are no rules about diet or uniforms or wearing funny hats. The Family of God is identified by their love. In the list of over 40 commandments about how we treat "one another" 16 say love one another. **We are the Family of God when we love one another**

Review – We are the Family of God

Born into one family – It is only through a radical change referred to as new birth or adoption that we enter the Family

Learning who we are in the Family – God has created and gifted each one for a unique place in the Family

Under one Authority – God loves us as children and disciplines us for our good

God is love and has always desired his people to love others. *Leviticus 19:18 "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against a fellow Israelite, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.* Of course, God's love is to be shown to all; Brothers and sisters in Christ, neighbors –(Jesus told a story in *Luke 10* to make clear that even those despised by the world -Samaritans – are our neighbors). Jesus went further and said we are to love our enemies. *Matthew 5:44*

But this is a new commandment for we are to love one another as Christ loves us.

I. To love one another we must receive the love of Christ

Christ's love is:

Unconditional - *But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.*

Romans 5:8

Self-sacrificing - *For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin,^[a] so that we could be made right with God through Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:21*

Full of forgiveness – *Ephesians 4:32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as through Christ has forgiven you.*

Eternal - *Romans 8:38 And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers*

We know we have His love when we love each other

- *Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."*

II. To love one another we must reveal His love in us

We are not commanded to create such love.

We are not to copy His love but be connected to Him (as a branch connected to the vine – *John 15*)

We are not to simulate His love but to manifest His love. Christ in us equals the ability to love

Our love is to be

Unconditional – Jesus said to love even our enemies *Matthew 5:44*

Self-sacrificing – *1 John 3:16 We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters.* Story of boy giving blood for his brother.

Full of forgiveness – we can forgive for we have been forgiven *Ephesians 4:32*

Abundant and increasing - *And may the Lord make your love for one another and for all people grow and overflow, just as our love for you overflows. 1 Thessalonians 3:12 (also see 4:9 and 2 Thessalonians 1:3)*

Great Examples

James and John "sons of thunder" – James gave his life for Christ. John wrote the following verses

1 John 4: 12 No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.

Peter – He boastfully said he would never deny Christ but denied Him three times that night

1 Peter 1:22 You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth, so now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters. Love each other deeply with all your heart.

III. To love one another we must be real in our love **Romans 12: 9-13**

Jesus said **"If you love me, you will keep my commandments"** John 14:15

John tells us not to love in word only - **1 John 3:18 Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.**

Paul spells it out to the Roman church in **Romans 12:9-13**

Our love to be real must be:

9 Authentic – without hypocrisy means literally "with out a mask or acting"

9 Astute – making decisions in character with love – hating evil and holding tight to good

This works when we love sinners but hate their sin

10 Affectionate – brotherly love rejoices when others are honored – we brag on our brothers!

11 Active – real love is not afraid to serve and get it's hands dirty

12 An Attitude – we rejoice in hope, are patient in troubles and constant in prayer. This is only possible when we know how much we are loved as God's children

13 Accommodating – we are ready to help those in need generously and we use what we have to welcome all

The early church was known for love, Tertullian wrote: *"It is mainly the deeds of a love so noble that lead many to put a brand upon us. See how they love one another, they say, for they themselves are animated by mutual hatred; how they are ready even to die for one another, they say, for they themselves will sooner put to death (The Apology, ch. 39)."*

Questions we need to ask ourselves

1. Have I experienced the love of Christ fully? Am I a child of God?

Maybe you cannot trust the love of God because you have not experienced real love

Those who should have loved you – didn't

Those who could have loved you - wouldn't

God's love is unfailing and never runs out - measured by giving His Son for you.

2. Does my life reveal the love of Christ fully? Are others drawn to Christ by my life?

Do pre-judgments (prejudice) ruin my relationship to others?

Have past hurts become bitterness toward others?

3. Do I actively seek ways to love my family in Christ?

Is my love generous?

Am I willing to sacrifice that others might experience the full love of God?