

## BY THIS ALL WILL KNOW... John 13:34-35

This being the third Sunday, typically (but not always) I devote a lesson to growth in some way. Whether dealing with evangelism, church growth or personal growth, we need to regularly consider such topics. It is with that in mind that I present this lesson. I know that on a regular basis I emphasize the importance of loving one another as brethren. In this lesson, I would like to focus on that in greater detail. This is not a new subject, but it has been awhile since I focused specifically on this. AND, this will not be an exhaustive study of this subject (that would take considerable time to develop) but just a few observations.

### I. Christian love

- a. Defined – 2 words typically used in scripture.
  - i. The word “love” is found 284 times in the NKJV New Testament (286x NASB).
  - ii. *Agape*. This is the primary word for love in the New Testament, found ~251x. Vine’s describes it as the characteristic word of Christianity. When we describe Christian love, it is based on this word.
    1. BDAG defines the word as – the quality of warm regard for and interest in another, cherish, esteem, affection, regard, etc.
    2. Thayer defines it – to be full of good-will and exhibit the same, affection, good will, benevolence; THESE definitions give us an understanding of the quality of this word.
    3. *Caring enough to sacrifice for what is best*. Emphasis on the fact that we care
    4. It is a love that applies to every relationship the Christian is in – God, Jesus, one another, neighbors, ourselves, and even enemies.
    5. This love is deciding to act in a deliberate way. (Moyer<sup>1</sup>) Biblical love is defined by action above emotions. We sometimes misunderstand what love is because we associate it first with emotions (that is how we typically use the word in our language). Biblically that is reversed. While Christian love will involve feeling and emotion, it is based on action. Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). 1 John 5:2-3.
  - iii. *Phileo*. This is a word translated love 22 times in the NT (NKJV). Used more than half in John’s gospel. It is a term that involves affection.
    1. BDAG defines the word – to have a special interest in someone or something, with the focus of close association.
    2. Thayer – to be friendly to one.
    3. This word is closer to our English usage in that it deals with a caring relationship including preference. For example: Matthew 10:37 – He who loves father or mother more than Me...; John 11:36, the people said this about Jesus (See how He loved Him) as He wept over at the death of Lazarus.
    4. From a Christian perspective, this love is the RESULT of true *agape* love toward one another. We develop real and meaningful relationships with each other as brethren. A STRONG bond that draws us closer to each other than the world. In essence we prefer each other- see Romans 12:10, *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another*;

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<sup>1</sup> Moyer, Doy; Foundations for Growing Christians. Moyer Press, Birmingham, AL © 2019. Ch. 10, pg. 91ff

5. NOTE: The word in Romans 12:10, is a derivative word – the Greek - *Philadelphia*, which is often translated, brotherly love or kindness (see 2 Peter 1:7, Hebrews 13:1)
- b. Love described 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 – both its importance and its character. This text within itself is worthy of its own study.
  - c. To understand our love, we must first understand God’s love.
    - i. As with so many qualities, God defines what love is. 1 John 4:7-8 says, “God is love.”
    - ii. He demonstrated this in many ways. The greatest being the sending of Jesus – John 3:16, Romans 5:6-9. Consider Romans 8:31-39 where we find an appreciation of God’s love causes us to remain faithful to Him.
    - iii. When we appreciate how much God loves us, we love Him in return. 1 John 4:19. How? By keeping His commandments – 1 John 5:2-3. Recall Matthew 22:37.
  - d. Loving God leads to loving one another
    - i. Matthew 22:38-39 – Jesus noted the second command is to love your neighbor as yourself. While a whole other lesson, for the sake of this study, let us understand that our brethren are part of this group (cf. Galatians 5:14-15, James 2:8-9).
    - ii. That is a basis of the fellowship we discussed this morning – cf. 1 John 1:2-3.
    - iii. 1 John 4:20-21 – tells us that if we love God, we will love one another as well.
    - iv. Loving one another is a foundational quality –John 13:34-35, 2 Peter 1:5-7, etc.
    - v. AND it is my hope that this love is not MERELY a sense of duty, but something we gladly do for one another.

## II. How should I love my brethren

- a. Hebrews 13:1 – Let brotherly love continue. This is an imperative statement.
- b. By realizing that we are different –
  - i. We live in a world where differences are being accentuated, sometimes to a fault.
  - ii. And while some differences are important as Christians (e.g. 2 Corinthians 6:14ff, Ephesians 5:11, 1 John 2:15-16, etc.), there is another sense in which we need to overlook differences, ESPECIALLY among brethren.
  - iii. The point is – in some areas, we do not think alike, we come from different backgrounds, and we have different personalities. God made each of us unique with different abilities.
  - iv. We need to respect those differences and realize that we are ONE family – Galatians 3:27-28, 1 Corinthians 12:12ff – the body has many different members, etc.
  - v. Paul and others dealt with this continually – Romans 14 – differing views on matters of liberty (not matters of faith), 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 – he became all things to all men, 1 Corinthians 8:9-13 where we are to be concerned that our liberties become a stumbling block to our brethren.
  - vi. It is easy to point out the faults and idiosyncrasies of others and let that gnaw at you and perhaps even drive a wedge between you and others. But that is NOT what God wants! Consider also Galatians 5:14-15 – NOTE that we are NOT to bite and devour one another.
  - vii. IF, we are pursuing brotherly love we will not let our differences hinder our relationship.
- c. By being longsuffering with each other –
  - i. 1 Corinthians 13:4 – the very first quality of love Paul describes is longsuffering.
  - ii. Galatians 5:22-23 – it is a fruit of the spirit.
  - iii. As Christians we are to be “bearing with one another in love” – Ephesians 4:2. Again, 1 Corinthians 13:7 notes that we bear all thing (be willing to absorb, endure, “to put up with” (L&N 25.176).
  - iv. We need to be patient with each other. Apply this to the previous point about our differences. It also applies as we think about those who have not yet matured in the faith, or as we find ourselves studying a matter where we do not agree about.
  - v. The point is, we must maintain a godly attitude.

- d. By serving one another
  - i. Galatians 5:13 calls for us to through love serve one another.
  - ii. Serving others is a good way to keep yourself humble (unless you are praising yourself for your serving) and appreciate the EQUAL worth of others. Consider Matthew 20:25-27
  - iii. Recall how Jesus served and calls for us to serve – John 13:14-15 after He washed their feet. Matthew 20:28 – He came to serve.
  - iv. By being willing to sacrifice for each other – Our service should be to the point of sacrificing for each other - James 2:14ff, 1 John 3:16-18. Cf. 2 Corinthians 8:1-5 – the Macedonian brethren sacrificed to help other brethren. They FIRST gave themselves to the Lord.
- e. By watching out for each other's souls.
  - i. While not meddling or being a busybody (2 Thessalonians 3:11-12, 1 Thessalonians 5:10-12), if we know a brother is overtaken in sin, we NEED to act on it.
  - ii. Galatians 6:1-2, James 5:19-20 both challenge us to help a struggling brother.
  - iii. 1 Thessalonians 5:14 – we warn the unruly, comfort the fainthearted and uphold the weak.
  - iv. If we genuinely care about each other, we are not going to let them fail spiritually if we can help it.
- f. By not jumping to conclusions without all the details
  - i. 1 Corinthians 13:5 tells us that love “thinks no evil”. Vs. 7 notes that we bear all things, believe all things, hope all things and endure all things. This emphasizes that we should not automatically assume the worst in a given situation. With wisdom (not burying your head in the sand), we ought to give the benefit of the doubt when we can.
  - ii. Proverbs 18:13 says, *He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him.* Proverbs 15:28 says, *The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, But the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil.*
  - iii. We are called upon to judge with righteous judgment - John7:24 (which notes we are NOT supposed to judge according to appearance). Matthew 7:1-5 can fit into this category of wrongful judging.
  - iv. I would also consider Matthew 7:12 in this, e.g., “the golden rule”.
  - v. Before I take action, I need ALL the facts. And if not sure, love will “conceal a matter” – cover up what you can (not ignore it, nor just “let it go” if it needs to be addressed).
  - vi. Matthew 18:15-18 also applies here – GO TO THE ONE and clear it up!
- g. By being willing to forgive one another –
  - i. This is oft emphasized, both in sermons AND in the New Testament.
  - ii. Ephesians 4:32 – we forgive as we have been forgiven. Also Colossians 3:13.
  - iii. And recall how Jesus in giving the model prayer elaborated on the in Matthew 6:12, 14-15.
  - iv. Consider this also along with James 2:13 – judgment is without mercy to the one who shows no mercy.

We could add many thought to these, but find here a sampling as taught in scripture, of how we are to love each other. The text we began with, John 13:34-35, finds Jesus speaking of this new commandment. And he noted that this is how “*all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*” PLEASE do not forget, that in this hostile world, they ARE WATCHING us and looking to find fault. One of the easiest ways to give them fuel, is to fail to love each other. Let us resolve that such will not be us. Think about it!