

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 6-10-12 AM NOTES
"THE TRUE DISCIPLE'S NEW COMMANDMENT" (PART 2)
JOHN 13:34-35; 1 JOHN 3:11-18
#50 in Series, "Verse-by-Verse Through John"

John 13:34-35 (NKJV) "34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

A church is a covenantal community, not a group of consumers meeting in a building on Sundays to consume a product.

Some **Possible** Reasons to Leave a Church:

1. Heretical teaching on a fundamental doctrine of the faith
2. A lack of desire or commitment on the part of the leadership of the church to obey the Great Commission
3. A major change to unscriptural methodology for carrying out the church's mission (such as a pattern of manipulation, neurotic control, or other unbiblical leadership styles)
4. A pattern of failing to deal biblically with open, unrepented of sin in members of the body, especially those in leadership

"The first aspect of any local church community is that it is covenantal. That is, it is a community of believers who have become part of the New Covenant in Christ's blood and, as a result, have covenanted together to help each other run the Christian race with integrity, godliness, and grace. It is a community of mutual commitment to doing each other good spiritually—bearing each other's burdens, sharing joys, giving to support the ministry, exercising affectionate watchfulness over one another, and at times rebuking the unrepentant or submitting to correction ourselves as occasion may require." —Mark Dever and Paul Alexander

I. The Command to Love (1 John 3:11)

1 Corinthians 16:14 (NKJV) "Let all *that* you *do* be done with love."

Ephesians 4:2b (NKJV) "...bearing with one another in love."

Ephesians 5:2 (NKJV) "And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma."

Colossians 3:14 (NKJV) "...put on love, which is the bond of perfection."

2 Timothy 2:22b (NKJV) "...pursue righteousness, faith, love..."

Hebrews 10:24 (NKJV) “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works.”

1 Peter 1:22b (NKJV) “...love one another fervently with a pure heart.”

Philippians 2:3-4 (NKJV) “³ Let nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”

Romans 5:5b (NKJV) “...the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

II. The Contrast to Love (1 John 3:12-13)

A. The Example of Cain (v. 12)

Philippians 2:3b-4 (ESV) “³ ... in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

B. The Example of the World (v. 13)

John 15:18 (NKJV) “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated you.*”

“The world hates us because it does not understand us or the life we have. It does not share this life with us, and it feels we are condemning it, even though we may not say a word. But because we are so different, it feels condemned. It feels lost, and it hates the feeling of condemnation, so it hates us. This is why the world hated our Lord.”

—Martyn Lloyd-Jones

III. The Confidence of Love (1 John 3:14-15)

A. The Revelation of the Presence of Love (v. 14)

B. The Revelation of a Pattern of Hatred (v. 15)

IV. The Cost of Love (1 John 3:16)

V. The Carrying Out of Love (1 John 3:17-18)

1 John 3:18 (AMP) "Little children, let us not love [merely] in theory or in speech but in deed and in truth (in practice and in sincerity)."

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"THE TRUE DISCIPLE'S NEW COMMANDMENT" (PART 2)
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50 in Series, "Verse by Verse through John"

Today's message begins a series within a series. Last week we looked at the new commandment Jesus gave to His disciples. **John 13:34-35 (NKJV)** ³⁴ "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." Today and the next two weeks, I want us to go to some other Scriptures to see what this "love for one another" looks like. I want to make it super practical because my goal is that God will use these messages to transform our church. Today we are going to see some details concerning what loving other believers looks like from 1 John 3:11-18.

We live in a day where church membership is taken lightly. Our age has been called the consumer age and that is an accurate assessment. Today we tend to approach everything with a consumer's mindset. A consumer's mindset says, "You are offering a service and I will **contract** with you to receive that service. As long as I am satisfied with the service, I will continue the contract with you for it; when I become dissatisfied with the service you offer, I will find another place that will meet my needs better than you and I will dump you and contract with them. That may be OK with a dry cleaner or a lawn service or an internet provider, but is it acceptable when it comes to a church? When we look at the symbols in Scripture for a church, we see a different type of connection that is called for within the local church (and the vast majority of the references to the church in the New Testament is referring to the local church). In the New Testament, the church is called the Body of Christ, the flock of God, the family of God, God's building, and the Bride of Christ. The approach we take to our membership in a church is not as a consumer entering a contract; it is as a disciple entering a covenant. Let me share the difference between a covenant and a contract from a Biblical perspective. Generally, a contract is an agreement made in suspicion. The parties do not trust each other, and they set "limits" to their own responsibility to stay in the agreed on relationship. Generally, a covenant is an agreement made in trust. The parties love each other and put few limits on their own responsibility. Certainly there are conditional covenants as well as unconditional

covenants in the Bible, but there is still the love relationship between the parties. Our church has a covenant that we introduce in the First Step class to every member. **A church is a covenantal community, not a group of consumers meeting in a building on Sunday to consume a product.** Here is why this is so important. Love flourishes in a covenant relationship, but a contract based relationship stifles and even discourages love. One of the main reasons that the church has lost its influence and power in the world is because we have adopted the consumer mindset manifested by a contract approach to church and genuine Biblical love between members of the body is squelched. The world today isn't often drawn to Jesus by our love for one another; the world is repulsed by the hypocrisy and lack of love in the church. For an example of covenantal love, let's look at marriage. After all the Bible tells us in Ephesians 5 that marriage is a picture of our covenant relationship with Christ, and the church is called the bride of Christ. I am convinced that the main reason that 50% of first marriages end in divorce and a much larger % of second and third marriages don't last is because couples with a consumer mindset enter marriage as a contract and not a covenant. "When my spouse doesn't meet my needs, doesn't perform up to my expectations, the contract is violated and a divorce is drawn up and the marriage is ended". Both formerly married consumers then go on a search to find another mate who will hopefully keep their end of the contract. In a covenant marriage, a man and a woman come together as givers and not just takers. They make a covenant with one another to love and to cherish one another until death comes to one of them. It is in this atmosphere that biblical love flourishes. Will they have problems and disagreements? Certainly they will! Instead of canceling the contract, they are forced to deal with the problem, compromise their expectations and preferences and desires, and they must deal with one another in patience trusting God to change whoever needs changing. What happens in a church? Too many members enter membership as consumers and see their membership as a contract. They join because as a consumer, they like the product that is being offered. That product may be the music style, the preaching, the warm friendly Sunday School class, the clean Preschool rooms the children's, youth or college ministry, or any other facet of the church. After a time some changes are made or they get tired of the preaching and being made to feel guilty. The youth or college ministry goes through some changes, or "people just aren't as friendly as they were when I joined". What do they do? They break their contract and as consumers they seek another church that fulfills their needs and make a contract with that church. Are there legitimate, Biblical reasons to leave a church? Yes there are, just like the Bible gives reasons a covenant marriage may be broken (unrepentant sexual immorality or an unbelieving spouse that makes a final decision to leave). I would suggest that some legitimate reasons to leave a church are: 1) Heretical teaching on a fundamental of the faith (not over disagreeing with the Pastor on whether the catching up of the church is before the great tribulation, in the middle of the great tribulation or at the end of the great tribulation). 2) A lack of any desire or commitment on the part of the leadership of the church to obey the Great Commission. 3) A major change in the church's methodology in carrying out the work of the church (such as using manipulation to get people to "make decisions for Jesus" or a pattern of neurotic, controlling leadership). 4) A pattern of failure to biblically deal with open unrepented of sin in the membership and especially in the leadership. There may be other reasons, but a difference in preferences on music styles, the changing of some program, obnoxious irritating members, decline in some area of ministry or details of how the money is spent are not reasons for breaking a covenant. If you are in a

covenant relationship with a local church, you are willing to lovingly confront other members (even leadership), work through problems with hard to get along with people, come alongside struggling ministries and ministry leaders, and sometimes just realize that some people irritate you so you love them with Christ's love and put up with them. You are going to find those in every church of every size. When you leave with a consumer's mindset to find another church, you are going to find that the irritating person's clone is a member of your new church!

Let me summarize this covenantal relationship that is the best atmosphere for Christians to love one another like Christ loved us. In the book *The Deliberate Church* by Mark Dever and Paul Alexander, they say: "The first aspect of any local church community is that it is covenantal. That is, it is a community of believers who have become part of the New Covenant in Christ's blood and, as a result, have covenanted together to help each other run the Christian race with integrity, godliness, and grace. It is a community of mutual commitment to doing each other good spiritually – bearing each other's burdens, sharing joys, giving to support the ministry, exercising affectionate watchfulness over one another, and at times rebuking the unrepentant or submitting to correction ourselves as occasion may require" [Page 110]. That is an atmosphere where biblical love for one another flourishes!

With that long introduction, let's spend some time examining what loving one another looks like and is built upon.

I. The Command to Love (V11)

The New Testament is filled with verses like verse 11 that commands true disciples of Jesus Christ to love one another. Here are just a few examples: **1 Corinthians 16:14 (NKJV)** "Let *all that you do be done with love*" [The context is in a church setting]. **Ephesians 4:2b (NKJV)** "...bearing with one another in love". **Ephesians 5:2 (NKJV)** "And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma." **Colossians 3:14b (NKJV)** "...put on love, which is the bond of perfection." **2 Timothy 2:22b (NKJV)** "...pursue righteousness, faith, love..." **Hebrews 10:24 (NKJV)** "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works". **1 Peter 1:22b (NKJV)** "... love one another fervently with a pure heart". That's a few of what one man counted to be 55 times in the New Testament that love is commanded.

The thought of commanding love is totally foreign to most Americans. The reason it sounds ridiculous to command love is because most people see love as purely an emotion. How do you command an emotion? Emotions respond to what happens or at least to what you perceive is happening or will happen. In most people's mind commanding love would be equivalent to commanding happiness, or commanding anger, or commanding sadness. Yet Jesus commands us to "love your enemies" in Matthew 5:44. The Greek word (agape) used to describe God's love and our loving enemies, husbands loving wives, and Christians loving one another begins with a choice. It is a choice to be others centered. The best description of this kind of love is in **Philippians 2:3-4 (NKJV)** "³Let nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others." When we obey, it will eventually affect the emotions (probably), but it is never simply an emotion. Feelings are the fruit of this kind of love, not the root of love. Most of the uses of this word for love is not a noun (which it

would be if it was an emotion only); it is most always a verb – an action word. In this passage, loving one another is not simply a duty; it is evidence that we are truly born of God (as we will see in later verses). The response that usually comes to this kind of teaching about love is, “If we consider others above ourselves and seek to meet their needs without feeling love for them, aren’t we being a hypocrite?” No, you are just being obedient. Someone may respond, “To love in action when you don’t have affection for a person is hard”. I would respond, “It is not hard; it is impossible in your own strength”. That is why God gave us the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ to indwell us. When He fills or controls us, the fruit He produces is listed in Galatians 5:22 and the first characteristic of that Spirit produced fruit is love! **Romans 5:5b (NKJV)** “...the love of God [God’s kind of love – agape love] has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” This love in the Christian’s life takes place in the home and the workplace, but the primary venue for this unexplainable love that only God can enable takes place within the church body. As the world sees it, no less authority than the Lord Jesus Himself said that the world would know that we are His disciples. In other words, we will put Jesus Christ’s life on display through our loving others as He has loved us.

II. The Contrast to Love (V12-13)

John gives us two contrasts to love. To put it another way, he gives us two examples of the opposite of love.

A. The Example of Cain (V12)

If we had to summarize Cain’s life, we would say that he was totally self centered and self consumed. John tells us that Cain was “of the wicked one” referring of course to Satan. Satan was the ultimate in self-centeredness. He wanted to usurp the very throne of God! He was totally into self elevation. Cain manifested his self-centeredness in several ways. First, he wanted to worship God his own way. We know that God had instructed Adam and Eve about the necessity of a blood sacrifice, probably when He killed two innocent animals (likely lambs) to provide a covering for them after they sinned (Genesis 3:21). Cain decided that he didn’t like God’s way so he brought a bloodless sacrifice. Second, Cain became jealous of his brother when the Lord accepted Abel’s sacrifice. He was upstaged by his little brother. Remember the description of love in **Philippians 2:3b-4 (ESV)** ³“...in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” Jealousy is the opposite of genuine love. Cain desired to count himself more significant than others and to look out only for his own interests. What does love in the church look like? It looks just the opposite of Cain’s actions against brother!

B. The Example of the World (V13)

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit (who is the Spirit of Christ) we will be responded to by the world the same way the world responded to Jesus. Why are we surprised with that? **John 15:18 (NKJV)** "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you." Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones gives great insight into why the world hates Spirit filled Christians: “The world hates us because it does not understand us or the life we have. It does not share this life with us, and it feels we are condemning it, even though we may not say a word. But because we are so different, it feels condemned. It feels lost, and it hates the feeling of condemnation, so it hates us. This is why the world hated our Lord” [Martyn Lloyd Jones, *Life in Christ, Studies in 1 John*, Page 355].

III. The Confidence of Love (V14-15)

A. The Revelation of the Presence of Love (V14)

Loving the brethren is the evidence of the new birth. Loving other believers gives us evidence that we are no longer in the grip of spiritual darkness. If you have no humanly unexplainable love for other believers, you may not have passed from death to life. I have heard this illustrated by talking about the bond we feel with a Christian from another culture that we may not even speak their language. That is true, but I don't think that is primarily what this is referring to in this context. I think the primary reference is other believers in the same local church. Remember that this is not primarily speaking of emotion. It is not speaking of "liking the brethren"; it is speaking of those who love other believers they know with Christ's love. It is easy to love believers in the church we partner with in West Africa, in China, in Peru, in India, and even those we meet from other churches around us. We don't really know them and there truly is a bond between believers. When the person we are to love is in our own church – people we know well and that we see their feet of clay, their irritating habits, their flesh patterns, their manifestations of spiritual immaturity – that is where we must love them with Christ's love. That is the evidence that we have been born of God! There's an old rhyme that says, "To live above with those we love, that will be glory. To live below with those we know, now that's a different story". Think about Jesus' disciples. Have you ever thought about what a challenge it was for them to love each other? I think of one of the disciples who was called Simon the Zealot. The Zealots were a group of radical Jews who hated Rome, hated all compromise with Rome, and sought to overthrow Rome. Another of the disciples was Levi or Matthew the former tax collector. The tax collectors (publicans) were collaborators with the Romans and collected taxes for their people's enemies. Now, both Simon and Matthew followed Jesus. Wouldn't you like to see the interaction between those two? That would be like Rush Limbaugh and Nancy Pelosi being converted to Christ and being members of the same church and serving together in the nursery. It is loving those we know that this passage is primarily referring to. The point is, there are no loveless Christians – only loveless false professors who are deceived about their spiritual condition. If there is no pattern (lifestyle) of love toward believers, then there is no reason to believe that we have passed from spiritual death to life.

B. The Revelation of a Pattern of Hatred (V15)

The word "hates" is not referring to a temporary flare up of hatred for a person. It is referring to a settled pattern of hating a person or group of persons. God marks this kind of hatred down as murder. Murder is the desire of hate just as sexual immorality is the desire of lust. In Matthew 5, Jesus said that lusting makes us guilty of adultery (Matthew 5:21, 22, 28). Jesus said that our evil deeds began in our heart (Matthew 15:19). The only reason this kind of hate doesn't always end in literal murder is because of the consequences from our government for murder. God knows not only what you do, but what you want to do. Hatred is the moral equivalent of murder and an unrepentant murderer does not know Christ.

IV. The Cost of Love (V16)

Jesus voluntarily laid down His life for us. It wasn't taken from Him. In the same way (though not to the same extent) loving other believers involves our laying down our lives for them. It is the laying down of our plans, our preferences, our comfort, our time, and our finances to genuinely love the brethren. Love is self sacrifice to meet the real needs of

another. In the last point, John shows us what laying down our lives looks like.

V. The Carrying Out of Love (V17-18)

Let me remind you that the love spoken of here is primarily carried out in the local church – “sees a brother in need”. Here is the very simple point in these two verses: genuine Biblical love involves action! I like the Amplified version of **1 John 3:18 (AMP)** “Little children, let us not love [merely] in theory *or* in speech but in deed and in truth (in practice and in sincerity).” People who are always talking about how much they love others and revel in the good thoughts about others but never put that into action are in reality loving themselves and that is the opposite of what this passage is talking about. Genuine love is absorbed in the object of their love – the one in need – not themselves.

CONCLUSION

The greatest evangelism program a church has is not the latest thing coming from the denomination, it is not Evangelism Explosion, and it is not even TELL that we use. Those programs are good and in our culture necessary. But the greatest evangelism program is in reality not a program at all; it is the local church loving one another (the brethren) as Christ loved us. The result is that the world will see and perceive that we are His disciples and there will be a drawing to the church where we then have the opportunity to as 1 Peter 3:15 says to “give an answer” for the reason our lives and our love are different.