

Cultivating Love for Others: the Church
John 13:34-35
1 John 3:16

1. Mission and Values
 - a. Slight change: We exist to glorify God, walking closely with Him, striving together to become more like Jesus every day. (Ephesians 4:1-16) **THIS IS OUR GOAL!**
 - b. Our values are the means or tools God uses to fulfill His mission for the Church.
 - i. Follow Jesus
 1. Starts with growing mastery of the basics, understanding and using the tools God has given for our apprenticeship to Jesus.
 2. The disciplines are not a self-help formula. God doesn't care about us "checking boxes". These habits deepen our relationship with God.
 - ii. Cultivating Love for God
 1. This is the heart of our Mission and Values.
 2. Love for God engages our whole being.
 3. Love for God grows as our relationship with Him grows deeper.
 - iii. Cultivating Love for Others has two parts.
 1. Love within the family of God (John 13:34-35 and 1 John 3:16)
 2. Love of our neighbors (Matthew 22:34-40)
 - iv. Making Disciples
 - v. Seeking Unity
 2. Transition: I am always learning, always growing. Once again, I learned something new from the study of a passage I thought I already knew. Our relationship with God is a life-long project. There is nothing better in life than the pursuit of God.
 3. Read John 13:34-35 and 1 John 3:16, then pray.
 4. Why this value has two parts.
 - a. Jesus identified the two greatest commands in the Law: love God and love your neighbor as yourself.
 - b. A few hours later, alone with His disciples, He gave them a *new* commandment, "love one another as I have loved you."
 - c. Why was it new?
 - i. There was a new standard of measure, "as I have loved you."
 - ii. The recipients of this love was smaller, "one another", the family of God.
 - iii. This sort of love would be the main way to identify Jesus' disciples.
 - d. Next week we will talk about our love for our neighbors.
 5. What is this word, "love"?
 - a. Unique to Christianity, agape.
 - b. Far more than mere feelings.
 - c. We don't *fall* in love with God or with other people. We *choose* to behave in a loving way, as defined by the Bible.
 - d. Choosing to love in this manner. . .

- i. Fosters feelings of affection for those we love. We see them in an entirely different way.
- ii. Encourages us to “excel still more”. It’s addictive in the best possible way!
- iii. Identifies us in a very unique way. This love is supernatural. It is only possible with the involvement of the Holy Spirit.

6. Who is the “one another”?

- a. It is a good idea to remember the K.I.S.S. principle: Keep It Simple, Silly!
- b. Jesus was speaking to His closest followers. This commandment was new because it was much narrower in scope.
- c. We will see next week that Jesus clearly defined “neighbor” as anyone around you. “Love your neighbor as yourself” is the old version. It was NOT superceded or eliminated. Jesus adds another layer here.

7. “As I have loved you” . . . from the disciples perspective. (John 13:34-35 SLIDE)

- a. I have been teaching this wrong since 1983!
 - i. My error? I have interpreted it from the perspective of people who understood the cross because I am standing on this side of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection. We have established at this moment the disciples did NOT understand what Jesus would be doing by dying.
 - ii. Context matters!
 - iii. We must continually ask questions to sharpen our focus. This week, I asked this passage, “What was the disciples’ perspective when Jesus made this statement to them?”
- b. How would they have understood Jesus’ statement? “As I have loved you . . .”?
 - i. The significance of the foot washing (Read John 13:1-17 SLIDE)
 - 1. Visual object lesson of the leader being the servant.
 - 2. The lover stoops to demonstrate love to the beloved.
 - 3. The beloved must humble him or herself to accept the service.
 - 4. What about us?
 - a. Are you going to this extreme to serve the people in our church family?
 - b. Are you allowing people to serve you?
 - ii. The broader context . . .
 - 1. The centerpiece of the disciples’ lives for the past 3-½ years was *relationship*.
 - 2. When they responded to Jesus’ call to follow Him, they were entering an intimate, life-on-life, day-to-day relationship.
 - 3. They were known by Jesus and knew Him.
 - 4. Jesus. . .
 - a. Walked with them
 - b. Prayed for them
 - c. Empowered them
 - d. Trained them
 - e. Corrected them
 - f. Fed them

- g. Challenged them
 - h. Showed them
 - i. Care for them
 - j. LOVED THEM
- c. John 13:34-35 tells us
 - i. Who to love. Other Christians and particularly our local church.
 - ii. How to love. As Jesus loved us.
 - iii. The outcome of love— “by this will all men know you are my disciples”

8. 1 John 3:16 (SLIDE) expands the height, and width, and length, and depth of the love we are meant to show one another.

We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

- a. We *must* face the implications of what John is saying here.
- b. We are commanded to love as Jesus loved.
 - i. Jesus sacrificed Himself, dying for His people. We are to love in the same way.
 - ii. Jesus loved us *before* we were deserving.
- c. How is this possible?
 - i. We must cultivate love for God. We can *only* learn to love like Jesus by cultivating love for Him first. Nothing else provides sufficient motivation.
 - ii. We must work with the Holy Spirit.
 - 1. Cultivating the discipline of prayer.
 - 2. Learning to hear His voice.
 - 3. Choosing to obey His direction.
 - 4. Trusting He can give us what we need to demonstrate love like this.
 - iii. We must serve in community. Recognize the power of synergy.
 - 1. We must pay attention! Antennas up!
 - a. Knowing others intimately
 - b. Being known intimately
 - 2. Be vulnerable!
 - iv. We must create margin in our lives
 - 1. Money
 - 2. Time
 - 3. Energy