

Romans

Scripture reading: 1 Corinthians 13

Sermon Title: Genuine Love for One Another (part two)

Sermon Text: Romans 12:9-16

Key verse: Romans 12:9 *“Let love be without hypocrisy”*

MAIN IDEA: Endeavor to practice ten characteristics of genuine love toward one another.
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- 1 – Be Discerning: *Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.* (v.9)
- 2 – Be Devoted: *Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.* (v.10)
- 3 – Be Valuing: *Give preference to one another in honor.* (v.10)
- 4 – Be Zealous: *Not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.* (v.11)
- 5 – Be Heavenly-minded: *Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer.* (v.12)

- 6 – Be Charitable: *Contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.* (v.13)
- 7 – Be a Blessing: *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.* (v.14)
- 8 – Be Empathetic: *Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.* (v.15)
- 9 – Be Like-Minded: *Be of the same mind toward one another.* (v.16)
- 10 – Be Humble: *Do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.* (v.16)

NOTE: *This manuscript is provided as a courtesy. It is not followed word for word during the message. This document is not developed for publication; there may be grammatical errors throughout. Unfortunately, there is not always time to proof read. I choose to use my available time for studying, finding ways to explain the truths of Scripture while keeping a balance of time for visiting and discipling people in the church. Thanks for understanding.*

This week we continue looking at Romans 12:9-16. The passage begins with the phrase, let love be without hypocrisy.

God desires we love with genuine love. We are to be sincere in how we demonstrate love.

Think about that ... are we able to manufacture sincerity in loving? Does God want us to somehow change how we feel about others by loving them more sincerely?

How we love others is not in how we “more genuinely or more sincerely feel about them, instead, loving others more genuinely comes about in how we interact with them.

Love is more about what we do than how we feel.

The most important act we do as a Christian is to love. God is love and we are to love one another. Love is the fulfillment of the law. Therefore, if love is more about what we do and less about how we feel, than what we do as Christians is far more important than how we feel.

Don't say you love God. Instead, *show how* you love God.

Don't say you love others. Instead, *show how* you love others.

This passage in Romans teaches how we may show our love.

Romans 12:9-16 ⁹ Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; ¹¹ not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹² rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, ¹³ contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. ¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

MAIN IDEA: Endeavor to practice ten characteristics of genuine love toward one another.

Last week, we looked at the first ways we may demonstrate our love is genuine.

1 – Be Discerning: **Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. (v.9)**

2 – Be Devoted: **Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. (v.10)**

3 – Be Valuing: **Give preference to one another in honor. (v.10)**

4 – Be Zealous: **Not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. (v.11)**

5 – Be Heavenly-Minded: **Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer. (v.12)**

The sixth characteristic of genuine love we should endeavor to pursue is:

6 – BE CHARITABLE

Contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. (v.13)

The Greek word *koinōniō*, is a form of the Greek word for fellowship, *koinōnia*.

The word *koinōnia* most people are familiar with as it means to be in fellowship with one another.

Koinōniō means to share with one another. Instead of saying, contributing to the needs of the saints, the phrase can also be said distributing goods to meet the needs of the saints.

This doesn't mean we may not own something someone else does not have. In other words, it doesn't say everyone has to have the same size house, have the same car, or wear the same clothing. It says contribute to the needs of the saints.

What are needs? Food, clothing, and shelter are needs. None of the household of God should live in destitute conditions. We need to help one another to make sure our basic needs are met.

Everyone is to do this together, not just those with more.

Notice it also says we are to meet the needs of the saints. It doesn't say Christians are obligated to meet the needs of every individual who asks. If they confess Jesus as Lord and Savior and if they show a mutual commitment to the body, then they qualify.

Most scriptures about giving speak about being generous to one another; the saints. There is a common misconception in the world that the church is obligated to help people with financial need. We are to be compassionate, but we are also to be good stewards.

At Christ Community Church we have an elder fund (also known as the benevolent fund) and a food pantry that is specifically for use by church members.

The way the elder fund works is that when people have needs, they complete a financial need form and submit it to the elders. We ask for the form for a few reasons. We desire to be good stewards of the fund. People trust the elders to make the right decisions regarding money. We desire to have accountability. You do not want the elders giving money out unfairly to some and not others. The elders desire to help those who need the money to make careful considerations with their budget. If something looks out of whack, like a \$300 per month cell phone bill and groceries are \$100 a month, then we desire to help shepherd people so they may be good stewards.

The food pantry is available for any member and there are no questions asked. If you need food from the food pantry, please speak to the church office or Sandy Moxley who oversees the ministry. All we ask is you not complain if the food pantry only has B&M baked beans and you prefer Bush's beans.

There are many ways to contribute to the needs of the saints. Sometimes the needs are not money. The church sometimes makes meals for families when circumstances are difficult. We might also help with a project or with moving. There are many ways we need to contribute to one another's needs.

In addition to meeting the needs of the saints we are to practice hospitality. The word hospitality, *philoxenia*, is two words, philo which is love and xenia which is foreigners or strangers. The word literally means love foreigners.

We often think of hospitality as with one another, but not strangers. In the first century, before hotels and motels, there was a necessity for Christians to entertain strangers. It was a common cultural practice. There was a need to practice hospitality to people passing through town.

Inns were often considered unsavory or sleazy. This made it more of a necessity for people to be hospitable to people traveling through.

I am not sure why the NASB translation says we are to *practice* hospitality because the word for practice is best translated *pursue*. It means to run after or to seek hospitality eagerly. We are to look for opportunities for hospitality.

This is a very difficult concept in our day and age. Certainly there are the safety issues we need to be careful about. Opening up our home to complete strangers shows a lack of wisdom. In our culture, perhaps it would be better to pursue hospitality by paying for a room at the local motel.

The main idea is we should ask God to give us opportunities to be hospitable to strangers. The concept is similar to how we help one another. There is no reason to just throw money at strangers. The main idea is to pursue helping strangers who are in need. A need would be a basic need such as food clothing or shelter.

We have a reciprocal relationship with people we know. In other words, we mutually benefit from one another. Genuine love towards strangers would be to help people in need with no expectations for them to return the favor. Doing this would be truly sacrificial and a demonstration of genuine love.

Isn't this characteristic of the love Christ showed us? What does He gain from the love He has shown us? Christ gained nothing. Jesus had all the glory of the Father before coming to redeem us from sin (John 17:5). He left His glory behind. Jesus had nothing to gain in showing us love. His love is a sacrificial love and it is His love we are to demonstrate to others.

The seventh characteristic of genuine love we should endeavor to pursue is:

7 – BE A BLESSING

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. (v.14)

To bless is to wish good upon someone and to curse is to wish something bad happens.

The temptation, especially as we are to hate evil as verse 9 teaches, is that we will not only hate evil, but we will hate those who do evil. When people in government do evil things we will hate them. When enemies commit atrocities we will hate them. We are to hate evil, but not hate the evil doers.

Instead of cursing evil doers, we are to do just the opposite. We should not wish evil or bad things happen to our persecutors and enemies. Instead, we need to truly seek and wish good upon them. We are to pray for their good by praying God has mercy upon them and not wish them harm.

This is very, very difficult. However, this is the characterization of Christianity. Jesus died for us while we were yet sinners; we were His enemies.

It seems the Apostle Paul is teaching what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount.

Luke 6:27-36 ²⁷“But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸“bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹“Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. ³⁰“Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. ³¹“Treat others the same way you want them to treat you. ³²“If you love those who love you, what credit is *that* to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³“If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is *that* to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴“If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is *that* to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same *amount*. ³⁵“But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil *men*. ³⁶“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

This last verse is what we are to aim for; be merciful.

I like what Peter has to say on this.

1 Peter 3:8-13 ⁸To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; ⁹not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. ¹⁰For, “The one who desires life, to love and see good days, must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. ¹¹ “He must turn away from evil and do good; He must seek peace and pursue it. ¹² “For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” ¹³Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?

If we are not turning from evil, the Lord does not hear our prayer.

It does no good to bless the people in the household of God while outside the doors of the church we curse people of the world.

Genuine love will reflect the love of Christ upon all people, not just people in the church. When we love all people in this way, it reflects well upon the church.

Prove zealous to do what is good. Prove zealous to be a blessing.

The eighth characteristic of genuine love we should endeavor to pursue is:

8 – BE EMPATHETIC

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. (v.15)

Empathy is the ability to understand the feelings of others. It is different than sympathy which means you feel sorry for someone, but don't necessarily share the feelings of the other person.

You can't have sympathy for people who are rejoicing. However, you can have empathy with others by sharing in the feelings of joy.

Genuine love shares not only material possessions, but also emotions; our ups and downs. When we have a genuine love for others we will not be detached or distant from those we love. We will care about what is going on in their lives and share in their joys and share in their sorrows.

Home fellowship is the place we may do this the best.

It is easy to celebrate in the rejoicing of other people; at least it should be. As we first think about it, we would all agree it is good to rejoice with others when they rejoice. But, there are times when people do not. For example, someone might get a generous promotion and we haven't gotten a promotion in years. Someone might rejoice in getting engaged while others are jealous they haven't yet found a spouse. Or, someone might shoot a deer during hunting season and you haven't shot a deer in a few years. Genuine love will wholeheartedly share the joy of others without envy or bitterness.

Sorrow can be a challenging emotion. Some people, no fault of their own, have a life or a season filled with one sorrow after another. It is tiring and emotionally draining to be involved with people during a season of sorrow. Sometimes we may not feel like being depressed so we avoid others who are experiencing hardship. But, we should be with them in times of sorrow because we love them. We ought not have to walk alone with sorrow.

When we share our lives in this way, rejoicing when others rejoice and weeping with those who weep, we build great bonds with one another.

We shared emotions together when the Bakers went through the ups and downs of adoption. We share emotions together when Abby and Sandy lost their dads. We rejoice together when the Bartlett's celebrate 60 years of being married.

Being empathetic with one another is one way for us to remain devoted to one another. We are on this journey together because we are all adopted by the same Father, we are all joint heirs with Christ and we will all be living together forever in the Kingdom of Heaven.

The ninth characteristic of genuine love we should endeavor to pursue is:

9 – BE LIKE-MINDED

Be of the same mind toward one another. (v.16)

Psalm 133:1 ¹ Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!

Imagine the members of our body being independent in thinking. What if our finger had a different life goal than the knee? Imagine our legs wanting to run marathons, our arms desiring to paint paintings; and our belly wanting to break the world record hot dog eating contest all at the same time.

Running marathons or painting paintings are not bad endeavors. However, they are not able to be done at the same time. Neither task will be done well unless the whole body is involved and unified.

The members of our body are not independent thinking entities and neither should the members of the body of the church. The body does what the head of the body wills. The same should be of our church body; we should all be like-minded toward one another with Christ as the head.

To be of the same mind means to have a common goal and purpose. Some Christians are independent in their thinking. They do their own ministry without thinking how their talents and gifts might be used alongside others in the church for the benefit of the gospel. They are more concerned about themselves than they are of the body.

As leaders of the church, our goal is not that you would obey us and fall into line with the church leadership. No. Our goal is that all of us seek to understand the expressed will of God as it is written in the Bible. We need to be like-minded toward one another. Our goal is to work together like a symphony orchestra.

We also have to be careful to have divisions in the church with leadership. It is not acceptable, as Paul told the Corinthians, to have people say, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos." When we do this, we make the cross void.

It is hard to be of the same mind. All of us are guilty of trying our best to get people to think like us. We make great efforts to convince and persuade others to think as we think. Please understand things from my perspective. If you only understood what I am trying to say you would then do things as I do them.

Instead, the mindset ought to be that we try to think like others. I admit I sometimes try to think like others only because if I do so, I may be more successful in getting them to think like I do.

The beauty of having a plurality of elders with deacon-led ministries is the leadership of the church is not based upon one person's way of thinking. Together, the leadership of elders and deacons are working together to have our church unified in evangelizing and discipling.

Genuine love for one another puts aside self and seeks the will of God. Love with hypocrisy is more interested in self and not intent of the overall health and maturity of the church.

Genuine love prefers others and seeks to be in harmony with others.

Philippians 2:1-4 ¹Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, ²make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. ³Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

The secret to unity begins with how we view ourselves within the body as a member with a job to do. The key verse that addresses this is Philippians 2:3: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves." All disunity in a church can be traced back to the simple truth that too often we act selfishly and consider ourselves better than others.

The tenth characteristic of genuine love we should endeavor to pursue is:

10 – BE HUMBLE

Do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. (v.16)

This sentiment harkens back to verse 3, when Paul says, "I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment."

The KJV says it like this, *Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate.*

The idea is to avoid ambition and attitudes of the world which establishes a class structure. Don't seek to be among the elite. When we strive to be among the "beautiful people" or "the in-crowd" or "the movers and the shakers" we are conformed to the world in our thinking.

After all, has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world (1 Corinthians 1:20)? If we are to boast in our association, let our association be of Christ. Let our boasting be in the Lord and in the cross (1 Corinthians 1:31).

Isaiah tells us Jesus was a man of low estate. "He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him." (Isaiah 53:3)

Jesus Christ avoided the ambition of worldly pursuits. He was capable of great human accomplishment. He could have been king of any country, richer than any businessman, he proved himself the best fisherman, Jesus could have used His gifts and abilities to rule the world. Instead, Jesus pursued a life with sinners, publicans, and tax collectors. He didn't choose the religious who's who of the day but chose to live life alongside the downcast, poor, needy, sick and less fortunate.

This is the example we are to follow. How might we do this?

First of all, don't be condescending and go around telling people, I am here to help you today because I am making it my Christian business to associate and help you, the less fortunate, less skilled, more needy people. That is not genuine love.

When associating with the lowly, consider it a privilege and an honor. We are not bending down to help them come up to our level. Thinking in this way is insulting and unloving. Instead, think of it as we have a problem. The problem we have is we are thinking way too much of ourselves. We are wise in our own estimation. We are not the doctor for the illness of the lowly, the lowly are the doctor for those who have the disease of pride.

Associating with the lowly should be natural. In fact, it is something we shouldn't even have to think about. If we think to ourselves, I need to go find some lowly person and associate with them so I fulfill my Biblical mandate, we have a problem. We should not be blocking off our calendar with two hours a week to visit people at the hospital and two hours a week with associating with the lowly.

If there is even a person or group of people that come to mind for you that you need to associate with, than your pride is off the charts. You need to pray and ask God for thinking way too much of yourself.

In the body of Christ, there are only lowly people who need a Savior. So, if you don't feel as though you are one among the lowly, get off your high horse and take a good look in the mirror of God's word.

GENUINE LOVE FOR CHRIST RESULTS IN GENUINE LOVE FOR OTHERS

God has called us to have genuine love and not love with hypocrisy. He desires us to love others from the heart. We are to hate evil and cling to what is good; be devoted to one another, be charitable, bless others, share in one another's joy and sorrow, and so forth.

Genuine love for others is true Christianity. It must be real. How can we have it be real? There is only one way for it to be real and we see that in John 21:15-17 when Jesus asks Peter if Peter loves Him.

"Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" Peter replied, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My lambs."

A second time, "Simon, do you love Me?" Peter, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." ... "Shepherd My sheep."

The third time, "Simon, do you love Me?" Peter grieved because He had asked three times, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep."

What is the point of this?

The foundation for us to shepherd and care for one another in the church must be our love for Christ. If we have not fallen in love with Christ, we will not be able to love one another.

When we love Christ, loving others will be genuine.

Do you love Jesus? If not, it will be impossible to fulfill the commands of Christianity. You will be frustrated because it is impossible to love without the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. God has to do this work in your heart. I would like to help you know how you can love others. Please, talk with me after the service.

Do you love Jesus? If you do, love His sheep. This is what He asks.

QUESTIONS FOR HOME FELLOWSHIP

Questions to ensure understanding and right application of the passage:

1. Be Charitable: *Contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.* (v.13)
 - a. Our church is very good about helping meet one another's needs. Therefore, let's focus on ways we can practice hospitality to strangers.
 - b. What is a way we can pursue this command? Remember, this is not just doing random acts of kindness, but helping meet genuine needs.
 2. Be a Blessing: *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.* (v.14)
 - a. Are there times we curse those who persecute us?
 - b. In what ways can we bless those who persecute us?
 - c. What are some reasons we feel like holding back good will to those who persecute us?
 - d. Read 1 Peter 3:8-13. What are some principles we need to keep in mind with this text?
 3. Be Empathetic: *Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.* (v.15)
 - a. What is the difference between sympathy and empathy?
 - b. Rejoicing is easy with others, or is it? Have there been times when others are rejoicing and you don't feel like rejoicing with them? What heart issue do we have which would keep us from desiring to rejoice with others?
 - c. What makes weeping with those who weep not easy? Has someone ever wept with you?
 4. Be Like-Minded: *Be of the same mind toward one another.* (v.16)
 - a. What are some practical reasons we should be of the same mind toward one another?
 - b. Do you find yourself trying to get others to be "of your mind" more often than you are trying to be "of their mind"? Why do we do this? What steps can we take to be more like minded?
 5. Be Humble: *Do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.* (v.16)
 - a. What does it mean to be haughty in mind?
 - b. How are we wise in our own estimation?
 - c. What are some practical ways we can notch down our thinking about our own self?
 - d. Do you know any humble people that you would like to have rub off on you?
 6. How can we cultivate our love for Christ so we might love others as we should?
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