

SERMON NOTES:

Series: Just Call Me Old-Fashioned | Part 5: Christians Should Be Known by Their Love

Just Call Me Old Fashioned...but I believe Christians should be known by the way they love.

John 13:34-35 (NLT)

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."

The love of Jesus was without reservation and without limit.

Jesus expects us to love in the same manner.

In the earliest centuries of the church divine love was indeed the hallmark of the community of Jesus: (for example Ignatius of Antioch *Letter to the Ephesians* 4.1; Justin Martyr *1 Apology* 1.16; Minucius Felix *Octavius* 9). Tertullian (born around 150AD, considered one of the great church fathers) reports that the pagans said of the Christians, "**See, they say, how they love one another . . . how they are ready even to die for one another**" (*Apology* 39).

E. R. Dodds, himself not a Christian (focused on mysticism and psychic research), thinks that the genuine love and unity among Christians was "a major cause, perhaps the strongest single cause, of the spread of Christianity" (Dodds 1965:138). He goes on to note, "Love of one's neighbour is not an exclusively Christian virtue, but in our period [from the second century A.D. to Constantine, early in the third century] the Christians appear to have practised it much more effectively than any other group" (Dodds 1965:136-37).

*"Such cohesiveness is part of what made Christianity attractive to Constantine, for he saw that it would help unify the empire. Before Constantine, when one became a Christian there was no question but that a death to self was involved in being a Christian. But this changed after Constantine, and so it is not surprising to find Chrysostom, preaching in the fourth and early fifth century, chastising his congregation for their lack of love. In contrast to the earlier age, he now must say, "There is nothing else that causes the Greeks [that is, the non-Christians] to stumble, except that there is no love. . . . We, we are the cause of their remaining in their error. Their own doctrines they have long condemned, and in like manner they admire ours, but they are hindered by our mode of life" (In John 72.5). In parts of the world today the church continues to be the greatest obstacle to people's coming to believe that the Son has come into the world, sent from the Father."*ⁱ

The question is, how can we, Lifehouse, raise the bar and reclaim this high standard and hallmark of faith?

The love that Jesus is speaking of is not simply a feeling.

Love is willing and doing the best for the other person:

1 John 3:16-18 (NLT)

¹⁶We 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. ¹⁷If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God’s love be in that person?

¹⁸Dear children, let’s not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.

THE APOSTLE PAUL ON EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE IN THE COMMUNITY

Ephesians 4:31-32 (NLT)

³¹Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. ³²Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

Ephesians 4:31-32 (MSG)

³¹⁻³²Make a clean break with all cutting, backbiting, profane talk. Be gentle with one another, sensitive. Forgive one another as quickly and thoroughly as God in Christ forgave you.

Ephesians 4:1-3 (NLT)

¹Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. ²Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love. ³Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.

Colossians 3:12-14 (NLT)

¹²Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. ¹³Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. ¹⁴Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony.

Colossians 3:12-14 (NIV)

¹²Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Romans 12:9-10 (NIV)

⁹Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Romans 12:9-10 (NLT)

⁹Don’t just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. ¹⁰Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.

Romans 12:10 (MSG)

⁹⁻¹⁰ Love from the center of who you are; don't fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle.

Galatians 6:2-13 (NLT)

² Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ. ³ If you think you are too important to help someone, you are only fooling yourself. You are not that important.

⁴ Pay careful attention to your own work, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won't need to compare yourself to anyone else. ⁵ For we are each responsible for our own conduct.

⁶ Those who are taught the word of God should provide for their teachers, sharing all good things with them.

⁷ Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. ⁸ Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. ⁹ So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up. ¹⁰ Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.

1 John 2:6 (NLT)

⁶ Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NLT)

²² But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

ⁱ IVP Commentary on John 13