

Belonging to One Another

Week 3: A Body that Loves

Scripture:

Romans 12:9-10

Motivation (Why You Need This):

We've already seen that the body is given (vv.1-2) and the body serves (vv. 3–8).

Now Paul turns to the heart of what binds the body together: love. But not love in the abstract. A specific kind of love.

If we're not careful, we buy into the belief that action is equal to love.

In other words, if I show up, my actions demonstrate that I'm loving.

However, there is a component Paul calls us toward that requires both *action* and *heart posture*...and that is love – a certain kind of love.

Before we jump into Romans and look at *love*, look at 1 John.

1 John 4:12 (ESV) No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

Notice two things...

- No one has seen God
- However, others “see” God when we love each other

So loving one another becomes important because it's the way people see God.

Today, I want to talk about what that love looks like, why it must be present in our church, and how it binds us together.

As I said on week one of this series...

The structures of this church can introduce you to people. They cannot love those people for you.

I want to challenge you to discover and practice love toward one another.

Information (What You Need to Know):

Romans 12:9 (ESV) Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. **10** Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

We'll take these verses phrase by phrase...

▪ **Let love be genuine or sincere** (take off your mask with one another)

- ✓ Define what *love* is here

“Occurs 116 times across 26 New Testament books. It is never used of romantic passion and only rarely of natural affection. Rather, it denotes a holy, self-giving disposition that *originates in God*, is *displayed perfectly in Jesus Christ*, and is *implanted in believers by the Holy Spirit*.” – Topical Lexicon (Greek)

- ✓ Define what *genuine* is here

- Carries glimpses of *without hypocrisy, behavior free from selfish motives, and transparency of heart where outward action and inward reality agree*
- Genuine or sincere love means that I love you as you are, even when you aren't who you should be and vice versa

Ephesians 4:31 (ESV) Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. **32** Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

▪ **Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good** (be honest with one another)

“Love is not genuine when it leads a person to do something evil, allows a person to do evil, or avoids doing that which is good. Love knows the difference between right and wrong. The church must hate what God hates and love what God loves.” – Christ Centered Commentary

- ✓ Evil should not only grieve the believer's heart but also lead us to action with one another in love.

Galatians 6:1 (ESV) Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.

- ✓ Real love does not flatter, enable, or pretend. Loving people are honest. Niceness avoids hard conversations. Love has them.

▪ **Love one another with brotherly affection** (treat one another as family)

- ✓ The church is more than a gathering; it is a spiritual family
- ✓ In the early church people lost family/social belonging, church was life-giving
- ✓ Treat one another with genuine warmth, tenderness, and affection

- **Outdo one another in showing honor** (speak well of one another)
 - ✓ Theological Depth
 - All are created in the image of God
 - Gifts differ so we honor all gifts and parts of the body
 - ✓ Christ's Example
 - Christ set aside His heavenly home to come to earth for us
 - Christ goes to the heavenly throne to provide us help in time of need
 - ✓ Practical Outworking
 - Words – speak highly of others rather than tear them down
 - Service – put the needs of others above your own
 - Encourage – lift one another up in times of failure and victory

Application (What You Need to Do):

A loving church is not built by people who merely attend the same service. It is built by people who choose to move toward one another.

So this week, take four steps...

- **Take off the mask**
Choose a trusted person in this church and let them know how you are really doing. Genuine love begins when outward appearances and inward reality start to agree.
- **Tell the truth in love**
Is someone you care about drifting, struggling, or making destructive choices? Do not gossip about them or quietly withdraw from them. Pray, examine your own heart, and then speak to them gently and honestly.
- **Treat someone like family**
Move beyond the people you already know. Invite someone to lunch, make a phone call, sit with someone new, or check on someone who has been absent. **Do not wait for the church to create belonging for you. Practice it.**
- **Give honor before you receive it**
Encourage someone specifically. Speak well of them. Thank them for the way God uses them. Look for a need you can meet without being noticed or repaid.

Church, people cannot see God with their physical eyes. But according to 1 John, they can see evidence of Him when His people genuinely love one another.

Let us become a church where the masks come off, the truth is spoken with gentleness, strangers become family, and honor is given freely.

Do not merely attend church. Love the church.