

# Relationships

## Introduction:

The Church is a community of believers in Jesus Christ. The Bible describes this community in many ways. It is the Body of Christ; He is the Head and believers are His Body. It is a family unit with a Father who is the epitome of love and mercy. It is depicted as fruit bearing branches growing out of a single Vine. All of the members of the community are citizens of the Kingdom of God who are on a temporary work visa in a foreign land. In every metaphor of the Church, we can clearly see that each individual is an essential part of the whole and each is completely dependent on Christ and interdependent on the other individuals in the community. Last week we discussed the indispensable need to abide in Christ. This week we will deal with Scriptural instructions for maintaining healthy relationships with one another in the Body.

*Ephesians 4:1-3*

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

Scripture Focus: John 13:34-35; John 15:12; Romans 12

Scripture Memory: 1 Corinthians 13:4 – 7

## The Foundation of Our Relationships is Love:

The first thing we need to understand is that all of our relationships are to be based on love. Everything we say to or about another person is to be motivated by our love for them.

John 13:34-35

34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

John 15:12

12 "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

The above Scripture tells us to love one another. Is this a suggestion or a guideline? No, Jesus gives us this commandment that we love one another. It is not optional! And like all commandments given us from God, it cannot be done in our own strength. It is given to prompt us to rely upon Christ to fulfill it through us. As we allow Christ to live through us, we are able to love others with His love, not our imitation of it.

First let's get a good understanding of the meaning of the word love. In our society today, the word love is used interchangeably with like and lust. In the language of the new testament there are three words that are often translated in English as love.

Phileo (fileo) – brotherly love, having affection for or liking someone. This is the word we might use for the friends we choose to spend time with because we enjoy their company.

Eros (eros) – sexual passion both appropriately and inappropriately expressed.

Agape (agaph) – holding someone in high esteem, seeing value in them and seeking the best for them even though they don't deserve it and it's going to require self sacrifice. Agape is expressed to others without regard to what they deserve. It is not sentimentality; it is the way God loves each of us. The first two types of "love" are driven largely by emotion and personal preference. The third however is not governed at all by emotion. Emotion often follows the expression of agape love, but it never initiates it. We are not commanded to like everyone, but we are commanded to highly value everyone and seek the best for them at our expense. This is the characteristic that identifies us as disciples of Jesus!

Let's look at one of the best know Scripture passages on the meaning of agape love.

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1 Corinthians 13:4-7

4 Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. 7 It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. NRSV

Love is	Love is not
Patient	Envious
Kind	Boastful
Rejoices in the truth	Arrogant
Helps carry the burdens of others	Rude
Hopes for what is best	Self Absorbed
Has staying power	Irritable
	Resentful or Vindictive
	Enjoying sin
	Skeptical

## Jesus Models Healthy, Mature Relationships?

- He loves everyone unconditionally and without partiality, and because He loves us, He disciplines us when we stubbornly head in the wrong direction. (Tough Love)
  - In Caesarea Philippi Jesus praised Peter for his confession that Jesus was the Christ the Son of God and moments later when Peter denied Jesus' revelation of the cross, Jesus said "Get behind me Satan!"
  - Clearing the temple of money changers
- Motivated by love, He brings dignity to the lowly and humility to the proud.
- Even His anger is motivated by love (not because someone offended Him).
- Though sufficient in Himself, He works in community with team members less capable than He.
- He does not control others, but is eager to guide them if they will follow Him.
- He is not a people pleaser, trying to curry favor with people who can promote His cause.
- He does not let tradition, peer pressure or pressing responsibilities distract Him from lovingly interacting with the people He meets each day.
  - Woman at the well
  - Attending Levi's (Matthew) celebration
  - Woman who touched His robe
- He serves others and allows them to serve Him.
- He does not draw attention to Himself
- He is grace and truth – two critical components of deep relationships.

## One Another Passages:

<p>Romans 12:9 &amp; 13 Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality. NLT</p> <p>Romans 14:19 So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.</p> <p>Philippians 2:3-4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Love hates sin because it destroys the loved one. When you see someone commit sin, should you confront them or not?  Do you reject someone or look down upon them when they are caught in a sin?</li> <li>• Love enjoys offering genuine praise to others. Do you refrain from praising others openly?  If yes, is it because you don't want them to become prideful or because you secretly want to be exalted instead?</li> </ul>
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<p>Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; 4 do not <i>merely</i> look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.</p> <p>Hebrews 10:24-25 Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, 25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near.</p>	<p>What motivates you to praise someone? (Because you want something from them?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Love is on the alert to the needs of others. Are you too focused on your own problems and interests to be aware of the needs of others?  When you see someone in need, do you avoid stopping to help?</li> <li>• Love eagerly welcomes opportunities to serve others. What is your awareness level regarding the needs of others?  What causes you to hold back from serving others? (i.e. Helping someone over a rough hurdle (financial, health, relationship problem, visiting shut-ins, making a new person feel welcomed at Church or in the neighborhood, etc.)  What are your expectations from those whom you have helped?  Is it easier for you to serve than allow someone to serve you?</li> </ul>
<p>Romans 15:7 Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.</p> <p>Ephesians 4:32 And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.</p> <p>1 Thessalonians 5:15 See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all men.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Love is not earned it is given to those who don't deserve it. Do you avoid people who behave in a manner contrary to your beliefs?  Do people need to prove themselves to you before you will accept them?</li> <li>• Love forgives before the offender repents. If someone repeatedly does you wrong, are you willing to continually forgive them?  Does forgiveness mean the offender is free from the consequences of their actions?  What part should you play in bringing consequences to bear for the wrongs done to you?</li> </ul>
<p>Ephesians 5:21 Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. (NRSV)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Love willingly concedes to the wishes of others. Do you need to have the last word in a disagreement?  Do you usually get to do things the way you want to do them? What happens when someone crosses you?</li> </ul>