

john 15:4  
**A b i d e** in **M E**



Bible studies for disciples who make disciples

Loudonville Community Church

Volume 4 - Number 5  
The week of November 11, 2018

Sermon Series: *The Real Thing*  
The Brightness of Love and the Blindness of Hate  
1 John 2:7-11

**THIS WEEK'S CORE STATEMENT**

**Tangible Compassion** *Matthew 25:31-46*

Showing compassion to those in need and so minister to Jesus Himself.

**What "One Another" Means for Our Mission**<sup>1</sup>

by Jared Musgrove

For far too long, we whose hearts honor Christ have had no credibility with those whose do not. We are commanded to "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have within you" (1 Peter 3). Well, they stopped asking a long time ago. Maybe we've kept our hope too much within us. And in most cases, we have stopped arresting their attention altogether.

Our Christian life together all too often looks like those of neighbors whose hearts are far from Christ. We gather with one another as Christian believers and the focus turns insular and isolated. Perhaps even inhospitable. We honor Christ in our hearts but forgot the outworking of such a faith and hope. Our holiness is not whole when it terminates on us and our church. The preaching of the gospel for all the world to see begins with one another and continues with one another. As Robert Coleman wrote, "One living sermon is worth a hundred explanations."

Practicing ministry one to another, first to the believer and then to the outsider, is the biblical model of how the nations will have their attention arrested to the one, true, and living God. This is the case with Moses' preaching to a generation settling a land surrounded by "not God's people," all the way to the New Testament and its collection of 59\* "one another" commands and statements (the majority of which written by the missionary Paul himself). Across biblical history the people of God are charged to image God to the nations around them by doing the commands of God with one another such that "when the nations hear all this they say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?" (Deuteronomy 4:6-7).

One-another ministry that serves the believers and publicly states the case that God's people are different is the way to make the world look again -- this time at true Christianity on full display. A group of believers unified is a crucial time-tested, biblical evangelistic/discipleship strategy, one based in Christ's command: "Love one another as I have loved you, you must also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:33-35).

Spurred on and given courage by such love brothers and sisters will go, teach, baptize, tell, invite, live, preach, serve. All the action verbs we love in church mission statements come alive in community and arrest the attention of the nations next door. The mission of a gospel-centered community begins and ends with love in the context of the fellowship He's already created. Pastor-theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote that such Christian fellowship "is not an ideal which we must realize; it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate."

And since “love one another” is a command, it can either be done or disobeyed. And in our disobedience to love one another as Jesus has loved us, we’ve failed to arrest the world’s attention. It is a loss of holiness. And thus, a loss of distinctiveness. Pastor-evangelist Francis Schaeffer calls Christ’s commandment in John 13 “the mark of the Christian.” He writes, “The point is that it is possible to be a Christian without showing the mark, but if we expect non-Christians to know that we are Christians, we must show the mark... This passage reveals the mark that Jesus gives to label a Christian not just in one era or in one locality but at all times and all places until Jesus returns.”

Tell the nations what we believe and why we believe. And once we tell them what we believe, what will we invite them into? How will they see us live our belief? White-boarded strategy around this may seem faster than Scripture. But it will not be lasting. The wells of human sadness, grief, abuse, sorrow, relational and unlamented pain require a plan of love given us long ago.

There are two humanities, yes, and the basis of the community under God’s Holy Spirit is truth in love; the basis of the community under humanity is desire. But what do these neighbors desire? They desire to see love truly lived out. Recently we had a Home Group at The Village Church invite in the unbelieving mother of one of its members. She was not a Christian believer but kept coming to the group. When asked why she kept coming back, her response was, “no one has ever loved me like this.” This is only the latest such story. And it won’t be the last.

Love of one another is the final apologetic to a dying culture. Jesus gives non-believers the right to know whether you or I or this church are believers based on their observance of our love for one another. Love. Without love or true reconciliation on display we’ve no credibility. Because they see no oneness in us, we are left as a clanging cymbal of a church that shouldn’t expect the nations to believe that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Schaeffer writes:

Jesus did give the mark that will arrest the attention of the world... Because every man is made in the image of God and has therefore aspirations for love, there is something that can be in every geographical climate – in every point in time – which cannot fail to arrest attention: The love that true Christians show for each other... the observable love and oneness among true Christians exhibited before the world must certainly cross all the lines which divide mankind.

We will practice the time-tested, Scripture-commanded plan of one-another ministry where, just like the Lord Jesus, everything done with the few has its sights on the salvation of the multitudes. Robert Coleman writes in *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, “We must decide where we want our ministry to count -- in the momentary applause of popular recognition or in the reproduction of our lives with a few chosen people who will carry on our work after we have gone. Really it is a question of which generation we are living for.” Nowhere does this become more of a reality of replication than in a small group of three. Or twelve. Such groups were the context of “love one another” for Jesus. He commanded His disciples and followers to do likewise. And the world was never the same.

The ministry of love outside of Sunday morning gatherings creates the credibility that not only arrests, but keeps the attention of those inside the church and outside it. It allows the hearing of the preaching of the Word and the bold telling of the gospel toward the expansion of God’s Kingdom. Neither the congregation nor those outside will hear the Word apart from experiencing the Word through one-another ministry in the mundane miracle that is everyday life under God. What else stands a chance to arrest the attention of a dying, angry world but such arresting love on full display for all to see? And believe.

<sup>1</sup> Jared Musgrove, For the Church, <https://ftc.co/resource-library/blog-entries/what-one-another-means-for-our-mission>, October 11, 2018.

STEP ONE . . .

**OBSERVATION**

*What does the text say?*

**1 John 2:7-11**

<sup>7</sup>Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. <sup>8</sup>At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. <sup>9</sup>Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. <sup>10</sup>Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. <sup>11</sup>But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

- Place brackets around the word *beloved* and write the words “Loved by God” and “Loved by John.”
- Circle all four occurrences of the word commandment.
- Double underline the phrase, “at the same time” (v.8).
- Place quotation marks around the words, *whoever says* in verse 9.
- Write the word “Gnostics” above the word *whoever* in verse 9.
- Write the word “Believers” above the word *whoever* in verse 10.
- Write the word “Unbelievers” above the word *whoever* in verse 11.
- Circle the words loves and light in verse 10 and draw a connecting line between the two.
- Underline the phrase *in him there is no cause for stumbling* (v. 10). Above it, write the words “fall into sin.”
- Circle the words *hates* and *darkness* in verse 11 and draw a connecting line between the two.

## INTERPRETATION

*What does the text mean?*

## Commentary

<sup>7</sup>**Beloved.** [*Agapetoi*] – one of six occurrences in this letter indicating John’s affection for his readers (2:7; 3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11). He expresses his love for them before commanding them to love. They are not just dear friends. **I am writing you no new commandment.** In verses 3-6 John uses the plural “commandments” twice. Here he uses the singular **commandment** four times. He is narrowing his focus from the previous paragraph to one specific commandment. It is **no new commandment** in the sense that it is not novel. He is not urging them to obey something they have never heard before.

**But an old commandment that you had from the beginning.** The new commandment is an **old** one because it draws upon God’s character in creating the world. The command is as old as God. The command to love also has ancient roots in Leviticus 19:18. **The beginning.** John uses language that is reminiscent of creation itself. **You had** this commandment all along. The message is old and yet current. The commandment was both old and new for John.

**The old commandment is the word that you have heard.** John is not imposing on them a new moral obligation.

<sup>8</sup>**At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you.** The old commandment goes all the way back to Moses. **At the same time,** it took on a new character with the coming of Jesus. Jesus said, “A new commandment I give you: love one another” (John 13:34). There are two different words for **new** in the Greek NT. One means new with respect to time. The other word, the one John uses here, means **new** with respect to quality.

**Which is true in him and in you.** Literally, “which [thing] is true in him and in you.” **True** [*alethes*] in this case means something that is truly expressed. **In him** refers to Jesus; **in you** refers to John’s readers and us. John is writing of a new commandment which finds true expression in Jesus and in all believers. **Because the darkness is passing away.**

Darkness occurs seven times in 1 John. It refers to either sinful behavior specifically, or the sinful behavior that prevails in the world. **Passing away** [*parago*] is stated in the present tense which means that as an ongoing event it is “coming to an end.”

**And the true light is already shining.** The darkness is fading away because the true light [Jesus] has begun to shine (see John 1:4-9).

<sup>9</sup>**Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever says.** This has been John’s way of expressing claims made by the early Gnostics in Ephesus (see also 2:4,6). They were claiming to be **in the light**. Their claim contradicted their practice because they were also, specifically, hating believers. The present tense indicates an active, ongoing hatred.

<sup>10</sup>**Whoever loves his brother abides in the light.** True believers, identified as those who abide in the light, love one another. Love is the theme of this section, though this is the only time the word itself appears in verses 7-11. **Whoever loves** is expressed in the present tense indicating whoever is consistently loving their brother.

**And in him there is no cause for stumbling.** Literally, there is nothing to cause stumbling in him. People who walk in darkness stumble often. **Stumbling** [*skandalon*] always refers to causing some sort of harm to someone else.

<sup>11</sup>**But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going.** People who hate walk in the realm where sinful behavior predominates. They do not have the truth to guide them, so they don’t know where they are going.

**Because the darkness has blinded his eyes.** If a pattern of hatred characterizes someone, they are in darkness, walk in darkness, directionless, and blind.

THIS WEEK’S  
COMPLEMENTARY PASSAGE

John 13:31-35

<sup>31</sup>When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. <sup>32</sup>If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. <sup>33</sup>Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’ <sup>34</sup>A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”



STEP THREE . . .

**EXPLORING** the passage through discussion

**Questions**

1. Read 1 John 2:7-8. What is the commandment referred to in both verses? In what sense is it old? In what sense is it new? Why does John go out of his way to stress its oldness and newness?
2. John refers to the command to love as something his readers had known from the beginning. What priority should this command occupy in the early stages of Christian discipleship? What “good things” do we tend to emphasize before this command?
3. What passes off as love today is anything from an emotion, a preference, a passion or even a lust. How would you define biblical love?
4. What are some ways that Jesus demonstrated selfless love?
5. The biblical concept of love is deep and wide. In what ways can Christians demonstrate genuine love?
6. What is the inconsistency about the person described in verse 9? What does the way in which we treat other believers reveal about ourselves? What is the evidence that a person is wandering “in spiritual darkness”?
7. According to verse 10, what is another way that we can demonstrate love for one another?



Sunday, November 11 thru Saturday, November 17, 2018  
John 4-6, Psalm 137; John 7-9, Psalm 138; John 10-12, Psalm 139;  
John 13-15, Psalm 140; John 16-18, Psalm 141; John 19-21, Psalm 142

## THE MISSION OF LOUDONVILLE COMMUNITY CHURCH

We are committed to reaching and teaching people to become devoted followers of Jesus Christ, connecting them to one another and sending them to serve their families, communities and world.

### 10 CORE PRACTICES OF A DISCIPLE

**Undiluted Worship** *Matthew 22:37-40*

Loving the Lord God with all of our physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual vigor and, my neighbor as myself.

**Constant Abiding** *John 15:1-11*

Abiding in Christ in order to be faithful and bear fruit.

**Bible Study** *Hebrews 4:12*

Reading the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for daily life.

**Desperate Prayer** *Psalms 66:16-20*

Praying to God to know Him, laying requests before Him and finding direction for daily life.

**Biblical Community** *Acts 2:44-47*

Fellowshipping with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, other people's lives and, in the world.

**Spiritual Gifts** *Romans 12:4-6*

Using my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

**Total Forgiveness** *Ephesians 4:30*

Practicing forgiving others as God has forgiven me in Christ.

**Tangible Compassion** *Matthew 25:31-46*

Showing compassion to those in need and so minister to Jesus Himself.

**Generous Giving** *2 Corinthians 8:7*

Giving away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

**God Space** *Ephesians 6:19-20*

Increasing the quantity and quality of our gospel conversations.

## Memory Verse

<sup>10</sup> **Whoever loves his brother abides in the light,  
and in him there is no cause for stumbling.**

**1 John 2:10**