

John 13 verses 31-35

I like it when the Bible keeps things simple.

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.”

That's it! One command! How much simpler does it get?

A little girl writes in a letter at Sunday School, “Dear God, I bet it's very hard for you to love everybody in the whole wide world. There are only four people in our family and none of us can do it.”

So maybe it isn't that simple, but it is important.

Today I want to look at the topic of Love and ask three simple questions about this one simple word—Why, Who, and How!

Why? Because Jesus said so!

When my children were young and started getting older I started getting sick and tired of answering all the why questions. So in the end when they asked why they have to do something, I simply said, “Cause I said so!” It seemed to work better than all the reasons I could have given.

Yet Jesus **does** give us a reason. He says, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciple—that’s Why!”

Your love reflects Christ in the world better than any explanation or reason you could possibly give that He is Risen!

If you love as Jesus loved you could just throw away all of the other things you are supposed to do. That’s right! Just get rid of all the laws and the 10 commandments—you don’t need them. If you love you won’t steal, kill, commit adultery, lie, cheat, covet.

Love fulfils the Law—that’s Why!

Notice who Jesus is addressing when he gives the command. He is addressing his disciples, people who were already part of his family, people who had experienced his grace, people who were in a relationship with him.

This new command does not tell you, “Do this if you want to be saved,” but rather, “Do this if you want to glorify God—Do this if you want to praise God—Do this if you want to serve God.”

It is not a command to qualify you for the kingdom. It is a command to you as a member of God’s family.

Here is the only place in the Bible where Jesus addresses his disciples as “little children. He speaks to us as part of the family, and how we are to act as family members.

As a parent, I use to give instructions to my children. If they didn't listen to me, which was quite often, I was sad, hurt, even angry, but I didn't throw them out of the family. Their obedience didn't make them members of the family, their birth did. Likewise we are members of God's family not by what we have done but by birth.

And our obedience is how we glorify God.

Jesus tells us we give Glory to the Father of everyone, His family, by loving one another.

If it is your intention to glorify God, to praise God who has made you a member of his household, if you want to respond to God's grace in your life, if you want to respond to God's love in your life, if you want to be a responsible family member, here is how you do that—Love one another

The question of who to love is the most simple. Those who are part of God's family—All people!

God's people were greatly divided when Jesus give this command.

Even within the Jewish family there were the Pharisees and Sadducees, the Herodians and Zealots who were constantly fighting over all kinds of matters, they were not loving the aliens or strangers in their land, they hated the Romans, they despised their neighbours to the north—the Samaritans. Yet this is who Jesus commanded they love.

I saw a letter written by a woman to her ex-fiancé that read, “Dearest Jimmy, No words could ever express the great sorrow I’ve felt since breaking our engagement. Please say you’ll take me back. I realise that no-one could ever take your place in my heart. Please forgive me. I love you. I love you. I love you. Yours forever, Marie.

PS—Congratulations on winning the lottery.”

We’re to love all people—even those who dump us and those who can do nothing for us! That’s who we are to love!

So how do we keep this simple, yet seemingly impossible command of Jesus?

First we must see what love looks like. Once we come to see what true love is, then we know we can’t do it!

At least not on our own! The best definition I can see is “Working toward the benefit of another!” You don’t even have to like a person to show love. Love is not just a feeling or emotion. Love is action.

Two stories—that show what love does or doesn’t look like.

A young man calls his girlfriend one evening and woos her with his words. “My love for you is higher than any mountain top. It is deeper than any valley. I would travel to the stars and swim across any ocean to show you how much I truly love you.” With tears in her voice the young

woman says, "That is the most moving thing anyone has ever said to me. I must see you right away.

Can you come over now?" To this the young Casanova replied, "I'd love to, but it's raining!"

Too much of our so-called love is just that words.

A Celtic legend tells of an eagle swooping down and carrying off a little baby to its nest high upon the cliff of a mountain. The men of the village tried one after another to scale the high and rugged cliff, but one after one failed. Finally, a small, frail woman did what no man had been able to do, and she scaled the mountain and returned the baby to safety. She was the baby's mother.

That's what love looks like.

So how? How can we glorify God through our active love for others?

Only through the Cross and the Empty Tomb!

Eric Clapton sings a Blues song that goes like this, "Before you accuse me, take a look at yourself. Before you accuse me, take a look at yourself."

That's what the cross does. Through our meditation upon the cross we can take a good look at ourselves and hopefully begin understanding the love God must have for us in spite of ourselves. We deserve death and damnation. The love of Christ offers forgiveness and eternal life.

We are to share this love with all people, ALL Gods Family, Not just those we consider acceptable.

But once the good news of Jesus kicks into our lives it makes the impossible, possible. We can begin to work for the benefit of others knowing and seeing this is how we glorify the God who give us everything.

Whoever they are, wherever they come from, whatever they may have done, we are called to love and to serve them.

And when we find ourselves doing the good works that the law demands, We can rest assured it is not us that do them but God who is actually working through us.

God working through you—Doesn't that Give you the shivers! That's how we love!

My prayer is that this week we will all start seeing others as part of Gods Family, and as such part of ours, and will love each and everyone of them, as we are loved by God

The Words of When I Survey say it all.

See from his head, his hands, his feet, the sorrow and love mingled together. A love so amazing, so divine, that it demands you soul, your life, your all.

And remember

By this everyone will know that you are a disciple, if you have love for one another.

AMEN