



In

Unison

The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the Lord.
2 Chronicles 5:13

Loving One Another

Loving God

The apostle John sets out the principle for us near the end of his first epistle. There he tells us

- *how we are to love God*
- *how we are to love His children*
- *the Lord's commandment about this*

John begins by answering the question, "How do we love God?"

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. 1 John 5:1 nasb

Everyone who believes that Jesus is God's Son is *begotten* of God. This is the same word Jesus used when He explained to Nicodemus that

"...unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."
John 3:3 nasb

John tells us that we love God by loving His children. Then he goes on to answer the next question, which is, "How do we love His children?"

Obedient Love

Surely there must be many ways we can show our love for each other—as many ways as there are those who believe. But what is the one acceptable way to love each other?

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments.

1 John 5:2

The apostle John tells us that we demonstrate our love for each other by obeying God's commandments. What commandments might these be?

And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.

1 John 4:21

A Broad Devotion

It sounds as if the apostle is taking us in circles. What he is saying is that when we enter God's family through the blood of Christ, we enter into an intimate relationship—not only with the eternal God of heaven, but also with those who share that same intimacy with Him. And He accepts our love for each other as love for Him. More than that, He *commands* us to demonstrate this love.

How do we love God? The first way is to worship Him directly—on our knees, with uplifted hands, with our hearts open and offered up. The second way to love God is to love *each other*—to lift up to Him the sacrifice of grace shown to our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

"Love the Lord your God with

all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

This is the first and greatest commandment.' Matt 22:37-38

The first, most important, and most direct method we have to show our love for God is by raising up to Him words of worship and praise. We call out His attributes, thereby proclaiming His lordship over our lives.

But we also love God by loving *each other*. Worshiping God is not limited to those times we are settled into the stiff-backed pews of the church building. We are given the opportunity to declare our love for Him every day as we mingle with the rest of His children—our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Mortar Between the Stones

“God has a special building. Do you know what it is? It’s the visible, living assembly of the redeemed saints. When we come together, we constitute the temple of God in a unique way. So, we are not only individual temples; collectively we are one great temple in which God dwells.” (John MacArthur, *True Worship*, Moody Press, 1985)

Because what the world calls “fellowship” is easier than worship, the two are often intermingled into an unrecognizable stew that is neither.

Worship, by definition, places God before everything else. Love for our fellow believers in Christ can only be categorized as worship when it begins with, and is rooted in, our love for God.

Koinonia

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:2-3

True Christian love for a brother or sister is the Biblical concept of fellowship. In the New Testament the Greek word behind most occurrences of the word is *koinonia*—which means a partnership, a participation in another’s life.

Something far deeper and more profound than chatting over the punch bowl, or discussing the weather, the concept of *koinonia* describes two or more

people who have made an investment in each other’s lives based on their mutual love for the Lord.

True koinonia fellowship can only take place when one first has connected solidly with God; more than that, it requires even a steady, on-going pursuit of the Master. Given that pursuit, fellowship might even be considered the priority of the church.

If the necessary worship is assumed by the very definition of the process, then out of that worship flows the edification, the equipping, the encouragement so necessary to a healthy body of Christ.

The Outflow of Grace

After six days of doing battle with the lords of this temporal kingdom, we should approach the sanctuary—be it the sanctuary of the church, or the sanctuary of our heart—with a singular dedication to come face to face with the Lord of the eternal Kingdom. Nothing should stand in the way of our reconnecting with God, the exquisite beauty of His presence, and the restorative power of His touch.

Moments spent in the presence of our God, moments of reverent humility met by His outpouring grace, become the sweet outflow of our own grace displayed to each other.

And *that* is fellowship.

A Badge of Unity

“Love—and the unity it attests to—is the mark Christ gave Christians to wear before the world. Only with this mark may the world know that Christians are indeed Christians and that Jesus was sent by the Father.” (Francis Schaeffer)



Scripture

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:34-35

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other. John 15:12-17

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellow-man has fulfilled the law. Romans 13:8

Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. 1 Thes 4:9

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. 1 Peter 1:22

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. 1 Peter 4:8

This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. 1 John 3:11

And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. 1 John 3:23

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 1 John 4:7

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. 1 John 4:11-12

And now, dear lady, I am not writing you a new command but one we have had from the beginning. I ask that we love one another. And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love. 2 John 1:5-6

CommUnity

"Fellowship with Christians is for the sake of fellowship with God." (J.I. Packer)

"When we take God for our God, we take His people for our people." (Matthew Henry)

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We Are God's People (Leech)
...He wills us be a family
Diverse yet truly one...

In Christ There is No East or West (Oxenham)
...Who serves my Father as a son
Is surely kin to me.

I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord (Dwight)
For her my tears shall fall;
For her my prayers ascend;
To her my cares and toils be given,
Till toils and cares shall end.

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee (van Dyke)
...Father love is reigning o'er us,
Brother love binds man to man.

We Give Thee But Thine Own (How)
To comfort and to bless,
To find a balm for woe,
To tend the lone and fatherless,
Is angels' work below.

In Unison

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