

Building the Beloved Community Through Genuine Love

Rich Nathan

October 6–7, 2012

The Beloved Community Series

Romans 12.9–13

INTERACTING WITH THE SERMON

SYNOPSIS OF THE SERMON

In this weeks sermon, Rich discussed the value of genuine love in context of community. Just as you can tell the difference between a genuine smile and a fake smile you can see the difference between genuine love and fake love. A fake smile and disingenuous love just don't feel right even though the differences from the fake and authentic versions may be slight. One feels warm, transparent, and life-giving while the other feels counterfeit. So, How do you recognize real love? In Romans 12 Paul gives several indicators for how genuine love must look in order to be recognized as authentic.

1. **Genuine love is marked by obeying the God's commands.** There is a moral dimension; there is an inescapable inner component to genuine love. Jesus said "If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love (John 15)." If we want to say we love someone else, then we have to obey God's commands concerning how we relate to that person.
2. **Genuine love is marked by relating like family.** Jesus said, "Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother (Mark 3)." People of the ancient world defined themselves by what family they belonged; however, Jesus redefined the way we think about family. Genuine love is marked by relating to someone else as if they are part of your family: Caring for our sick, our emotionally broken, our financial struggling, our rejected, our young, our sad, and even caring for those of us needing extra grace in social skills such as telling the truth or relating to a person of opposite gender in a nonsexual way. It would be difficult to love just anyone with these problems, but for family, we would go that extra mile.
3. **Genuine love is marked by showing honor.** People deserve to be treated with respect, not because they've earned it, not because they are always kind and easy to get along with, but because they are a child of God. Genuine love is shown by honor which is demonstrated through little things in life such as saying please and thank you, celebrating a birthday, being a good tipper at a restaurant, keeping a secret, and not telling a joke at another person's expense. Love can be shown even in the smallest acts of honor.



4. **Genuine love is marked by God's energizing power.** We are spiritually combustible. Our nature is created to be set ablaze by the Spirit. We are spiritually most blessed, most victorious, most useable when we are ablaze. We are most God-like when we glow with holy flame – the flame of the indwelling Spirit. We can't love in an ongoing way unless we are set on fire by the Holy Spirit. It is by God's Holy Spirit alone that gives us the perseverance of loving people when it becomes difficult.

GETTING THE CONVERSATION STARTED

These questions can be used as ice-breakers in the beginning OR interwoven between the questions below to draw the group into the discussion.

- Was there anything in this week's sermon that stood out to you? Briefly share.
- Discuss some modern misconceptions of what love is.
- Describe a time when you felt most loved by community. What specifically did others do to create such impact?

SCRIPTURE STUDY

1 Corinthians

[Read through the chapter out loud]

Background and context: 1 Corinthians is a letter written by the Apostle Paul, addressing the Corinthians. Chapter 13 is a continuation of Paul's response to the Corinthians regarding their misguided belief that spiritual gifts determine some sort of superiority. But Paul calls the church out on their problems by showing them that the real issues at hand are not whose spiritual gifts are greater, but rather the issue is their lack of love for one another. Love should be at the center of all of their actions, not self interest. As they exercise their gifts love should be seeping through their every action.

Questions for discussion:

- What are the consequence of acting out spiritual gifts without having love (v.1-3)?
- How does Paul describe love (v.4-8)? Describe each of these words as they are called out. (e.g. Describe what it means to be patience, kind, not envy).



- Discuss where the source of love comes from and why Christians are called to carry out their lives with love?
- How does the lasting benefit of loving compare to the other giftings' benefit? How is this significant for Christians? For unbelievers?
- Loving others is often difficult to carry out with consistency– How do followers of Jesus remain in love for the long haul?
- How can we as the body of Christ improve in loving others in ways we may have failed to love in the past?

MINISTRY APPLICATION

Below you'll see some options for ministry time with your group. We always encourage you to reserve time in your group to pray for one another and wait on the Holy Spirit.

- We discussed loving others by first obeying what God has commanded. If you feel like there is an area of your life where you are struggling to obey a command of Jesus, tell someone tonight what you are struggling with and ask them to pray with you.
- We discussed how when we begin following Jesus, God redefines who our family is. Some of you are struggling to define who your family is in the body of Christ. We encourage you to get prayer for this.
- We discussed the importance of staying connected to the Holy Spirit as the source of Godly love. Please get prayer if you are finding it difficult to connect and receive from the Holy Spirit. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with His love.
- We discussed how we would like to improve in loving others. If there is a broken relationship that came to mind when we discussed ways that we have failed to love in the past, ask the Lord how He might want to bring healing into that past experience.

Announcements

Contact deb.george@vineyardcolumbus.org

- The Small Groups department is looking for a video intern. Ask your small groups if there is interest and email Deb details.
- We need new descriptions of your small groups to go into the booklets. Please stop by the Small Groups Counter for a form or email Deb.
- We anticipate small groups to grow significantly this fall with the Beloved Community Sermon Series. We are asking you to give 45 min this month after our weekend services to volunteer at the Small Groups counter. Please email Deb if you would like to participate in growing your group in this way.

