

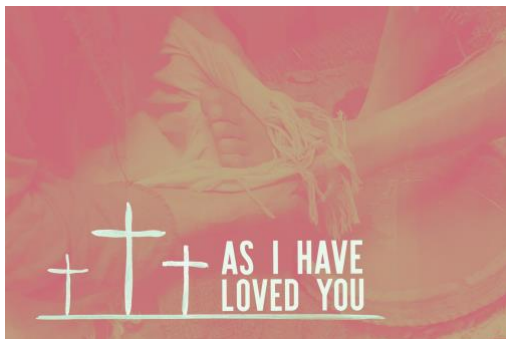
## Sermon #11: Genuine Love

July 2, 2023

Text: **Romans 12:3-21**

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### Sermon Open

In our 11th sermon on the Family of God, we explore 'Genuine Love' as the defining characteristic of our Christian community. This love transforms, unifies amidst diversity, and bears witness to the world. It builds unity, endures trials, and fosters mutual growth. This type of mutual love does not come easily or quickly, and there will always be challenges that the church must work through to experience it. But there are a mountain of blessings available to us if we will endeavor to love and serve one another with brotherly affection, as the word calls us to do.

### Exposition of the Text

The heart of our passage for this lesson is **Romans 12:9, Let love be genuine**. The exhortation in the passage is found in **v6, let us use [the gifts of God entrusted to us]**. Here we see our lessons from the previous 2 weeks tied in – that one of the ways we express genuine love for others in the church is through faithful and sacrificial service to one another with the spiritual gifts God has given to us. When we live in the church in this way, we can be sure that the Spirit of God will use us to bless others and simultaneously our fellow believers will be used to bless us. Surrounding the heart of the passage (**v9**) and the exhortation (**v6**) is a very distinct blue print for Christian living in the church, including the elements of humility (**v3**), unity in diversity (**v4-5**), discernment (**v9**), mutual honor (**v10**), generosity, hospitality (**v13**), and forgiveness when we offend one another (**v17**). Paul has in mind all of these elements and more as we strive to have our hearts knitted together to the point that when one rejoices, all rejoice, and when one weeps, all weep with them (**v15**).

### Life-Truths

How we live outwardly toward others in the church profoundly impacts our inward experience of God and his blessings. Yes, we are called as individuals to come to Jesus in faith and be forgiven as we repent of our sins and look to Him for salvation. As we are justified in Christ (declared not guilty of our sins), we have the foundation we need to build on. This building is our life in the body of Christ. God has designed for His people to live and worship as one body, while helping build one another up to mature faith, as we exercise the love of Jesus toward one another. This genuine love for the people in our church requires us to cling to Jesus and live His life – with a mindset of constant selflessness. When we live this way, Christian community is the brightest expression of the gospel of Jesus in a sin-darkened world.

### Application

Every instruction that we have looked at in this lesson requires of us to **look to Jesus**: To see His love for us and to love him in return. If our faith is weak, we should ask him to help us obey – **especially the first and greatest commandment, to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength**. As we keep looking to Jesus, we must expose ourselves to the risks of disappointment and hurt and the guarantee of sacrifice and service by connecting in community. The reward is the delight of God, the protection of the body, and our obedience to the second greatest commandment, to love one another as Christ loves us. What is at stake is the preaching of the Gospel to a dark world and our own ability to walk in the calling God has given us. When trials come and we are not living in a body of believers, we will find ourselves lonely, confused, and weakened. But we can also be assured that God has storehouses full of the blessings of His Kingdom ready for His people if we will ask Him to open them; asking that we will love Jesus more and adhere to the good works of faith.