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2026 ANNUAL THEME: “*Hope in Motion*” →

BIBLE STUDY

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“The Hope Hall of Fame (Part 1): Love One Another”
(John 13:34-35)

Topics

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Scripture Reference:

³⁴ I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35 NASB)

Reflection Questions

- A. Reflect on a recent situation: How did you demonstrate love, and what impact did it have on those involved?

B. What type of signature behavior, clothing, markings, or other identifiers do certain people use to show that they are special or unique?

Important Emphasis

There is one thing that a healthy church can't live without and that is Love. As a community that follows Christ there must be sincerity in our love, servitude that guides our love and spirituality that drives our love. **John 3:16**

“The first thing Christians do when they meet is give evidence of their love.”

- Love in Christian theology, the principle of God's action and man's response. *The Oxford Dictionary of Christian Church*
- The greatest of the theological virtues is Love **1 Corinthians 13:13 and 13:3-4**
- The love God has for his people is the primary truth. It is this love that undergirds all scripture. *Dictionary of the later New Testament*

St. Catherine of Siena, resolved the tension between the two precepts of love by insisting that in each case it is God's own love which draws the believer into itself, making him love God and creatures.

New Testament books insist that the saving work of Christ means that believers must live in love to one another. **Hebrews 13:1** let mutual love continue.

There must be an internal desire for us to love one another. Love must be supported by the exercise of the will. Those who have been saved by Christ must not live selfishly. Christian love must not be seen as an option for those who like that sort of thing. It is an imperative laid on all those who have experienced the salvation of Christ brought about at calvary.

Love defined

The Hebrew word for love among other is *chesed* refers to covenant love. Jehovah is the God who remembers and keeps his covenants in spite of the treachery of people.

The Greek word for love among others is agape or *agapao* used by believers to denote the special unconditional love.

- Love makes allowances
- Love tries to help
- Love looks at the good people do (in preference to dwelling on their defects)

“Loving the Christian family is of the first importance for those who seek to live out their lives as the servants of God in a troubled and all too often evil world.”

Johannine Gospel Love

Jesus is giving Fundamentals of Faith during this Farewell discourse!

The Johannine language that is familiar is agape this is demonstrated by Jesus **John 11:3,5,36 and John 13:1-5**. The prior foot washing also points to the interpretation of love as an active engagement. “Judas departure into the night v. 30 leads to a shout of triumph.”

This love for one another is what Jesus calls a new commandment! This implies the intensification of the command. The phrase a new commandment is an emphatic in the Greek. It is important. This is one place in the Gospel where Jesus uses the term new. It is presented as the marching order for the newly gathering messianic community.

Carson

“When people come to believe in Jesus and to become members of the church, they are to love all the other members. Life in the Christian community is meant, among other things, to introduce new believers to a community of love, a community in which the members strive to build one another up and to do this in love ; believers help one another.”

This love was new because the love of Christ’s friends for Christ’s sake was a new thing in the World. Christians have love for one another on account of Christ’s great love for them

- **Empowering utterance-** But such love flows from a radical following of Jesus and never from an imposition of one’s own world view of God’s design.
- **Embracing Agape-** The Testaments are also marked by a command to mutual love.

- **Emancipated internally-** Jesus gives a new commandment that provides clarity that connects with **Lev. 19:18** .

Key Words and Terms

Christ-like	Love
Commandment	Model
Community	New
Disciple	One Another
Emulate	Relationship
God	Sacrificial
Guiding Principle	Transform
Identity	Unconditional
Jesus	World

Outline

- I. This Love is Newly Commanded of You
- II. This Love Newly Identifies You
- III. This Love Newly Transforms You

Introduction

In the heart of Christian teaching lies a profound and transformative commandment: to love one another as Jesus has loved us. This Bible study lesson, centered on John 13:34-35, invites us to explore the depth and significance of this divine mandate. As followers of Christ, we are called to embody a love that is both sacrificial and unconditional, mirroring the love that Jesus demonstrated throughout His life. This lesson will guide us in understanding how such love is not only a command but also a defining characteristic of our identity as disciples of Christ.

Through this study, we will delve into the ways this love can transform our lives and communities, serving as a powerful testimony to the world. By examining supporting scriptures and reflecting on personal experiences, we aim to uncover the barriers that hinder us from fully embracing this commandment and discover practical ways to demonstrate Christ-like love in our daily interactions. Join us as we embark on this journey to deepen our understanding of love's role in our faith and its potential to reflect God's kingdom on earth.

Background and Context

John 13:34-35 is part of Jesus' farewell discourse (John chapters 14 through 17) to His disciples during the Last Supper. In this intimate setting, Jesus prepares His followers for His impending departure and the challenges they will face. He introduces a "new commandment" to love one another as He has loved them, emphasizing the importance of love as a defining characteristic of His disciples. This commandment underscores the sacrificial and unconditional nature of Jesus' love, which they are to emulate [match, imitate, model, pattern after]. The passage highlights the transformative power of love in building a community that reflects God's kingdom and serves as a testimony to the world.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

I. This Love is Newly Commanded of You (John 13:34ab)

"I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another..."

John 13:34ab introduces a new commandment from Jesus, emphasizing the importance of loving one another. This love is sacrificial and unconditional. Love is from God and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. God is love, which highlights the divine nature of love and its importance in the life of believers. This supports Jesus' command to love one another by underscoring that love is fundamental to knowing God and being in relationship with Him (**1 John 4:7-8**).

This command was considered "new" not because the concept of loving one's neighbor was unheard of, as seen in **Leviticus 19:18**, but because it was the first time a group was to be identified by their love for one another. Unlike Jews, philosophers, or military men who were recognized by external symbols or attire, Christians were to be known for their mutual love and support, transcending distinctions of wealth, learning, or social status. This love was to unite them, acknowledging their shared redemption and heavenly destination, as emphasized in **John 15:12-17** and **Galatians 6:2**.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. What makes the commandment to love one another "new" according to John 13:34ab?

2. How does the concept of love in John 13:34ab differ from the love mentioned in Leviticus 19:18?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

II. This Love Newly Identifies You (John 13:34cd)

"...just as I have loved you, that you also love one another."

Believers are encouraged to be imitators of God and to walk in love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us (**Ephesians 5:1-2**). John 13:34cd supports Jesus' command by urging believers to follow His example of selfless love, reinforcing the idea that love should be the guiding principle in their interactions with others.

This command to love one another was reiterated throughout the New Testament, highlighting its importance as the "law of Christ." The early disciples understood this love as a fundamental **principle**, as seen in **1 Thessalonians 4:9**, **2 Thessalonians 1:3**, and **1 Peter 1:22**. The love commanded by Jesus was new in its extent, as he instructed them to love one another as he loved them, a love characterized by strength, continuity, and sacrifice. This is further illustrated in **1 John 3:23**, where the depth of Jesus' love is presented as a model for his followers.

Jesus' love was ultimately demonstrated through his willingness to lay down his life, as stated in **John 15:13**. This sacrificial love set a new standard for the

disciples, urging them to be ready to endure hardships and practice self-denial for the benefit of their fellow believers. The call to lay down one's life for others, as mentioned in **1 John 3:16**, exemplifies the profound commitment and attachment Christians are to have for one another, reflecting the love of Christ in their lives.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

3. What is the significance of Jesus' command to love one another as described in John 13:34cd, and how does it relate to the concept of "the law of Christ"?

4. How does the text illustrate the extent and nature of the love that Jesus commanded his followers to have for one another?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

III. This Love Newly Transforms You (John 13:35)

"By this all people will know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another."

Love has the power to transform relationships and communities, reflecting God's kingdom on earth.

John 13:35 emphasizes that true Christian identity is marked by deep, genuine love rather than external appearances or customs. This love was a defining characteristic of early Christians, as noted by pagans who observed their willingness to sacrifice for one another.

This famous observation, often quoted as "**See how these Christians love one another,**" is attributed to the early Christian theologian Tertullian in his work *Apologeticus* (chapter 39), written around 197 AD. It reflects how pagan observers remarked on the sacrificial, communal love of early Christians.

Tertullian noted that pagans (heathens) observed Christians, often during times of persecution, and were impressed by their mutual affection and willingness to die for one another.

However, given the current state of the Christian world, we are falling short of the ideal of this guiding principle—to love one another. Genuine love and self-denial are often overshadowed by pride and division. Despite belonging to different groups or denominations, Christians are called to love each other deeply, as instructed in 1 John 4:7, "*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God.*" The text calls for a love that transcends social, racial, and denominational boundaries, reflecting the spirit of **Galatians 3:28**. As the millennium approaches, this love as described in John 13:34-35 will become the defining mark of God's children.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

5. How does the text describe the role of love in defining true Christian identity according to John 13:35?

6. What challenges does the text identify in achieving the ideal of love among Christians today, and how does it relate to the teachings of Tertullian and biblical scripture?

LIFE APPLICATION

Think about it!

- How will the concept of selfless love, as demonstrated by Jesus, challenge or inspire you in your daily interactions with others?

- In what ways can you embody the "law of Christ" by practicing sacrificial love in your community or personal relationships?

Resources:

Adult Questions for LESSONMaker, LOGOS Bible Software

Barnes Notes on the New Testament.

Enns, Paul P. *Moody Handbook of Theology*. Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

Galvin, Dr. James C., Veerman, Rev. David R., Barton, Dr. Bruce B., and Lucas, Daryl J. *Life Application Bible Studies*. © 1999 by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. Database © 2006 WORDsearch Corp.