

Week 3:
“Sharing Our Love”
Romans 12:9-13

LESSON PREP: COMMENTARY

These insights have been gathered from the Smyth and Helwys and New Interpreter’s Bible commentaries on the book of Romans. They are offered here to help discussion leaders prepare for the lesson; feel free to use these insights in your discussion of today’s passage with your small group.

Sharing the Topic

Think about how places in Wilmington got their name or what they are known for. **Take a look at the list below and share how the names came about.**

- Monkey Junction
- The Pumpkin Church (Wesley Methodist)
- Sunset Park
- Bald Head Island
- Azalea Festival

What do we want to be known for at Winter Park Baptist?

- The Church Behind Denny’s
- The Church with the New Steeple
- The Church with the Big Bus
- The Paul Burgess Church
- The Church of Genuine Love and Hospitality

Sharing Scripture

- In the early verses of Romans 12, Paul urges the Christians in Rome to present their bodies as a living sacrifice, as a spiritual act of worship, to God. In today’s verses, we get a clear sense of Paul’s concern for the image of the Church towards the world. Christians are being watched by other believers and non-believers to see if they truly love like they say they do. “To love someone is not simply to cater to specific likes and

dislikes of a person. It is rather to act toward them in ways that help them experience more of God's goodness." (Mark Reasoner)

- **Read Romans 12:9-13**

⁹ Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. ¹⁰ Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. ¹¹ Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. ¹² Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. ¹³ When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.

Sharing Insights

- Beginning in verse 9, Paul shares a list of ways in which individual Christians and groups are to behave. The list strives to build up the community as a whole.
- This list, as well as other lists shared by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 and Galatians 5:22, begins with love.
 - "Don't just pretend to love others" or in other words "love should be without hypocrisy."
 - The Greek word that Paul uses in verse 9 means "without hypocrisy." The word was used of the masks used by actors on the stage. Some of the masks were happy, others were sad. The actor did not necessarily feel as the mask showed, but the mask indicated the role that he was playing. Paul says that our love for one another is not to be a phony mask or role playing, but rather be the real thing. We should genuinely desire God's best for others and speak and act toward that goal.
 - **Read Matthew 23:25, 27**
 - **How do we, the church, love in a genuine way? How do we, the church, fall short and "pretend to love" others?**
 - **How can we fall into the trap of being more concerned with "cleaning the outside of the cup and plate" than seeking ways to love others?**
- Verses 10-13 contain instructions from Paul that are bracketed by the Greek words for family love and brotherly love. Paul is sharing that we

should have a tender affection and concern for fellow believers like we would have with our own family members (father, mother, brother, sister, etc.) We might think this would be easy to carry out, but just like the early church, Winter Park Baptist is made up people varying in age, race, economic need, and other characteristics. Family/brotherly love is for all . . . we are not called to select who to love and who to shun in our church family.

- Paul has high expectations for the believer who is acting with genuine love. Our love as Christians is to be both a response to God’s love and a reflection of His love. If we allow the Spirit to guide us to observe these behaviors, our concern will be focused more on others than self. In verses 10-13 we see Paul’s list of “actions” to respond and reflect:
 - Hate what is wrong
 - Hold tightly to what is good
 - Love each other with genuine affection
 - Take delight in honoring each other
 - Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically
 - Rejoice in confident hope
 - Be patient in trouble
 - Keep on praying
 - When God’s people are in need, be ready to help them
 - Be eager to practice hospitality

- As you read through this list, are you reminded that love is not just a feeling, but requires actions? We don’t love others to be seen, so our love requires humility. Paul is sharing that loving others is not always an easy task, so we as Christians, need a persistent endurance. Our prayer life should remind us that we need God’s strength and guidance to truly love others, and we should pray for our eyes to be open to the needs of those around us.

- **Which of the above actions are the most difficult for you to live out?**

Sharing Stories

- **Share an experience when you feel that someone shared “genuine love” for you in the church?**

- **Have you ever caught yourself sharing “love” on behalf of the church, and yet deep inside not feeling sincere about it? Did you justify yourself in your feelings or ask God for forgiveness?**
- **How does our church show hospitality and how can we do even more in this act?**

Sharing Prayers

- In your prayer time today, include prayers for God’s guidance in sharing “genuine love” as a church family.
- Ask for energy to share the God’s love.
- Ask for forgiveness in areas where you put self before the need of others.
- Ask for strength and peace in hard times.
- Ask for God to open your eyes to ways to be more hospitable.
- Pray that those who see Winter Park Baptist Church will see God’s love being shared in many ways.