

# Body Life - #2

## The Distinguishing Mark

**Introduction** – Our numerical growth does not prove our health. Cancer grows. If we are to truly understand what it means to be Christian, we must understand the doctrine of ‘loving one another’. And we must understand it as a doctrine, not a cliché.

**Love One Another: A Command** (John 15:12-13, 17) – Loving one another is not a suggestion. It is a command. In this passage we see that the love Christ is talking about is a love of sacrifice. Jesus is not talking about ‘being nice’ to one another. “*Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.*”

**Commanded From the Beginning** (1 John 3:10-12) – From the first of human relationships, this has been our commandment. And John leaves no room for splitting the difference. We are children of God or children of the devil, and the test is love. We either love to the death or we kill in hatred. But we are to imitate Christ in the little details of life, not simply in the grand moment of giving our life away (1 John 3:16-17).

**Closely Connected** (1 John 3:23) – This command for this kind of love is closely connected to our belief in Christ. It is a firstfruit of our conversion. So this commandment exists not just since the beginning of the world, but since the beginning of our lives as Christians. This love flows out of our abiding love in Christ (John 15:9-10).

**Commanded and Given** – Christianity is not working out our salvation on our own, but working out what God is working in. This kind of love God teaches us (1 Thes 4:9) and makes us abound in (1 Thes 3:12).

**Love One Another: Imitate Christ and the Father** (John 13:34) – Our love towards one another is to imitate the love Christ has for us. One reason to be reading the gospels is to see how Jesus loved the disciples. His love was not a saccharine-sweet sentimentalism. By studying Christ, we avoid defining ‘love’ by our own standards or the standards of the world.

**The Love of the Father** (1 John 4:9-11) – Central to this is the fact that God loved us, not that we loved Him. He loved us when we were unlovely, full of hatred, sin, and rebellion. And that is the love we are called to imitate with one another.

**Love One Another: The Distinguishing Mark** (John 13:35) – Christians know they are called to display their faith publicly. What they often forget is that they are also told how that display is to be made. But the primary badge we are to wear, the very center of our distinction to the world is to be our manifest love to one another. If we do, we are promised they will notice; and this gives us another measuring stick to determine whether we are understanding and implementing true biblical love or not.

**Starts in the Home** – And of course, our strong temptation is to look good here and in public. But the true test begins at home, with those closest around you all the time. Children, this means you as well. You are commanded to love your little brother and sister in the same way that Christ loves you. And He loved you while you were yet a little stinker – so...

**Seeing the Invisible Father** (1 John 4:12) – We cannot see God the Father. But His love is manifested to us in the flesh of His Son. No one has seen God except (in a sense) when we love one another.

**Love One Another: From the Heart** (Rom 12:9-13) – In 1 John 5:2 we are told that our love for one another is measured by our commandment-keeping. It is important to notice that love is not defined emotionally. But we must keep these commandments from the heart which means we must love with our emotions. They must follow. The command is directed to our emotions – we are to be kindly affectionate, and we are to love fervently.

**Emotions** – Now, many of us might respond, “No one can tell my emotions what to do?” Well, that’s part of the problem. Like undisciplined, unruly children, undisciplined emotions cannot be controlled or enjoyed.

**Love One Another: True Liberty** (Gal 5:13-15) – We have been called to liberty, true liberty. But this liberty enslaves itself with the opportunity to serve one another. How often are congregations or individuals guilty of biting and devouring one another all in the name of Christian liberty. Isn’t this what so many unbelievers see when they look at the church?

**Prisoner of the Lord** (Eph 4:1-2) – In his liberty, this is how Paul describes himself. And he describes being a prisoner of the Lord in terms of how he serves others – “with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love.” You cannot say that you love God while hating your brother.

**Conclusion** – “*Above all things have fervent love for one another, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins’*” (1 Pet 4:8). We all stumble in many ways, in a multitude of sins. If we do not love one another as defined in the scriptures, we lie about our love for God, we display darkness, not light, to the world, and we will devour one another in schisms and divisions. One of the keys to effective body life is simply this – love one another. It requires initiative on everyone’s part, sacrifice on everyone’s part. It also requires contact with one another, not isolation with the exception of a couple hours here on Sunday. And the result will be a body truly built up in Christ and a world noticing the difference the true gospel makes.

Dave Hatcher – May 13, 2001