

RESPOND – OTHERS NEED YOU

One of the marks of sincere love is that you give more than you get – at least giving is more important to you. You see, you can almost divide humanity into two camps: Those who use people to get money, and those who use money to win people. Not that you win them for yourself, but you win them out of love.

Notice two things about the phrase “practice hospitality.”

1. The word practice is more literally translated “pursue.” It’s a strong word that indicates intensity. It really means to chase after.
2. The word hospitality does not mean “entertainment.” We entertain when we want to impress or when we expect to be invited in return. Entertainment is when you invite the right people. Hospitality literally means “the love of strangers.”

Do you want to be sincere in your love for others? Then run after those you don’t know, open your home and your heart to them, and when you discover they have a need – share with them.

Application

A. Let me ask you something. If the church in America, or if the church in Reedley experienced a genuine renewal, what would that look like? The possibilities could include signs and wonders (God performing miracles), thousands coming to Christ, prayer meetings overflowing, offering baskets overflowing, every seat filled.

As I’ve studied this paragraph I’ve come to think of those things as the results of renewal, true. I’m convicted that there won’t be renewal until we return to this paragraph right here – Romans 12:9-13. Until we love each other as Christ loved us, we will not impress, impact or ignite our community.

On the night he was betrayed Jesus said, “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” Jn. 13:35

B. I’m asking you this morning to turn your hearts toward the love of God – ask God to help you make right whatever is wrong between you and someone in the church. Will you do it for Christ? Will you do it for the Kingdom? Will you do it because God asks it of us? Will you do it because Jesus tells us to?

Who have you wronged? Who have you ignored?

Who have you cheated? Who have you gossiped about?

Who have you disrespected Who have you lied to?

Who have you hated? Who have you put down?

Husbands? Wives? Sons? Daughters? Brothers? Sisters?
Classmates? Co-workers? Neighbors? Sunday School members?
Teachers? Fellow members?

Time of prayer and reconciliation.

“And this is my prayer, that your love may abound more and more.” Philippians 1:9

“Living Below With Saints We Know” 1/24/10
Romans 12:9-13

RMBC
Pastor Dennis

Introduction

A. A few years ago a book came out titled, *Why Men Hate Church*. The thesis was that the rough and tumble psyche of men is not attracted to soft music, pastel colors, and the exchange of niceties and pleasantries. Men need to grunt and groan and look scruffy once in awhile and church often isn’t the place for that.

B. As I prepared to teach on loving one another this morning I silently feared the men might bolt at the word “love.” The last thing you guys want is a nice, sissy poem asking, “Can’t we all just get along?” So here’s a short piece on friendship for men:

When you are sad, I will jump on the person who made you sad like a spider monkey jacked up on Mountain Dew!

When you are blue, I will dislodge whatever is choking you.

When you smile, I will know you are plotting something that I must be involved in.

When you're scared, we will high tail it out of here.

When you are worried, I will tell you horrible stories about how much worse it could be until you quit whining, ya big baby!!!!

When you are confused, I will use little words.

When you are sick, stay away from me until you are well again...I don't want whatever you have.

When you fall, I'll pick you up and dust you off--After I laugh my head off!

'Why?' you may ask...because you are my FRIEND!

C. The guy who wrote that was likely the same one who said, “When times are tough, you know what you can ALWAYS count on? Your fingers.” Years ago someone said, “To live above with saints we love, oh that will be glory. But to live below with saints we know, now that’s another story.” The last half of Romans 12 challenges us to look at ourselves and ask, Does the love of God really have a hold on me? Paul has believers in mind in vs. 9-13 and then in vs. 14 he shifts to those outside of the church/family circle. How do we love when it is not fun, comfortable or easy? (Romans 12:1-13)

Love Must Be Sincere

A. Just as with vs. 3-8, vs. 9-13 need to be read with vs.1-2 in mind: God offers to renew our lives from the inside out. The only way we can win the battle against our natural self (which always wants its way; always wants to be first; always claims its rights) is to ask God to do a “total home/heart makeover” and renew our minds.

B. We live in the same loveless world as the 1st century Romans. Evil is everywhere, people are oppressed, injustice pops up all the time and people get hurt and deeply wounded. Love is not for sissies. Sincere love is the most daring, honest, and adventurous thing you can do. Whenever the church becomes anemic and ineffective we must ask, Have we have lost our ability to love?

C. This opening statement, “Love must be sincere,” is a heading; what follows is some of the strongest language of the Bible: hate, cling, devote, zeal, fervor, affliction -- strong, feeling, and descriptive words. You know what those outside of the church accuse us of most often? Hypocrisy – they say we are not sincere. We are not genuine. If we are to win others and keep them for Christ our love must be sincere – our love for each other.

Five Signs of Sincere Love

The following short, staccato statements read like proverbs. Paul is saying, sincere love looks like this:

REJECT SIN – LOVE PEOPLE

The word “hate” is the N.T. equivalent of God teaching his O.T. people to “abhor idols.” Originally this word referred to something so repulsive that it was sickening. It was something that caused your whole body to react. It was revolting.

We don’t know much about that today in spiritual terms. There’s not much we abhor. People get confused over O.T. stories because they forget that God abhors evil. This may sound harsh, but you will not love God and others with all your heart until you also learn to abhor evil. God must renew your mind.

The word “cling” is just as strong a word that describes two objects glued together permanently. It’s the old word “cleave” and it finishes this first example of sincere love: God wants to so transform your mind that you actually abhor what is evil, but cling for dear life to the good. That’s one mark of a great, sincere lover.

REMEMBER RELATIONSHIPS – THEY MATTER MOST

Verse 10 points to the priority of relationships. In one sense, all of life is about relationships – I don’t think that is an overstatement. Just as God is unique in desiring a relationship with those he created, we who are created in his image are most deprived when we lack healthy relationships – sincere love.

In describing how we are to live this out Paul uses two different forms of the word “love.” The word “devoted” comes from the word “storge” which is familial, or family love. And “brotherly love” is the Greek word “phileo” which is the highest human love apart from God’s work in us. Phileo love is friendship.

So the challenge is this: To be sincere in your love for others live like family; treat each other as best friends. Now to be sure we have plenty examples, even in the Bible, of dysfunctional

families, but Paul adds the explanation of how healthy families and best friends act: They honor others above themselves. It’s the expression of that old saying, “There is no limit to the good one can do if you don’t care who gets the credit.” Picture the church in which everyone treats each other as family and best friends. I think people will trip over each other just to belong to that.

RETAIN ENTHUSIASM – EVEN IN SETBACKS

Don’t people with enthusiasm build you up? Of course it has to be sincere, but what an impact such people have. I like to think that it’s because true enthusiasm is a sign of God in your life. You see, enthusiasm broken down looks like this:

En – in; thus – Greek for God is *theos*; *iasm* – a quality or level: Enthusiasm is a deep level of God in one’s life. That’s the kind of “fervor” we need. Fervor sounds a bit like fever. We need God to infect us with a fever that makes us “hot for one another” in the best sense of the word.

You know, one of the things God cannot stand is luke-warm believers. Of course he doesn’t want us to be cold Christians, but to the church of Laodicea in Revelation 3 Jesus declares, “Because you are luke warm . . . I am about to spit you out of my mouth.” Those are some of the most demanding words in the Bible – the thought of God spitting me out of his mouth moves me to raise my spiritual temperature – “Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.” That’s one more sign of a sincere love for others.

REJOICE – EVEN WHEN IT HURTS

Next week in our study we will look at love reacting to those who really oppose us. But in reality even when we love other believers we will get disappointed and let down. Can’t you count the times someone didn’t meet your expectation last week? So what did you do? God’s word teaches that love doesn’t quit in those times. To my regret I have quit too often when disappointed.

One writer put it this way, “True love is not myopic.” I think that means near sighted. By nature we expect people to just be so impressed when we love them, but the truth is that some things just have to wait for heaven. In this life people will let you down so what are you to do? Lighten up! Let up on your expectations. Don’t lay such a heavy burden on others to meet your needs. Instead:

Rejoice in hope = I believe that God is in control.

Be patient in affliction = I believe that God is not finished yet.

Be faithful in prayer = I believe that God is at work.

Did you notice that those three verbs are fruits of the Spirit? Joy, patience, faithfulness are three signs that the Spirit of the Living God has fallen on me and is doing a number on me. Back in vs. 11 the RSV translates “keep your spiritual fervor” as being “aglow with the Spirit.” If you rejoice in hope, are patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer, you will be aglow with the Spirit.

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Romans 12:9-13

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Introduction

To live above with saints we _____, oh that will be glory.
To live below with saints we _____, now that’s another story

Romans 12:9-13 A call to love one another in the _____
Romans 12:14-21 A call to love those _____ the church
Has the love of God gotten a _____ on my life?

Love Must Be Sincere

Love won’t be sincere until God has _____ our minds (vs. 1-2)
Our loveless, oppressed world needs to see God’s _____ in us.
An ineffective church is usually a church that _____ love
Sincere – the opposite of _____

Five Ways Sincere Love Shows Itself

REJECT SIN – LOVE PEOPLE

The word “hate” is the N.T. equivalent of the O.T. _____
The people were taught to abhor idols; God abhors _____
Cling – a strong word of _____ two things permanently

REMEMBER RELATIONSHIPS – THEY MATTER MOST

All of life is about _____
God loves us, his _____ He calls us to love one another
Devoted: from “storge” the Greek word for _____ love
Brotherly love: the Greek word for _____
Live like _____ Treat others like _____ friends
How? By _____ others above yourself

RETAIN ENTHUSIASM – EVEN IN SET BACKS

Zeal
En = in thus = Theos/God iasm = a quality or level
Enthusiasm is a deep level of God in us
Fervor
Sounds like _____ We need an _____ of God’s love
One thing God cannot stand is _____ believers
“... I am about to _____ you out of my mouth.” Rev. 3:16

REJOICE – EVEN WHEN IT HURTS

Even when we love other believers we will be _____
“True love is not _____ (short-sighted) Think eternal
Rejoice in hope means: I believe God is in _____
Patient in affliction means: I believe God isn’t _____ yet
Faithful in prayer means: I believe God is still _____

RESPOND – OTHERS NEED YOU

A mark of sincere love is _____ more than you _____
Two camps of people:
Those who use _____ to get _____
Those who use _____ to win _____
Practice hospitality:
Practice is literally to _____ or to chase after
Hospitality is literally the love of _____
Hospitality is not the same as entertainment
Those who show sincere love:
Open their _____ to strangers
Open their _____ to others
Open their _____ to those in need

Application

What is the key to renewal in the church?
Signs and wonders?
Greater evangelism?
More giving?
Increased attendance?

Most of the above are _____ of renewal
The key to church renewal is _____

“By this will all men know that you are my disciples,
if you love one another.” John 13:35

To whom do I need to be reconciled?

Lord, fill me with your love for my fellow believers.

“And this is my prayer, that your love may abound more
and more.” Philippians 1:9