

WARM-UP

- What is your favorite brand? How do you know if a product with that brand is authentic?
- What is a simple thing someone did for you that made you feel loved? How did you express your gratitude to the person?
- Who is the most hateful movie character you've seen? What are the things he or she did that made you feel this way?

WORD *Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.* **ROMANS 12:9**

The first part of Romans 12 talked about the appropriate response to God's mercy. Because of God's great love for us, He sent Jesus to die on the cross so that we could receive forgiveness and freedom from sin. As a result, we can now offer our bodies as a living sacrifice. This involves the renewing of our minds and the changing of our mindsets so that we can see ourselves and others around us through God's eyes. Now that we have been made part of one body, we are called to serve one another in love. This is not a duty, but a response to the love we've been given. We can express our love because God loved us first. This week, we will look at three ways that genuine love is expressed.

1 | Love God.

¹¹Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.

¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

ROMANS 12:11,12

Paul is saying that energy and excitement should be evident in the way we express our love to God. When we fully understand the magnitude of His love for us, we will not drag our feet to serve Him, but will do so wholeheartedly. A sense of awe and amazement will cause us to *rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer*. Our service to God is exciting not because it is based on our emotions, but on the truth that we are loved. How have you shown fervor in the way you express your love to God?

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2 | Love one another.

¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. . . ¹⁶Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. **ROMANS 12:13,16**

Paul enumerated some practical ways we can express love to those around us—both outwardly and inwardly. During his time, it was the practice of well-off believers to sell some of their possessions to help meet the needs of the ones who were in lack. They also traveled a lot on foot. Receiving food, rest, and protection in another person's home after days of journeying was more than enough to fill any heart with love. In the same way, God is calling us, as Christians, to outwardly demonstrate love in our own contexts. We can also express love inwardly through the way we see people. Paul said

that we should *not be haughty* nor be wise in our own eyes. Thinking highly of others, especially those different from us, is the same as loving them. According to John 13:34,35, what kind of love should we show to one another? Why is it important that we do this?

3 | Love your enemies.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.

ROMANS 12:14

(Read also **LUKE 6:27-30.**)

Luke gives us a description of what an enemy could look like. They could be people who *hate you, curse you, and spitefully use you*. They could be those who would strike you and steal what's rightfully yours. For some people, an enemy can simply be someone they find irritating or someone they can't agree with. Regardless of how we see our enemies, the Bible clearly says that we are to love them. Paul ended chapter 12 with this verse: *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good*. Loving our enemies is a very difficult thing to do. But Jesus' sacrifice on the cross assures us that we can overcome anything. His love will enable us to love even the unlovable. How has Jesus shown you undeserved love? In what way have you shown love to an enemy?

APPLICATION

- Our service to God is our response to His love for us. What is something you will do this week to joyfully and fervently serve God?
- Think of a person you have been avoiding because of something that happened in the past. Ask God to change your heart and enable you to love this person.
- How can you express your love to other believers in the church? How can you take part in the things the church is doing to express love to the community?

PRAYER

- Ask God to enable you to love Him with your whole heart. Pray that you will be zealous in serving Him.
- Thank God for giving you the grace to love others. Ask God for specific things you can do to express your love to your family and friends.
- Pray for God to show you if there are people in your life that you resent. Ask Him for the grace to love the people you find unlovable. Pray that the love you will show them will lead them to know Christ.



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