



## Love One Another

by Tom Kraeuter, Hillsboro, Missouri

*“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)*

In just two sentences, Jesus tells His disciples three different times that they should love one another.

If I want to make a strong point with my children or an audience to whom I am speaking, I will repeat the statement for emphasis. The repetition helps drive the idea home. In essence, I am saying, “Hey, this is really important!” Do you think there’s a remote chance that by repeating Himself—actually saying it in three different ways—that Jesus was telling His disciples that loving one another was really, really important?

I find it interesting to note that the Lord really doesn’t seem to allow any leniency regarding not getting along because of things like differing personalities or even temporal issues such as political views. He still insists that we love one another. Two of Jesus’ hand-picked disciples, Simon the Zealot and Matthew the tax collector, were about as opposite as you could get in that society. The Zealots were pro-Israel in every sense of the word. They wanted to battle the Romans and drive those uncircumcised heathen from their land. The tax collectors, on the other hand, had, in essence, sold out to the Romans. Their job was to collect taxes from their fellow-Hebrews and give the money to Rome. In Israel, Zealots and tax collectors were polar opposites. Picture an ultra-conservative Republican sitting next to a passionate, far-left-wing Democrat. Or a fanatical socialist seated with a Wall Street tycoon. Ideologically, Simon and Matthew were about as far apart as possible. Regardless, though, Jesus still insisted they love one another. And God does the same with you and me.

Honestly, there are times my kids are as different as night and day. Their personalities are so diverse that it is sometimes hard for me to comprehend that they came from the same parents and have had the same environment for their entire lives. I have often wondered, *How can they be so radically different?* Yet, even with their differences, they demonstrate their love for one another in a myriad of ways. Their willingness to help one another and their consistent care and concern for each other have often been an inspiration to me and to others. That’s the way we should act in the Body of Christ. Stop bickering. Stop stabbing one another with daggers made of words. When there is a disagreement, reconcile quickly. Don’t stomp off to your room and pout, or, worse yet, spread gossip and rumors about the other person. No! Members of God’s family have been given a very clear directive from the Lord: love one another.

I am not suggesting that we should never argue. Unfortunately, that word has come to imply something different than it originally meant. The earliest origins of *argue* did not have the negative connotation that the word has now. It is only in more recent times that arguing has been thought of as something angry or unkind. We can argue (i.e., give reasons for an opinion in order to support it, or to discuss something in all its aspects, or to try to persuade somebody by giving reasons) in the church, but we must do it kindly, not in a mean-spirited way. Disagreements are no excuse to act in a vindictive manner. Even when we do not see eye-to-eye, we should still display genuine care and compassion for the other person.

Right there in the worship ministry of your church, there may be folks with whom you don’t always agree. There may be someone whose personality is enough different than yours that they seem abrasive to you. Regardless, Jesus says, “Love one another.” Without love for each other we, as the Body of Christ—and even as a little segment of the Body, like a worship ministry—are bankrupt. Unless we love, we’ll be weak and faltering. Loving each other is not some small, side issue that has no relevance. It is vital to our health as the Church and as a worship ministry.

*Lord, cause Your love to overwhelm us, that we might truly love each other more, the way You want us to. Amen.*

### GOING DEEPER:

1. What might be different – in a positive sense – if we really loved one another?
2. What could we do as a group to help foster and strengthen our love for one another in the worship ministry?