

Be Devoted to One Another  
Romans 12:9a, 10a

Most of you probably remember the days of slide projectors. After they retired, my grandparents did some traveling and took a lot of pictures which turned into slides which turned into evenings spent in the dark on a tour of their vacation. No popcorn.

With the onset of technology, old photos can be scanned into the computer and with the aid of PowerPoint those photos can now be transformed into a slide show. My Aunt recently me sent a bunch of photos via Facebook. I thought you might enjoy a little walk down memory lane with me.

[Show pictures]

These photos help to illustrate the principle we will consider today. From our text today I want to look at three truths that relate to this admonition to be devoted to one another or as your Bible may read – be kindly affectioned one to another.

We see it as a family affair.

We see it as a faithful attitude.

We see it as a feasible appeal.

## I. A FAMILY AFFAIR

I want to begin by looking at the first part of verse 9 for a few moments. It simply says that “Love must be sincere.”

The KJV reads “Let love be without hypocrisy.”

That’s a more accurate rendering in the Greek. It is a simple call to love other Christians with that unconditional agape kind of love that only comes from God. A lot of music artists have sung about it, but we are far from it in practice.

If you remember the ‘60’s you may remember this song sung originally by Jackie DeShannon first released on April 15, 1965.

It’s been recorded by over 100 music artists including Diana Ross and Judy Garland.

What the world needs now is love sweet love,  
It's the only thing that there's just too little of.  
What the world needs now is love sweet love,  
No not just for some but for everyone.

Lord we don't need another mountain,  
There are mountains and hillsides enough to climb,  
There are oceans and rivers enough to cross  
Enough to last until the end of time

(Chorus)

Lord, we don't need another meadow,  
There are corn fields and wheat fields enough to grow,  
There are sunbeams and moonbeams enough to shine,  
Oh listen Lord, if you want to know

(Chorus)

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It’s true that the world needs love, but the only love that will turn the world around is the love of God when it is shed abroad in every heart. And it is His love that we are to show others. Paul tells us that it is the most important virtue that we can possess, more important than any spiritual gift we may have. “But now abides faith, hope, love, these three, but the greatest of these is love.”

We learned last week this Spirit produced fruit is how others will know we are saved. This kind of love, writes John MacArthur, “Centers on the needs and welfare of the one loved and will pay whatever personal price is necessary to meet those needs and foster that welfare.”

That example is found in Romans 5:8 where we notice that God knew our need and met it through the sacrificial death of His Son on the cross for us.

Peter applies that kind of love as the love we are to have for each other. I Peter 1:22-23a “Now you can have sincere love for each other as brothers and sisters because you were cleansed from your sins when you accepted the truth of the Good News. So see to it that you really do love each other intensely with all your hearts. For you have been born again.” (NLT)

The same word for sincere here is the same word used in verse 9 describing how love should appear.

I Peter 4:7-8 “The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray. Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins.”

This kind of love is essential for godly living. And before we get into verse 10 we need to see one more truth from verse 9. This love is without hypocrisy. That means love is not stained by being self-centered. Such an attitude is not compatible with agape love. Agape love looks out for the needs of others. It is not self-absorbed as a college roommate used to sing as he looked in the mirror “I think I love me.” It doesn’t pretend to be something it is not, or it doesn’t pretend in order to get something in return. It has no veneer and neither does it have ulterior motives. Agape love does not pretend in order to gain some thing or some advantage.

Donald Grey Barnhouse writes concerning loving others without hypocrisy: “Love is to take off every disguise and walk with heart bared for the world to see. It is a hard thing to do, for instinct warns us to protect ourselves and to keep the wounds away from our hearts. How easy it is to form a shell about one’s emotions and to withhold all that love might give, for fear of being hurt! Only when we recognize that the love of Christ will cast out all fear of being hurt, can we love as He wants us to love.”

What I think he is saying is that we may get hurt by loving others as God wants, but we love them

anyway. Otherwise to put that shell around us as a means of protection is hypocritical. In essence we love others as we want not how God wants. They may need more love than we can give, especially if they have hurt us or if they do something we know to be wrong, but that’s okay, because we cannot love them in our own strength, only through the empowering, indwelling Holy Spirit whose job it is to produce that love in us and through us.

Paul adds in II Corinthians 6:6 that love is to be without hypocrisy. II Peter 1:22 says the same.

This love is sincere, genuine. It doesn’t pretend. It doesn’t give a false impression.

A young woman wrote to an old boyfriend wanting to patch things up. She said she still really loved him and just knew that their relationship could work and asked forgiveness in what led to their break-up. She ended her letter with a p.s. “Congratulations on winning the lottery.”

A.T. Robertson says that kind of love is no love at all.

Folks, if we are going to be devoted to one another, it begins with understanding and exhibiting a love that is not hypocritical. It must be genuine. People will see right through love that pretends.

With agape love as the foundation we jump to verse 10 and the exhortation to be devoted to one another. As you do that, let me remind you of what we have said already in the previous weeks that the one another passages *are commands to obey not suggestions to consider*.

Here’s our verse “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.”

The Amplified Bible reads “Love one another with brotherly affection (as members of one family).”

The sentence structure in the Greek actually puts the emphasis on the last part and so it literally reads:

“In brotherly love, be devoted to one another.”  
Or as John MacArthur interprets it “Be lovingly loving with one another with loving love.”

It is here that we see that this one another command is truly a family affair.

There is to be genuine love for each person in the body of Christ. Paul calls it brotherly love which is to be differentiated from agape love, but you can't have brotherly love without first experiencing and expressing agape love. What Paul means is that we're supposed to treat everyone in the body of Christ as family. But maybe you think of your family more like the cartoon “Family Circus” than the magazine “Family Circle.” Maybe it was more dysfunctional than desirable.

Maybe you grew up in a home where there wasn't a lot of love given by parents or between siblings. Maybe affection wasn't shown much in your home. The reality is that we're supposed to work at getting along and not just pretending to do so.

I want to remind you that during the time Paul wrote that the Jews had no affection for the Gentiles and vice versa. The Jews and the Samaritans didn't get along. Those who were free held it over those who were slaves. But something unique and wonderful happened when people got saved and the church began. Paul writes that all those lines of demarcation were spiritually erased. People culturally were still Jew and Gentile and Samaritan. There were still the slaves and the free, but now faith in Christ made them into one family, the family of God.

Beginning in Acts the word brother is used over 200 times referring to this special spiritual kinship that now existed because of their common faith in Christ. It is a word that literally means “*from the same womb*.” It is a term that adds warmth, tenderness, concern, loyalty, and affection.

In the south especially, and in some churches here in the north, you still here people refer to each other as brother so-and-so or sister thus-and-such (right Harold). It's the acknowledgement of kinship, the understanding of it being a family affair.

In that roof top experience that Peter had (Acts 10), he was instructed to go with some Gentiles to the home of Cornelius. Upon his arrival he admitted there was still that cultural stigma that separated them but he was told by God not to treat as unclean what God had deemed clean. That day a house full of Gentiles were saved and they were joined together as family in Christ.

The church unfortunately has allowed cultural barriers to prevail. Some churches still perpetuate segregation whether by the color of one's skin or by the socio-economic status of its members or by some other criteria.

Paul says we are to treat each other as family. There should be no ugly step-child in God's family.

I showed those pictures at the beginning for a reason. Not to show you how cute I was as a toddler, although you have to admit it's true and some of you may be wondering what happened. I showed those pictures because that's family and there still is great love between us. None of us is perfect and there are things some in the family did that others didn't necessarily like, but they were loved just the same.

Folks, we are all different but we are to treat each other with brotherly love because we are all part of the same family. Unfortunately that isn't what happened in Corinth and Paul reprimanded them.

We still see it today in some churches. A person who is divorced might be treated as a second class church member and relegated to certain responsibilities in the church, if that.

Someone had recommended a friend to fill the pulpit while the pastor was on vacation but was denied the opportunity because he was divorced and remarried.

How about the person or couple who has a child outside of marriage? Or the person who had spent time in prison?

Robyn and I have friends – He's a black man from Panama and she's a white woman from Canada. He speaks Spanish and she speaks, well, Canadian. They wouldn't be welcome in some churches today.

Newsweek did an interview with Anne Graham Lotz, the daughter of Billy and Ruth Graham. She talked about some bad experiences she had trying to find a place to fit in at some churches. She referred to herself as a "believer in exile" wondering from church to church. They didn't like certain things.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century pulpeteer Alexander MacLaren described that this family affection for one another in the body of Christ should be much deeper than ties to our physical family or national heritage because we have been brought together through the bond of Christ's blood.

Maybe it's time we made an honest evaluation of our relationships within the family of God to determine if we are truly meeting this commitment of family affection for one another. You may hear someone say "I love you in the Lord" what they really mean is that I'm obligated to love you because it's a command, but I really can't stand you.

In Christ or because of Christ, we truly are blood relatives and spiritual siblings who are to love each other.

The author of Hebrews exhorts us to continuous love by stating: "Keep on loving each other as brothers." (13:1)

Paul reminds us in Galatians 6:10 "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

We all know the Gaither's song:

You will notice we say "brother and sister" 'round here,

It's because we're a family and these are so near;  
When one has a heartache, we all share the tears,  
And rejoice in each victory in this family so dear.

I'm so glad I'm a part of the Family of God,  
I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His blood!

Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod,  
For I'm part of the family,  
The Family of God.

From the door of an orphanage to the house of the King,  
No longer an outcast, a new song I sing;  
From rags unto riches, from the weak to the strong,  
I'm not worthy to be here, but praise God I belong!

(Chorus)

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Is that the kind of affection we have for others in the family of God? So what does this family dynamic look like? What are its characteristics?

## II. A FAITHFUL ATTITUDE

Earlier this week while eating dinner I asked David what he thought a loving family ought to look like. He said his brain was too tired to think, but he did come up with some suggestions. Robyn added a couple as did I. I won't tell you who came up with which characteristics. So as these are mentioned I would ask you to ponder whether they are evident in your home and in our church. They should be if we are to express and experience brotherly love.

Let's begin with what the verse says.

Be "kindly affectioned" or "devoted to one another."

Do we find any examples in Scripture?

I Samuel 18:1-4

I Samuel 20:1, 12-17, 23, 41-42

II Samuel 9:1, 6-7

Devoted is a word that means having a natural family affection for a friend. It is an affection not based on superficial criteria such as personal attraction or desirability. We are to love as family.

One of the lessons we learn from the example of David and Jonathan is that this kind of love for one another keeps its word. There is mutual loyalty, commitment, and faithfulness to one another. David kept his word to his friend. His loyalty to Jonathan didn't end when his friend died. As he promised, David showed kindness to his friend and committed to keeping his word by taking in Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth. It didn't matter that it wasn't written down on a piece of paper or that it was made during a stressful time when David feared for his life. It didn't matter that no one else witnessed it. They were devoted to one another.

Something else I see from their example is also just as important. They defended each other. Jonathan stood up to his father on behalf of his friend. He could have pretended to love David all the while thinking in the back of his mind that if David is killed by my father then I'll get the kingdom.

Such family affection protects those who are weaker and defends others when attacked. It comes to the aid of those in need providing emotional support when someone else is discouraged or when there has been some failure whether it's moral or personal. It's concerned about the welfare of others.

Philippians 2:19-23

I Thessalonians 3:1-2

Paul gives to both the churches at Rome and Corinth a glimpse at what it looks like.

Romans 12:15 "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn."

II Corinthians 1:3-4 "Blessed be God even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

Family affection rallies around others who are going through tough times. We don't leave others to fend for themselves concluding that when we had a rough go of it once, no one came alongside us. We don't tell them to go it alone because working through the bumps and bruises along the path of life are necessary to help build character. Instead, family affection comes alongside to help.

Family affection serves others and takes on responsibility to lighten the load of others.

My Mom worked long hours in the Camp kitchen. Out of family affection for her I would often put the dishes away that had dried in the drainer. At other times I would fold the laundry so she had one less thing to do when she got home.

Family affection doesn't look to be served but rather to serve, to make the work of someone else easier. I will often wash the dishes after dinner for Robyn. She will thank me and I jokingly tell her I'm just trying to earn my keep, when she really knows that it's out of affection and devotion for her that I do it.

Another attitude evident in family affection is the enjoyment of each other's company. We are called into fellowship with each other.

Hebrews 10:24-25

I John 1:3



Fellowship is loving time spent together. That's why I think our fellowship dinners are so important to the health of our church family and why I want to encourage you to stick around afterward just to share a meal together. It's not just about feeding our belly. It's time together, not frivolous time together. We see it in Acts 2 when the early church met daily to eat with each other. It could have been the whole church or just a bunch of families getting together. Even in just a casual setting like a meal, we can build up and encourage each other.

Along with that I think laughter and joy are an important part of fellowship. Include singing. "A merry heart does good like a medicine."

Another important attitude among a healthy family is forgiveness. When someone hurts you see to it that there is forgiveness and reconciliation. Family life this side of heaven is never going to be perfect, so there are bound to be times when we say or do something that's going to hurt another member of the family of God. Don't let that sever the body. Seek to forgive and do so quickly otherwise the church family begins to take up side and we look more like the Hatfields and McCoys than a family.

I also think family affection includes the importance of listening. Ok, I wasn't going to say it, but that was from Robyn. I don't know if she means that I need to be a better listener or if that's something we do well. Bad things happen when we don't listen. James 1:19 says it best: "Let every man (woman, boy, girl, young, old, rich, poor) be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger."

Family affection should encourage, demonstrate compassion, exhort, support in prayer, exhibit resilience when as a family we face trials. We could add a lot more but let's allow that to stoke the fire of discussion in our Adult Impact.

No matter who Paul wrote to, family affection within the church was on his mind. Let me close

with a familiar appeal.

### III. A FAMILIAR APPEAL

I Thessalonians 4:9-10 – we can always do more.

Peter tells us in II Peter 1:5-8 that this brotherly kindness is a virtue that is added along with faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, and love. Then he adds that if we have those in abundance we will neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

We are to treat one another with brother affection.

One evening a son and father entered a restaurant. The son wanted to treat his elderly father to a nice dinner out. As they ate, the other patrons watched in embarrassment as the old man ate. Occasionally he dropped crumbs on his lap or spilled his drink when he took a sip. When they were finished, the son without embarrassment stood his father up and took him to the restroom. There he cleaned off the crumbs, wiped away the stains, combed his father's hair and straightened his glasses. They returned to their table while the other guests watched in silence unable to understand how someone could embarrass themselves publicly like that. The young man settled their bill and began to walk out when another diner, an old man himself, called after him. He asked the son "Don't you think you've left something behind?"

The son replied, "No sir, I haven't?"

The other man replied, "Yes you have! You have left a lesson for every son and the hope of every father."

That is a lesson in family affection, the kind of love we are to have for each other.

This is the hope of our Heavenly Father in how He wants us to treat one another.

In brotherly love, be devoted to one another is an appeal to the family of God and to that we add what we said last week, that by this all men will know you are Christ's disciples if you love one another.