

Sermon Series: The One Another Commands

Sermon Title: Love One Another

Sermon Text: John 13:34-35

Sermon Presenter: Pastor Larry

Sermon Summary: This study begins an eight week series on the “One Another Commands.” A significant portion of this first study sets the foundation for the “One Another Commands” by examining what it truly means to be a Christian. When we understand that the word Christian literally means “little Christ” or “Christ follower” we can see the rationale for observing the “One Another Commands.” The first “one another” command found in The New Testament was given by Jesus Himself when He told His disciples that they were to love one another. Three considerations are made about this command: Love is not optional for a follower of Christ! A follower of Christ seeks to follow Christ’s example! Love for one another is the mark of a true Christ follower!

Full Sermon Notes:

Aren't you glad God is faithful from the rising of the sun to the setting of the same? Aren't you glad that when you put your faith in Jesus, he becomes your anchor, your hope and your firm foundation? As followers of Jesus we have this hope and firm foundation no matter what this old world brings us and we have been given instructions from our faithful God on how to live our lives as Christians. Let's pray and ask God to teach our hearts and allow our minds to understand and soak up what God will reveal to us today! Pray!

This morning, I'm going to begin by introducing this new series. This may be one of the longest and most important introductions I've ever given. Don't get worried, when we're done with the intro, half of the sermon will be over and you'll be getting closer to lunch. And by the way, we've taken Scriptures from each of the messages for the next eight weeks and built our Bible reading plan around that! So each week you'll be able to solidify and nail down the Scriptural principles for the One Another Command you've learned for that week.

The Rationale for Observing the One Another Commands

About thirty years ago I looked up all the times in the New Testament where there was an instruction that includes the words "One Another." I found over twenty. Don't panic!! I'm not going to tell you about all twenty today, just the first one. This series will only last eight weeks so I can't cover all of the 20. The one another commands deal with how Christians live and treat each other, so it stands to reason the rationale for observing the one another commands is based on the word Christian. So before we look at the first one another command it is imperative that we understand...

What it means to be a Christian?

For many people in our world today, it simply means they live in a Christian nation, not Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist, etc. In other words, Christian is more about what they are *not* (not Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist) rather than what they *are*, or should be, (follower of Jesus) ltm

For some, to be Christian is about what you don't do. I don't do this or that or that or that either. For some Christian is all about what you're against. Don't get me wrong, there are things a truly Christian person should not do, but it's a sad thing if the world only knows us for what we don't do. For many in the U.S. the word Christian designates whether or not you attend church on a regular basis. For the more involved church goers, it's not church attendance that makes one a Christian but a personal decision to accept Christ as Savior. So for these people being a Christian designates whether or not a person has soul salvation. Soul salvation is the first step towards being Christian. Don't lose me here. I'm not going to preach a sermon on earning salvation by works because it can't be done. We learned that clearly in last week's message. But Jesus once said this...

Matthew 5:20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Yikes! We might just have a problem here! None of us are that good, but stay with me and you'll see where I'm going. It is vital for a person to understand it is not nationality or family background or church attendance or even church membership that brings salvation to a person's heart and soul. It's not how good you have been or become. It is, rather, the admission that one has sinned and needs a Savior, a belief that Jesus Christ died on a cross in order to make salvation possible, and a commitment to Him as Savior and Lord! And when I say Lord, let me be clear, I'm not saying you have to become perfect and get everything fixed before you come to Jesus as Lord. As I said last week, we don't get cleaned up to come to God, we come to God to get cleaned up! But we've got to have a heart that is open to letting Jesus' precious blood cleanse us of our sin and then allowing The Holy Spirit begin His transforming work in our lives day by day. As I've said before,

"Letting Jesus become your Savior is a 'one and done'! Letting Jesus be your Lord is a daily decision made throughout the day!"

So you must understand that salvation brings us eternal life through a personal relationship with God and brings us the ability to walk in fellowship with God on a daily basis. Once a person is saved and adopted into the family of God that adoption is complete and cannot be revoked by anyone! God won't revoke it and you can't revoke it! However, our fellowship with God depends on our willingness to walk with Him and talk with Him and submit to Him daily. It's important for me to read a Scripture I read to you last week. I want to make sure there is no confusion concerning what I'm going to teach you about what it means to be Christian.

Romans 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

These two verses tell us about salvation, about admitting we've sinned, about being forgiven for sin, about accepting Christ as savior, and beginning the process of allowing Jesus to be our Lord daily! Salvation of the soul is the beginning of salvation for our lives. Why do I say the beginning of salvation for our lives? When we accept Christ as our Savior, our name is written in the Lamb's book of Life. Our past sins are forgiven. Our future in heaven is a promise secure in Christ. Jesus said...

John 10:28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no-one can snatch them out of my hand.

John 10:29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no-one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

John 10:30 I and the Father are one."

Now that's security!!! But listen to what the Word says about our lives from the moment we receive Christ until the day we are called home to heaven...

Philippians 2:12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling,

Philippians 2:13 for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

Philippians 2:14 Do everything without complaining or arguing,

Philippians 2:15 so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe

Philippians 2:16 as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labour for nothing.

Did you notice? It did not say work for your salvation, it said work out your salvation. In other words, you allow the power of God's salvation to not only save your soul but to begin a transforming work in your life here and now. Dr. Frank Stagg put it this way in his book "The Doctrine of Christ"...

"Jesus came not just as a teacher but with a new way of life. He came to incorporate that way into his followers. Jesus had something vital to offer but also to demand. He did not come just to give us a new destination (heaven instead of hell)."

You see, some have erroneously believed that once a person gets "saved" they can just live any old way they want, sin all they want and it doesn't matter. How tragic. First of all, if that person has truly seen what Jesus had to do on the cross to pay for our sins, and called on the Name of The Lord to be saved, that doesn't mean they won't mess up or make mistakes, but they will be saddened when they do, and The Holy Spirit of God will convict their hearts over their sin. God's Word has something to say about this.

Romans 5:20 The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more,

Romans 5:21 so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6:1 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase?

Romans 6:2 By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

You see, when a person truly accepts Christ as Savior I believe they have a change of heart and they want to live a different life. This doesn't mean they are never tempted or never struggle with sin, but they realize what Christ went through to pay for their sin and they don't want to wallow in the mess that was destroying their life before they met Christ. And this is important to know: if you're ever tempted to just be satisfied with salvation for your soul and you decide you won't bother with allowing salvation to permeate your life, then know this:

When Satan loses the battle for your eternal soul, he immediately wages a fierce battle for your life on this earth.

And if Satan can't have your soul, he'll fight to destroy your joy, your integrity, your influence in this world and your witness to the lost and hurting.

How will he do this? What will be his strategy? One of the first things he'll try to destroy is your fellowship with God. While he can't do anything about the fact that you now have a relationship with God and have become a Christian, by soul salvation definition, Satan will seek to keep you from being Christian by another definition. And what would that definition be? The Greek word for Christian is...

Xristianos - "Christ follower"

Check out this discussion on the word from Jerry Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, (Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.)

“christianos NT:5546, ‘Christian,’ a word formed after the Roman style, signifying an adherent of Jesus, was first applied to such by the Gentiles and is found in Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16. As applied by Gentiles there was no doubt an implication of scorn, as in Agrippa's statement in Acts 26:28.

Acts 26:28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?”

Tacitus, writing near the end of the first century, says, ‘The vulgar call them Christians.’ Why was it an implication of scorn? Early Christians were living the teachings of Christ and the ungodly didn't understand it so they tried to make fun of them by calling them...

"Little Christ" or "Christ Followers."

The early Christians were trying to be like Jesus. They were trying to follow His teachings. They weren't perfect, but people in the world saw enough authenticity to call them Christians, Christ followers. Again I will use the word tragic. Tragically, down through the years, many have called themselves Christian, and even preached many things in the name of Christ, but there was a major problem. They weren't following Christ. People in the world use another word for this:

Hypocrite!

Now let me make sure we are all clear. None of us are perfect. Hypocrites are not imperfect people who are trying to follow Christ. Hypocrites are imperfect people who aren't following Christ, but want everyone to think they are! It is these kinds of people that prompted the following statement from a person quite interested in the Christian faith...

"Let us think of the bulk of your people who preach the gospel. Do they spread the perfume of their lives? That is to me the sole criterion. All I want them to do is live Christian lives not to annotate them."

Annotate: To add notes to a text or diagram giving explanation or comment.

Who was this person I quoted? Gandhi. Wow! "All I want them to do is live Christian lives, not annotate them." In other words, if you live a Christian life, you won't have to do nearly as much explaining. People will see Christ in you. While I love apologetics and developing ways to help convince skeptics of the truth of Jesus and His teachings, I've come to realize that lifestyle either delivers the message with pin-point accuracy or hinders the message with inconsistency! I can do less defending and more proclaiming when I'm living what I preach! If we talked less religion and lived more Jesus, the integrity and effectiveness of our witness would grow exponentially. If our lives don't back our words, then we've got a problem. Again, it's not about being perfect, it's about being genuine. And the world can tell the difference!!! So here's the deal...

Soul salvation is so important, but it is only the beginning. It is a beginning that secures a wonderful ending, but it is only the beginning. It is the in-between that we are called upon to be Christian!!! When you look at a headstone at a cemetery you will see a name and the dates of their birth and death. In-between those two dates are a little dash. That dash represents their life. God wants us to use our dash, however long or short it may be, to follow Christ. To grow to be like Christ. To live in such a way that people in the world who know you would call you a "Christ Follower!" What does that look like and how can a person follow Jesus in this world? Is there a guide? A blueprint? A road map? A set of instructions? Yes there is! In the New Testament we find four Gospels accounts of Jesus' life. Beautiful accounts of His teachings and vibrant examples of how He lived and those should serve as our most important guide for living. And then, there's other writers in the New Testament like James, John, Peter and Paul, themselves followers of Christ, who gave wonderful insights on how to become more like Christ. And guess who gives us the first One Another Command in the New Testament? Jesus Himself! It's John 13:34-35

John 13:34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

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

What could be more appropriate than that? Jesus begins our series with His very own One Another Command! There are three major considerations on this One Another Command that come out of these two verses.

Consideration #1 - Love is not optional for a follower of Christ!

John 13:34 "A new command I give you: Love one another..."

If we are to be Christ followers, we must love. It's not optional, it is a command. Are there things in your life that are not optional? For adults, is paying your bills optional? Not without serious consequences. For young people, is doing your homework optional? Not without consequences. If you don't do your homework, then your teacher is not going to be happy and that will show up on your report card and then your parents are not going to be happy and that's when it gets real! Loving others is not optional for a follower of Jesus! Once an expert in the law questioned Jesus. He thought he could stump the great teacher and maybe even discredit him. Listen...

Matthew 22:34 Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together.

Matthew 22:35 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question:

Matthew 22:36 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

Matthew 22:37 Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'

Matthew 22:38 This is the first and greatest commandment.

Matthew 22:39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

Matthew 22:40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

We talked about these verses in one of our earlier Relationships sermons. And you might have noticed that six out of the ten commandments given by God to Moses had to do with loving our neighbor! But God knows it's not always easy to love others, especially when they are not very lovable. Especially when they have hurt us, wronged us, or taken from us. I understand, I too have been hurt by others at times in my life. But we must never forget this: Jesus didn't say you had to like them. He said you have to love them. And what does that mean? Loving someone doesn't mean you have to like what they do, their mean spirit, their hurtful words, their "I don't care" attitude. It does mean that you let Christ help you see beyond their faults and see their need for Christ. It means having a burden that if they don't find Christ they will spend this life and eternity separated from God's love. It means letting Christ help you understand that without the change Jesus made in your life, you would be capable of the same kind of despicable behavior. Ouch! I know that hurts. C.S. Lewis made a good observation about this...

"Do not waste time bothering whether you "love" your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him. If you injure someone you dislike you will find yourself disliking him more. If you do him a good turn you will find yourself disliking him less."

Pretty good wisdom! Now I should add that this one another command is specifically talking about loving our brothers and sisters in the family of God, our brothers and sisters in Christ. Jesus said...

John 13:34 "A new command I give you: Love one another..."

However, the principle of this one another command to love one another in the family of God can also be found in something else Jesus had to say about loving others!

Luke 6:27 "But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,

Luke 6:28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who ill-treat you.

Luke 6:29 If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic.

Luke 6:30 Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back.

Luke 6:31 Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Luke 6:32 "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them.

Luke 6:33 And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that.

So love is not optional for a follower of Christ!

Consideration # 2 - A follower of Christ seeks to follow Christ's example!

Jesus practiced what He preached!

John 13:34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

Jesus told his disciples to love as He had loved. To follow His example. Hey kids, it's kind of like having a coach show you or teach you how to play soccer, football or karate. They've played the game and they want to teach you how to be good at whatever sport you are involved in. If we are going to be a Christ follower, we must let Jesus be our coach! And no one has ever been a better coach when it comes to loving others. We are to love as Christ loved. Let me give you an example: Remember Judas? Yeh that guy! Jesus knew that Judas was stealing money from their meager treasury. He knew that he was going to betray him. Did that stop Jesus from loving him? When Jesus was in the Garden of Olives praying before His crucifixion this happened...

Matthew 26:47 While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people.

Matthew 26:48 Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him."

Matthew 26:49 Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him.

Matthew 26:50 Jesus replied, "Friend, do what you came for." Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him.

Jesus called him friend. The betrayer, the one who turned him over to his enemies. Jesus called him friend and that's because Jesus really did love him. Oh and about this crucifixion...

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

You know, I think sometimes when we are about to betray Jesus with our actions like Judas, or deny Jesus with our words like Peter, if we listen closely we might just hear Jesus say, "Friend, what are you doing?" I say this because we would all like to think we would never betray or deny Jesus. But remember this...

Isaiah 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Isaiah 53:6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

And let's remember this important fact found in Paul's letter to the Romans...

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

Romans 5:10 For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

Make no mistake about it, we are saved through His life, not because of our good life, but let's never forget this...

Ephesians 5:8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light

Ephesians 5:9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)

Ephesians 5:10 and find out what pleases the Lord.

And what pleases the Lord? Well we find that answer in...

Consideration #3 - Love for one another is the mark of a true Christ follower!

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

I have a question for us today. When the world looks at us, do they see the love of Christ? Do they see our love for one another? What do they see when they peer into the life of the church? Do they see us only loving those in our click, those who agree with us? Those who are like us? Those who share our political views? If Northshore Church is to fulfill its vision...

"To raise up a healthy church that will impact the North Shore and ultimately the world with the life changing message of Jesus Christ!"

If we are to fulfill this vision, we must let the world see our love for one another. They must see our love in what we say and what we do. People in the world understand the importance of branding. When you see a check mark on a pair of shoes you immediately know the brand, right? Or if you have a phone or a computer that has an apple with a chunk out of the side, you know what brand it is, right? But what brands us as Christians, as followers of Christ? Is it the cross necklace we wear? There are people in the world who wear a big cross because it's a fashion statement for them. Don't get me wrong, I love my cross necklace because it reminds me of God's love for me, but it's not what identifies me as a Christ follower. The world is not going to know us by the Christian bumper sticker on our car, and I'm not against having the fish symbol on your car, which ironically was originally used by Christians to hide their Christianity from their Roman persecutors. And by the way, if you do have a Christian bumper sticker or a Northshore Church sticker on your car, please remember that when you're driving! What is the bottom line? Love for one another is the mark that brands us as Christ followers. In fact, John, a disciple whom Jesus loved deeply and was very close to, wrote the following words and gives us a good summary of our one another command for today.

1 John 3:18 Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

1 John 4:7 Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

1 John 4:8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

1 John 4:9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

1 John 4:10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

1 John 4:11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

1 John 4:12 No-one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

1 John 4:19 We love because he first loved us.

1 John 4:20 If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.

1 John 4:21 And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Now someone here might say, "But Pastor Larry, I struggle to love others and even some people in the family of God! What does this mean for me? Does this mean I'm not saved? No it doesn't! Remember the Bible says we all sin and fall short of the Glory of God and John also said this in his letter a few chapters back..."

1 John 1:8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Remember what I told you earlier about the difference between relationship with God and fellowship with God? When we repent of our sin and accept God's grace and love we are adopted into God's family through the shed blood of Jesus Christ and a relationship is established that cannot be revoked. However, if we choose to live in sin and if we refuse to love one another then we cannot live in fellowship with God! The fellowship is broken, not the relationship. It's like this...Let's say a young girl runs away from home to live a terrible life in the world and rejects her parents attempts to reach out to her. Her fellowship with her mom and dad is broken or severely limited. She may not even claim her parents. However, she will still be their child, she can't change that! And if the parents were to disown her, and cut off all fellowship, she would still be their daughter, they can't change that! Now here's the deal: God will not disown one of His children, He promised, but if we allow ourselves to be enslaved in sin and refuse to love others then we are not loving God and we lose that sweet fellowship with God, the blessings of God, and the peace of God He so wants us to have. And while this one another command is not optional if we desire to be right with God, God has given us a choice. We can walk in fellowship with Him and follow His one another commands or not. There are consequences, good and bad, but remember, once Jesus is your Savior, that's a one and done! Let's pray!

Small Group Discussion Helps

How have you understood the word Christian in the past and how do you view the word today?

The original word Christian was a derogatory word used to put down people who were trying to imitate Christ by following His teachings. However, it became more of a compliment to the early followers of Jesus. Why? 1 Pet 4:16 However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. (NIV)

As a Christ follower we are commanded by Jesus to love one another. Why is this sometimes hard to do? What are some things we can do that will help us love one another?

Col 3:13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Col 3:14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. (NIV)

(Heads up, you will see this Scripture again in this series)

Why is it so important that we love one another?

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