



A New Commandment

By Randall F. Matheny

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn. 13:34-35). Some have wondered, since "love" has become a relative term in our culture, why Jesus would choose such a characteristic as the one thing about which He said, "By this will all know that you are my disciples." First, Jesus used the Greek word "*agape*" which goes beyond affection to unconditional devotion (see 1 Cor. 13:1-8), as in, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. (John 15:12-13)." Second, Jesus defines the love of John 13:34 "...as I have loved you." The love that is to be between Christians, which testifies of true discipleship, is to be of the same nature as that of Jesus for His disciples. He left the glory of heaven for them (Phil. 2:5-8). He was born, He lived and He died for their benefit (Mat. 1:21; 20:27-28) and for all who would obey Him (Heb. 5:8-9). It is only by examining the love of Jesus for His disciples that we can understand love at all

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"...speaking the truth in love" Ephesians 4:15

(1 Jn. 3:16). If faithful and true Christians have a testimony to give to the world, this is it: the Christ-like love that they have for one another.

Since it is understood that this evidence of discipleship is to be demonstrated so that it may be observed, let us consider a few ways that Christians may accomplish this: (1) "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another" (Rom

devouring and consuming one another (Gal. 5:13-15). (7) "...with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:2-3). (8) By being kind, tenderhearted, forgiving (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13) and submitting to one another (Eph. 5:21). (9) By comforting and building up one another (1 Thes. 4:18; 5:11). (10) By considering "one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another..." (Heb. 10:24-25).

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12:10). (2) By treating one another fairly and equally (Rom. 12:16; 1 Cor. 12:23-26). (3) By not judging one another in matters of opinion wherein there is liberty. (4) By accepting one another to the exclusion of none (Rom. 15:5-7), excepting the disorderly and divisive (Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:9-11; 2 Thes. 3:6, 14-15) whom we must admonish and seek to restore in love (Gal. 6:1; Jas. 5:19-20). (5) Being filled with goodness and knowledge, willing to admonish one another when sin threatens (Rom. 15:14; Col. 3:16). (6) Being considerate and attentive to the needs of one another (1 Cor. 11:33). (7) Through love serving one another rather than biting,

In summary, faithful Christians want to please God by serving one another, they want what is best for one another and willingly sacrifice of themselves to achieve that end, they want to be together at every assembly and will allow nothing of lesser importance to keep them apart, and they are satisfied with nothing less than the church as Jesus would have it to be. Loving one another as Jesus loves us presents undeniable evidence that He has disciples on earth today and will draw more attention to the Lord and His church than anything else could do. Nothing will substitute for love and without it nothing else has enduring virtue (1 Cor. 13:1-8;

Rev. 2:1-5). "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him" (1 Jn. 3:18-19).

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Being Committed Is No Shame

By Randall F. Matheny

Loyalty and commitment seem to have become two of those archaic words, although once esteemed and spoken firmly, that have fallen into disrespect and disuse. Our society manifests this in several ways, not the least of which is a divorce rate of well over 50 percent of all marriages, and the fact that so many people exhibit no shock or outrage when political leaders routinely lie, saying that they all do it and that they have come to expect nothing better of them. This is more than tragic, because if one cannot trust a spouse, or those lead our land, then cynicism and apathy are certain to be the result, which will foster even more lack of loyalty and commitment.

Christians cannot shun the ideals of loyalty and commitment, but must be in the forefront of those upholding their need as fundamental building blocks of society from its smallest unit to its greatest. Jesus was fully committed to doing the will of the Father, even unto the death of the cross (Phil. 2:5-10). Peter teaches that the commitment and loyalty of Jesus serve as examples for all of His disciples (1 Pet. 2:21-24). Paul declared his unashamed defense of the

gospel of Christ as the exclusive power of salvation to all who believe it (Rom. 1:16; Phil. 1:17), and presents himself as a role model for all Christians who would follow (1 Cor. 11:1). It seems that God expects and will accept nothing short of full commitment, total loyalty, to Him through His Son.

Christians, of all people, understand loyalty and commitment. "But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the evil one" means that the Christian can be taken at his word (Mat. 5:37; Jas. 5:12). The words of Jesus stand as stark warning, "But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment" (Mat. 12:36). Giving one's word to something, whether "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" before being baptized, or "for richer for poorer, for better or worse, in sickness and in health, until death do us part," or in any other thing, is a profoundly serious matter in the eyes of God even if it is not in the blinded eyes of the world. While the disloyalty of the world can be easily seen in the routine breaking of vows, the loyalty of the faithful child of God is just as readily seen in the keeping of them. Marriage and family are viewed as a divine institutions to be protected and preserved. The assemblies of the church take top priority at their appointed times - a faithful Christian would never willingly miss a meal at the Lord's table, reject an opportunity to feast upon the word, or be in fellowship with others bought by the same blood. The Lord's

work in daily life is seen as a privilege and opportunities to serve are sought out. Being Committed Is No Shame. "Where He leads me, I will follow."

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