

Weekly Devotions: LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER 20

Is Your Church A Community of Grace?

For the church to be a community of grace, majority of her members must be people of grace. Their relationships with one another and those outside the church are marked by grace or unconditional love. When a church is a community of grace, she is like the light on the hilltop drawing many to Christ.

The authors of the book “Future Faith Churches”, a study of the common characteristics of vibrant, growing churches in Canada, noticed that in these churches, relationships amongst the members are “laced with compassion and infused with mercy”. The authors said; “When compassion is present, mean-spiritedness is absent. Instead of nurturing harshness, vindictiveness, or the urge to censor; compassion leans sympathetically toward others... It offers the benefit of the doubt. In relationships, it is prepared to travel the second mile... Extending open arms to people is part of the spirit of these churches. They are inviting, accepting and certainly not judgmental.”

Read Rom 12: 9-21

Paul exhorted the Roman Church that their love must be genuine, not just to impress people. They are to love one another and also their enemies, both from within and outside the church.

As a family of God, they are to love one another with brotherly affection by respecting others (10) and serving God zealously (11). They are to be humble and selfless, sharing in each other’s joys and pain. Paul also challenged them that when persecuted or attacked they should refrain from evil and do what is honorable (17). They should not retaliate but leave it in God’s hands (19). Instead, they are to bless their enemies and to conquer evil with good (20-21). By showing love to their enemies, they are heaping burning coals on their head. Coals are a symbol of penitence; love shown to an enemy may lead the person to repentance.

Questions to ponder

1. What does it mean to have genuine love for one another and how should we relate to fellow believers in God’s family (9-11, 13, 15-16, 18)? Which of these injunctions are you weakest in and what can you do to strengthen this area?
2. What does Paul say about loving our enemies and persecutors and how should we respond to wickedness (9b, 12, 14, 17-21)? What are 3 things you can do to bless someone whom you resent?
3. Is your church a community of grace and what can you do so that your church can reflect more grace, mercy and compassion?

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