

## Being the Family of God – Part 11: Tender Affection

1. Review and Overview
  - a. We have been talking for 11 weeks about “being the family of God.”
    - i. My question for you today is are you beginning to see yourself and the people around you in this room as family?
    - ii. The bible declares us as family, not only as the “family of God” but family “to one another.”
    - iii. It is a fact, an unchangeable truth that every one of us in this room who belong to Jesus Christ belong to one another as family. And as such, we are to *learn* how to *act* like family.
  - b. Today’s sermon will deal with the indispensable first steps we need to take for ordering our lives so that we might live and act like the family of God. I’d like to walk you through three related passages of scripture that address our conduct toward one another .
2. Romans 12: 10 NAS: *Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor (reverence);*
  - a. The word for "be devoted" refers to a special kind of love. This is the only place in the New Testament that this word is used, but it’s not a rare word outside the bible.
  - b. The Greek word means to have "tender affection” and is used in to describe family affection. It signifies the tender affection which a mother has for her child. (paint a picture with a mother)
  - c. One commentator translates this as “*Feel the tenderest affection towards each other, and delight to feel it.*”
  - d. This is both a command to act and to feel an emotion.
  - e. Christians are commanded to demonstrate "*demonstrate tender affection toward each other in family love.*"
3. 1 Peter 1:22, “*Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart.*”
  - a. Again, we have a command to love one another earnestly with all our hearts.
  - b. It is possible only because we have been cleansed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.
  - c. (expound?)
4. In Philippians 1:8 Paul says to the church, “*For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.*”
  - a. In the first two passages we hear Paul exhorting and commanding the church family to express tender affection and love for one another from the bottom of their hearts.
  - b. In this passage, Paul uses a word that demonstrates his own love in a way that ought to make us sit up and take notice.
  - c. He uses the word “Splagchnon” for affection. The word is an odd one because it refers to the "intestines" or "inner organs."
    - i. Doesn’t this translation sound weird? “how I long for you all with the bowels of Christ Jesus”?
    - ii. The bowels were regarded by the Jews as the seat of the tender affections, esp. kindness, benevolence, compassion; and our heart.
    - iii. The idea is: I long for you and love you not just with an act of will power but with deep and tender affections. In other words, “I miss you. I am homesick or lovesick for you.”
    - iv. Paul is expressing his love for his brothers and sisters in Christ, his love and affections for the family of God.
5. Now here is the point behind all of this.
  - a. The bible commands us to love one another.
  - b. You have probably heard it said here or at a wedding that **love isn’t just a feeling, it is a commitment.** Right?

- i. That is true. It is important for us to remember the truth when the feelings fade but the commitment remains.
- ii. But we cannot ignore the fact that love consists also of feelings.
- iii. And that is part of the problem! It is both feelings and commitment.
  - 1. And if so, how can we be commanded to feel something?
  - 2. Is it really possible for me to command my emotions and my feelings?
- c. Here in Romans 12:10 where Paul tells us to *demonstrate tender affection toward each other in family love.*" , we are commanded to FEEL love for one another.
  - i. We are literally commanded to feel emotions for one another.
    - 1. How can God do that?
    - 2. We know it is God's will for us to do right actions to one another as His children and to demonstrate sacrificial love.
    - 3. But God's will for His family is even bigger than that, He desires that we feel a certain way toward one another.
  - ii. He tells us to do things like
    - 1. *"Love each other with brotherly affection."*
    - 2. *"Open your hearts wide to each other."*
    - 3. *"Feel for each other a kind of tender affection and longing that would naturally be expressed in a holy kiss of love."*
- d. In other words, **God is commanding what we ought to feel** –
  - i. He doesn't just command our actions to be right, but He actually commands us to feel certain things.
  - ii. I know that this is tough truth to embrace, because modern psychology has taught us that our feelings are neutral, neither right or wrong.
  - iii. But throughout the bible, we are commanded to bring our feelings into line with our actions.
    - 1. If we ought to feel joy in the Lord, he commands us to, "Rejoice in the Lord" (Philippians 4:4).
    - 2. If we ought to feel the sorrow of sympathy, he commands us to, "Weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15).
    - 3. If we ought to feel gratitude for a great gift, he commands us to, "Be thankful" (Colossians 3:15).
    - 4. If we should feel remorse for our sin, he commands us to, "Be miserable and mourn and weep" (James 4:9).
  - iv. Why do we need to bring our feelings into line with our actions?
    - 1. Imagine experiencing feelings of anger toward someone in the church but acting kind toward them, as if nothing were wrong at all. We would call that hypocrisy! It is dishonesty.
    - 2. **Our emotions are a barometer of what is going on inside of us.**
      - a. Just as a barometer warns of weather conditions that might not be visible to the eye, our emotions inform us of conditions within our heart that we might not be aware of consciously.
    - 3. So when God commands us to feel affection for the brothers and we don't, that should be a warning, a literal alarm that something is wrong within us. Our emotions aren't matching our actions.
  - v. So why is it so hard for us to bring our feelings into line with our actions?
    - 1. The reason we don't always feel the way we ought is that our hearts are distorted by sin and self-interest. So there is often a disconnect between feelings and actions. We can obey and do the "right thing" even when we don't feel like it.
    - 2. And don't get me wrong...that is the correct thing to do.
    - 3. But God is telling us "don't stop there!"

- e. So what do we do?
    - i. **If you are feeling NOTHING** for your brothers and sisters at HHBC, then you should be asking yourself why! When people shake your hand and hug you, if you feel like it is an exercise in warm fuzzies and don't enjoy it, you should be asking yourself why.
      - 1. The answer may lie in the level of your relationship that you have with the people you aren't feeling anything toward.
      - 2. You see, I can feel ambivalent toward a stranger, but to someone I have shared a meal with or had over for dessert and spent time with, I have to feel SOMETHING for them.
    - ii. **If you feel ANGER** or animosity toward the members of the church family, that is a clear indicator that you have issues or offenses with them.
      - 1. The bible tells us what to do with that. The bible tells us to go to the one who has offended us and to let them know that they have hurt us or let us down.
      - 2. I found out last week that I had hurt a sister in Christ by not communicating with her about a change in a schedule. I would not have known and she would have had hidden resentment toward me if it hadn't been brought to my attention. But I asked her forgiveness and I believe that she again has the warmth of God's love toward me.
  - f. We are responsible for removing the barriers that prevent our actions and emotions from lining up.
    - i. God wants His children to feel love for each other and not just act nice toward one another.
    - ii. What parent doesn't want their children to be close to one another? They might be okay with just being civil, but God wants us to be tenderly affectionate toward each other, because this testifies to the reality of the family of God.
    - iii. When we feel hard or indifferent, bitter or resentful toward each other, this contradicts who God is and who we are.
      - 1. God is our father and we are his children and we are brothers and sisters in one family with the deepest common values in the universe.
6. This morning you should be hearing the command of Jesus to love the brothers and sisters at Here's Hope with tender affection.
- a. Then open your heart wide to them. Open your life up to them. Desire to feel a longing for them and joy in them.
  - b. I suppose you can think of several people that you do not feel that way about.
    - i. Perhaps they have gossiped about you or snubbed you or let you down.
    - ii. Your response is one that should say, "I hear you Lord. And I submit to the rightness of your command. But you know my heart and what I am feeling toward him or her. I acknowledge what I feel and I desire that my feelings match what you command. Show me how to remove the barriers with this brother or sister"
      - 1. "The German philosopher Schopenhauer compared the human race to a bunch of porcupines huddling together on a cold winter's night. He said, "The colder it gets outside, the more we huddle together for warmth; but the closer we get to one another, the more we hurt one another with our sharp quills. And in the lonely night of earth's winter eventually we begin to drift apart and wander out on our own and freeze to death in our loneliness." "Christ has given us an alternative: to forgive each other for the pokes we receive. That allows us to stay together and stay warm." (Leadership, Vol. 17, no. 2.)
  - c. **Defective lies feed us defective emotions.**
    - i. This is why we don't feel the way that God calls us to.
    - ii. We must replace the lies with the truth.

- iii. The truth shall set you free! As we know the truth about ourselves and others, we will learn to develop healthy emotions toward one another.
- iv. **The pain in my past will not control my future!** Can you say that with me?
- d. Remember Christian Love Is a Growing Thing
  - i. Love is a growing thing. So you may have some of it and be a real Christian and not have enough of it. You may feel some affection toward a fellow believer, but also wrestle with other negative emotions.
    - 1. that does not mean you are not a Christian, or that God is not pleased with you.
    - 2. It simply means that you have been touched your Father in Heaven and he is saying, "There is another step to take. There is another level of love to move on to.
    - 3. Consider the analogy in marriage.
      - a. Do you think that married couples always feel tender affection for each other? Always feel tender and warm? They don't. But such affection is the ideal. That is what God calls us to. And one of the reasons he makes marriage unbreakable and seals it with an oath, "For better or for worse, till death do us part," is because he knows that we need to live our lives in the circle of rugged commitment so that tender affections can be awakened again and again.
      - b. That is not only true in marriage. It is true in the church.
- 7. **Practical steps to growing in affection** and love for your church family:
  - a. **Spend time with your brothers and sisters:** Get to know them.
    - i. "To know me is to love me" is true when combined with commitment.
    - ii. Feelings follow commitment the same way the train follows the engine.
    - iii. The more you know someone the more you will feel the tender affections that God intended you to feel.
  - b. **Pray for your brothers and sisters.**
    - i. Prayer is an act of love.
    - ii. It is the act of expending your time, energy, attention and pouring your heart out for someone else.
    - iii. Here is a simple plan: Take a directory, it is 7 pages long, with 10 families on a page. Pray for the families on ONE page each day. By doing so you will be carrying each brother and sister on to the finish line of life.
- 8. Closing story:
  - a. Some missionaries in the Philippines set up a croquet game in their front yard. Several of the native became interested and wanted to join the fun. The missionaries explained the game and started them out, each with a mallet and ball. As the game progressed, opportunity came for one of the players to take advantage of another by knocking that person's ball out of the court. A missionary explained the procedure, but his advice only puzzled the native. "Why would I want to knock his ball out of the court?" he asked. "So you will be the one to win!" a missionary said. The short-statured man, clad only in a loincloth, shook his head in bewilderment. (Competition is generally ruled out in a hunting and gathering society, where people survive not by competing but by sharing equally in every activity.) The game continued, but no one followed the missionaries' advice. When a player successfully got through all the wickets, the game was not over for him. He went back and gave aid and advice to his fellows. As the final player moved toward the last wicket, the affair was still very much a team effort. And finally, when the last wicket was played, the "team" shouted happily, "We won! We won!" That is how the Church, the body of Christ, should be. We're a team. We are a family. We don't get ahead by leaving anyone behind, but rather by finishing together.
  - b. Will you commit today to carrying your brothers and sisters daily in prayer?.