



## Going Deeper

Weekly Sermon Discussion Guide 5/30/2021

*"By this all men will know that you are my disciples," John 13:35*

In the book of Leviticus there are lists of rules and regulations to teach God's people their part of the covenant he made with them to be their King, provider, and protector. Among the list are such things as do not steal, do not lie, do not deceive one another, and "...do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but *love your neighbor as yourself*, I am the Lord." (Lev. 19).

The night before he died, Jesus renewed this command. *"A new command I give you.."* Strong's concordance says that "new" here means, "which as recently made is superior to what it succeeds." This would have me sitting at attention and listening closely. *"Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

God created us in his image to be in relationship with him. That relationship was broken in the garden of Eden, so Jesus came to show us how to live in this broken world so that we can reflect his image and show the people of this world who he is. In order to look more like him, we enter into a covenant relationship based on love.

This sounds easy enough on the surface, but to survive in this broken world we are accustomed to conditional relationships instead of covenant relationships. The difference is that conditional relationships are focused on what we can get and are motivated by selfishness; covenant relationships are focused on what we can give and are motivated by sacrifice. That word 'sacrifice' makes this command sound less easy.

Infants and toddlers learn to survive through conditional relationships and unless they have parents that provide unconditional love, protection and provision for all their needs, the fear of not getting what they need turns survival into selfishness as they grow older. Fear of being hurt and hungry, of being alone and not being accepted makes selfishness necessary for living as the world lives. Jesus came to demonstrate that God will provide for all our needs and replace fear with trust and love. So instead of being self-protective and self-serving, we can be selfless and sacrificing and reflect his image.

Covenantal love and sacrifice bring us back into relationship with the one who created us and as we become one with him we reflect his image to a hurting world. This requires risk and the degree of risk is proportional to the risk of hurt. The church - the fellowship of believers - God's Kingdom on earth - is a safe place to take that risk. When we have like-minded people in our life who know us, we find a place full of God's love and acceptance and we learn the freedom of covenantal love. This takes the selfless sacrifice of time and vulnerability. In this community we will discover the depths of the destiny to which we are called us and will reveal the hope of heaven.

Jesus did not die so we can put conditions on relationships. His unconditional sacrifice frees us to love unconditionally and reflect his image to a world that desperately needs to know him.

### So Consider:

1. Do you live your life more in the protection of conditional relationships or do you see yourself more in harmony with the command to love as Jesus did? Describe how you understand the difference between these.
2. How might complete unconditional, covenantal love change your view of the divisions and duality of race, ethnicity, culture and political parties? Describe your understanding of the oneness of the Kingdom of God.
3. Where do you find the safety and confidence to be vulnerable enough to receive what you can't get on your own, go where you can't go on your own, and do what you can't do on your own? Describe your current relationship with church community groups and relationships and how you might embrace them with trust, love and hope.

**Take Action:** Ask God this week where he wants to lead you, nurture you, and guide you into deeper covenantal love and relationship with Him and with others. Be willing to find a new understanding of loving others as He loves you.

*If you would be interested in joining the writing team for Going Deeper please contact Pastor Linda.  
May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. ~Tess*