

Building Up One Another

Message 3: Devoted to One Another

One of the greatest blessings of life is being a part of a warm, loving, devoted family. Knowing that the members of your family love you, care for you, provide for you, and are committed to you provides a wonderful sense of comfort and belonging. All of us ought to be striving to have that kind of family life.

That's true for our physical families, and it ought also be true for our church, our spiritual family.

Sadly, some people do not have that kind of family life at home. Their home and extended family is not particularly loving, devoted, and supportive. Perhaps the extended family is unsaved and does not show much affection or commitment.

For those who have a warm, loving family life, the church can be an extension of that warmth and love. For those who do not have a loving physical family, the church can provide that love and affection that someone is missing.

As we continue with our Building Up One Another series, today we'll be considering a verse that has two "one another" statements in it.

Rom 12:10 *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.*

The text says, literally, "with brotherly love for one another, [be] kindly affectionate." (Τῇ φιλαδελφίᾳ εἰς ἀλλήλους φιλόστοργοι) Paul is exhorting us here toward "brotherly love," "kind affection," and mutual honor.

We should check the context of this verse. This whole list, in Rom 12:9-18, explains the command in verse 9a: "Let love (ἀγάπη) be without dissimulation" (i.e., hypocrisy). I.e., let love be sincere or genuine. These words, "kindly affectioned," "brotherly love," and "in honor preferring," describe the "love" in vs. 9. Sincere love is kindly affectionate and brotherly, not hypocritical or insincere. That kind of love prefers others more than one's self.

Paul is telling us here that the church ought to be a place of warm, brotherly love. We should be intentional about showing honor toward one another.

Let's look at these terms and then consider how the church should demonstrate kind affection, brotherly love, and honorable preference for one another.

I. Extend "brotherly love" to one another.

The term “brotherly love” refers to the love that should exist between siblings within a family. Applied to the church, it refers to the love Christians should have for each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.

A. The original word here is literally *philadelphia* (φιλαδελφία). It’s the combination of two words—“love” (*philos*) and “brother” (*adelphos*). So it’s the love of/for a brother.

1. The word for “love” is the general word for human love. It can refer also to our love for God or God’s love for us or our love for others. It can refer to friendship or close personal relationships. The meaning of the word is rather broad.
2. A brother (*adelphos*) is a sibling, a member of the same family. The word *brother* literally means, “from the same womb.” “Brotherly love” refers to family affection.
3. Used in a Christian context, the term “brother” normally refers to fellow Christians. It’s biblical to refer to a fellow believer as “brother.”

Christians are “joint heirs” with Christ (Rom 8:17; Gal 4:7) and members of the same family.

- B. Just as a physical family should be characterized by love, affection, and tender care, so should the church express these kinds of attitudes.
- C. The church is a family, and it should be a place of warmth, compassion, and love.

Trans: The church is not just a place where you go for religious rituals or duties. It’s not merely for instruction and service. Church is where we draw near to God and to one another. Church should be a loving, warm center of family love.

Do people experience that at our church? Would everyone who attends here affirm that our church is a warm center of family love?

II. Extend “family affection” to one another. KJV “kindly affectioned”

A. The first word, “brotherly love,” was *philadelphia*. This next word is like it—*philostorgos* (φιλόστοργος). This is the only use of the word in the whole NT.

1. The first part is the same as the previous word—*philos*.
2. *Storgos* – family love; devotion within a family; family affection; natural affection.

3. This word refers to the loving, tender affection that exists between parents and children or husbands and wives. Loving affection or tender care is the idea.

Quote: [The word pertains] to love or affection for those closely related to one [another], particularly members of one's immediate family or in-group—'very loving, warmly devoted to, very affectionate.'¹

4. Some scholars translate it as "be devoted to one another."

- B. So these two words—*philadelphia* and *philostorgos*—are quite similar in meaning; they are roughly synonymous. Both of them describe sincere love as the kind of love that exists in warm, affectionate, devoted families.

Perhaps the first word pertains more to family love and affection and the second word pertains more to devotion and commitment.

- C. By repeating the same concept, Paul is emphasizing something very important. Christians are to be devoted to each other like members of a close-knit family unit. In fact, the devotion we have for fellow believers may be even stronger and more committed than that we have for our own physical family members.

Following Jesus may actually fracture relationships with our physical family members. Some of us know what it is like to be separated from family members because of our commitment to Christ. But that is sometimes the cost of discipleship.

Matthew 10:35–36 *For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'*

Mt 10:37 *He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*

¹ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 292.

- D. The practical implication of this concept is that Christians should have a high degree of devotion for and loyalty to one another. The people of the church should be devoted to one another with the kind of loyalty and commitment that family members should have for one another.

Quote: The exhortation is, ‘love the brethren in the faith as though they were brethren in blood.’²

In fact, the word “kind” (as in “kindly affectioned”) originally pertained to kin or kindred—that is, your family. Kindly affectioned is having the affection of kindred or family.

- E. That is a high level of commitment. The old saying is “Blood is thicker than water.” What people mean by that is that family relationships are more significant than other kinds of relationships. When we have to make a choice between family and non-family, we usually choose family over other kinds of relationships.
- F. However, this verse shows us that our relationships within the church should rise to the level of the commitment people have for the members of their own family. In fact, such devotion may be even higher and stronger than that of the family in some cases.

God must take priority over family relationships, and fellow brothers in Christ may in some cases have priority over family members.

No doubt, the most devoted of relationships would be for those who are both family members and fellow believers. If your physical family members are not believers, your highest sense of loyalty and devotion may apply to your spiritual family—your church.

- G. Thinking of others in the church in those terms is fairly unusual. We may recognize one another as spiritual family members, but the affection and devotion typically does not rise to the level of physical family. But it should. The church is a place for devotion and affection—family love and commitment.

App: If you understand the devotion and commitment we should have for fellow members of the church, we would not casually or easily break those bonds of affection and devotion. We should be devoted to and loyal to one another like members of the same family.

² Farrar, in Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 213–214.

Trans: The language here is very direct and strong. We ought to have sincere, family love for one another, and that implies a strong sense of devotion to and affection for one another.

But he goes on to further describe this kind of family affection by telling us to ...

III. Extend honorable preference to one another.

The second part of the verse gives us another “one another” statement – “in honor preferring one another.”

- A. In the OT, the word “honor” literally means “to be heavy, weighty.” You honor someone by assigning him value or “weight.” It’s a term of respect. I see the other person as having significance and substance.
- B. In the NT, the word “honor” has the sense of “a valuing.” It involves placing a value on something so that it comes to have our honor and respect. I value the other person.

Where does human value come from?

Respect and honor for others is rooted in the idea that all humans bear the image of God. Everyone deserves to be treated with dignity because they bear the image of God. Without that understanding, we’re all just a bunch of animals fighting to get to the top of the food chain.

But beyond valuing one another as fellow image bearers, we honor one another as fellow believers in Christ, members of the same spiritual family. We honor Christ by honoring those who follow him.

The honor other believers deserve is based in their righteous standing with God. Believers are saints, and we treat one another with honor and respect.

- C. We demonstrate this honor by “preferring” one another.
 - 1. “To prefer” someone literally means “to go before as a leader, to lead the way.”
 - 2. The sense seems to be, “leading the way in showing honor to one another.” One translation (ESV) says “Outdo one another in showing honor.”

Take the lead in honoring others. Go out of your way to show your appreciation for others. Be eager to treat others with honor. Show that you hold others in high esteem. We ought to show each other a high level of respect and regard.

A basic expectation is that fellow Christians would treat each other with love, honor, and appreciation.

It's sad that believers often violate this expectation. They do not treat one another with honor and respect. We tend to treat our friends and family that way, but often we neglect others. It's easy to group up into cliques and just ignore others who are not in our "in" group. We should be intentional about showing honor and love for everyone, especially those who are not in our little clique.

We need to be sensitive to those around us and lead the way in showing others love, affection, and honor.

A good summary verse on demonstrating practical Christian love:

1 Peter 3:8–9 *Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; **love as brothers** (φιλάδελφοι), be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.*

Trans: We would promote love and affection and avoid many personal conflicts if we would simply follow this directive—"in honor preferring one another." We should take the lead in showing honor and respect for fellow believers.

IV. Practical steps for developing family affection in our church

These words tell us that the devotion and affection we have toward fellow church members should be like that of a close-knit, warm, tender, affectionate family. What can we do to encourage kind affection and brotherly love?

- A. If we consult the context of Rom 12:10, we find a whole list of things we can do to demonstrate love toward one another. (read selections from vss. 9-21)
 - 1. Pray for one another.
 - 2. Distribute to the needs of the saints.
 - 3. Practice hospitality.
 - 4. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

5. Be of the same mind toward one another.
 6. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble.
 7. Repay no one evil for evil.
 8. Live peaceably with all men.
 9. Do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, *Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,*” says the Lord.
- B. Beyond those items, in practical terms, we develop family affection and devotion to one another by doing various things.
1. Spend time with one another and sharing life with one another, i.e., fellowship.

I enjoy seeing people taking time to talk and share after services. In some churches, people head for the exit immediately after service. Loving, affectionate, devoted families want to spend time together.
 2. Communicate with each other. We have to talk and share our interests and concerns. We have to get to know each other, and we do that through communication.
 3. Serving together is another way of developing bonds of devotion and loyalty.
 4. Show concern for the other person’s circumstances.

Give or send a note of appreciation or sympathy.

Tell someone you are praying for him or her.

Reach out to those who are not included.
 5. Invite someone over for a fellowship meal.
 6. Seek to meet a need.
- C. Pray that God would give you a heart of love and affection for others.
1. We may mistakenly think that love is primarily a feeling, and if we don’t feel particularly loving or affectionate toward someone, there’s not much we can do.

2. But Christian love is not primarily a feeling. Christian love is a desire to do what is best for others. Christian love is humble service for others. Christian love is including others in your warm, affectionate relationships.
3. Feelings often follow actions. Start acting toward others with love, affection, and devotion, and you make find that you develop feelings of brotherly love toward them. Act as if you care, and soon you will care. Get to know people, and you'll find that you care about them.

The normal experience we should have at church is brotherly love, family affection, devotion, and honor. Every church member should feel a sense of appreciation and loyalty from every other member. Coming to church ought to feel something like coming home. These are our brothers and sisters in Christ. We ought to have a genuine sense of family concern and care for one another. We ought to have strong ties of loyalty, devotion, and commitment for one another. And that ought to produce acts of kindness toward one another.

As with any family, there may be irritations and conflicts from time to time. But we work through these issues. We retain our devotion to one another even through the hard times. Affection, devotion, and honor should bind us all together tightly as a unified church.

If such affection, devotion, and loyalty has not been your experience, then pray and work to change the atmosphere of the church. Maybe if you show family affection and devotion toward others, they'll show the same toward you.