

## John 13:34-35

**Introduction:** As Christians we love to wear our t-shirts, have our bumper stickers, put a Jesus fish on our car, and shout our slogans. We think that it will show the world that we are Christians. And I will agree that it will tip people off to the fact that you are claiming to be a Christian. It doesn't prove it mind you, but it does at least tell them, "I am claiming to be a Christian." Don't get me wrong, it is great that you are making that claim, I wish we would all be so bold, especially in a country that is growing more and more hostile towards Christianity. But please don't fall into the trap of thinking that is all you have to do. Remember all those things have done is have you claim to be a Christian, now the "real work" begins. James 1:22 tells us, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers (and if I may so say, wearers or drivers) only, deceiving your own selves." Is there a simple way to not only say we belong to God, but also to live like it? I don't know if I would classify it as simple, but there is a way to live life in such a way that is demonstrates to those around us that we belong to God.

### **Breakdown of the Text:**

**V. 34:** It seems very strange that Jesus says "I give a new commandment unto you" here because the command to love others isn't a new one. In fact the original command to love your neighbor is given in Leviticus 19:18. So if the command is not new, then why did Jesus call it new? For that let's go back into a first century Jewish context and mindset. To a Jewish person their neighbor was Jewish. Not only were they Jewish but they were also nice to you. So my neighbor in that context would be someone like me who is nice to me. It's kind of easy to love that person isn't it? Diana and I were in Tennessee last weekend and saw a sign that sums it up. The sign said, "Go ahead and feel free to disagree with me, if you want to be wrong." We wouldn't say it, but we feel that way sometimes don't we? Here is the problem, Jesus said in Matthew 5:46, "if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the publicans (tax collectors) do the same?" Jesus is saying if we only love those who love us what are we doing more than the unsaved? Everyone, Christian and non-Christian, love those who love them. But to a Jewish person that is what the

command of Leviticus 19:18 meant. Love those who are like me and nice to me. Do we see some of the same mentality in churches today? You better believe we do. You can turn on the news now and you can see what Christians are against. Please understand me, I am not saying that we shouldn't take a stand for things. The Bible calls us to. What I am saying is that for the most part all the world is hearing is what we are against, they aren't hearing Who we are for. Is homosexuality a sin? Absolutely! But then again so is gossiping, back biting, slandering, coveting, swearing, and many other things that are a regular part of church people's lives. Who died and made us judge or gave us the authority to say that what those who don't come to church do is worse than what those who do come to church do? I would in fact argue the exact opposite! Jesus called this a new commandment because He was teaching them God's standard of love. They had learned and probably lived out man's standard of love, which is love those who love you. But God is saying, that is not my standard, my standard requires you to love people as He has loved us. Jesus practically demonstrated this love in John 13 because it is the story of the night of the Last Supper. Remember Jesus gets up from the table, He wraps Himself with a towel, pours water into a basin, and goes over and washes the disciples' feet. You want to know who was there for this? Judas Iscariot was there! The very one that was going to betray Jesus with a kiss. The very one who had walked with Jesus during His ministry, who acted like he loved Jesus. And do you know how Jesus treated Judas? He loved him! He washed Judas' feet and Jesus gave Judas a couple of more opportunities to turn his life over to Christ that night. I want to tell you something church, that form of love is impossible without the life transforming power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ not only in your mind, but in your heart. Notice the phrase "as I have loved you." We are to love all people the same way that Jesus loves all people. It means we are to forgive them, we are to show them mercy, it means we are to extend them grace. It also means that we need to be willing to sacrifice our comfort for their good. In America today we are a selfish nation. We far too often worship at the altar of me, myself, and I. But the love of Christ, the love we are called to show to the world is not a selfish love, but rather a self-sacrificing love. We are to put the needs of others above our own needs and desires. Rather than waiting on people to come serve us, we need to go

serve them. We need to demonstrate a better way. Jesus gives us a promise concerning this love in verse 35.

**V. 35:** Jesus' promise to us is this, if we demonstrate this form of love the entire world will know that we are His disciples. We see that by the phrase "by this." Notice Jesus says the word "ye." That is translated as "you." In other words, Jesus was talking to each of us individually. You can't be responsible for what others do or don't do, but do you know who you can be responsible for? You can be responsible for yourself. Jesus was calling His disciples and us to do what is right regardless of what the rest of the world does. I have come to a conclusion in my 30 plus years of living, the easiest person for me to change is me. Remember that sign I told you about in Tennessee earlier? Maybe I am the one that is wrong. I can't control how people treat me or if they love me, but I can control how I feel about them. That is the essence of the word "love" here. In the Greek it is the word "agapao" which means a strong desire towards someone that leads to action. Biblical love is not the puppy love or the teenage love we see that is based generally on how the other person feels about us. Biblical love depends solely on how I feel about the person. Only when I have this type of love for people can I love my enemies, bless those who persecute me, or pray for those who spitefully use me as commanded in Matthew 5. Biblical love says "I don't care how you feel or how you treat me, I am going to love you anyway." The answer to our country's problems and the answer to churches problems is the same, we need to love as God has loved us. Are you showing that sort of love inside and outside of the church? If not, my friend please hear my love in this statement, it isn't the world's fault, it is yours. Only you can control whether or not you love people as Christ has commanded you to. Do you need to experience a love so powerful that God Himself would die in your place so you could go and live with Him for all eternity?