

A New Kind of Love

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Date: 19 July 2026

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[0:00] How many of you are familiar with the old country music singer Tom T. Hall? Raise your hand. You know, you're giving away your age, probably, but old guy.

Well, many years ago, he had a song that was popular. I don't know if you'd call it a hit or not. It was called I Love. It started off like this. I love little baby ducks, old pickup trucks, slow moving trains, and rain.

I love little country streams, sleep without dreams, Sunday school in May, and hay. And after every stanza like that, he had this little chorus, and I love you too.

Lisa dared me to do that. And one member of this church told me, I would give good money if you would sing in church.

Good money is a hundred dollar bill right here when I walk out today. Okay? That's a silly song, isn't it? It really is.

[1:21] But there's a lot of truth in it. Haven't you said things like he sings about, I love the mountains. I love the beach.

I love this and that. I love dogs. I love whatever. And then, as we talk about loving this and that, we look at our spouse, we look at someone special in our life, and we gaze into their eyes and say, I love you.

We use that word love in a very trite, trivial way a lot of times, don't we? And I guess that's okay most of the time.

When we hear someone, because of that, when we hear someone talk about love, we don't really sit up and take notice, do we? Because the word's just thrown about, talked about, sung about all the time in ways that are not really meaningful.

So it's okay not to pay attention when people are just talking about love in general, but it's not okay when Jesus is the one talking about love.

[2:31] When Jesus spoke about love, he was always serious. Never in a trivial way do you find in the New Testament, in the Gospels, where Jesus talked about love in a flippant way.

He was usually, or always, talking about it in the context of relationships. Relationship with God. And relationships with people. A good example comes when Jesus answered a question on one occasion.

It's found in Matthew chapter 22. It'll be on the screen. He was asked, Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? And he said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.

Well, the Apostle John heard Jesus say that. In fact, most likely Jesus said that on more than one occasion, talking about the essence of the law is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself.

[3:42] John took it to heart. John wrote about the importance of love in his gospel, the gospel of John that we have in our New Testament.

He really talked a lot about our love for God, but especially our love for one another as Christians, in his first letter, what we call 1 John in the New Testament.

And then John is the one, he's the only gospel writer, that tells us about the new commandment to love that Jesus gave them just before he was arrested and crucified.

It's in John chapter 13. And if you would, turn in your Bible there. It'll be on the screen, but it'll be something to mark in your Bible if it's not already marked.

The new commandment that Jesus gave, a new kind of love he's given to his followers. John 13, beginning in verse 34. A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another.
[4:47] Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

It may seem a little strange if you're just reading through the gospel of John, you come across this. Jesus says, The new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. When you've probably read, you know, Jesus talked about the importance of loving God and loving your neighbor.

But really, if you look at the context, it's not strange. Jesus is about to wind up his earthly ministry. Later on that night, he's going to be arrested, tried, the next day crucified. What Jesus is doing is preparing his disciples for his departure.

And he's telling them how important it is that they, his followers, his disciples, that they love one another, that they stay united.

[5:57] They stay together. You know, this is the new commandment that Jesus issued, not just to them, but Jesus knew it would be recorded.

It's the new commandment for us as followers of Jesus to love one another. And we're talking this morning about our brothers and sisters in Christ. Jesus issued a new commandment about the importance of us loving one another in the church.

Being united to one another like a real family in our church. I want us to look at these two verses at the new way Jesus calls us to love one another.

And as we go through this, you think, am I loving my brothers and sisters in Christ in this church? Family. Like Jesus did. Just look first.

Jesus gives us a new focus for our love. Our brothers and sisters in Christ. That's the first phrase. Love one another. And he's talking to his disciples. The focus of that Old Testament commandment, love your neighbor as yourself.

[7:08] The focus was on your neighbor. Now, when Jesus issued that or reminded them of that commandment, as they heard it, read it from their Old Testament, from the law of Moses, the Jews understood that very simply.

Love your neighbor means love your fellow Jews and love them only. Love people who are just like us, they thought. But that was never what God intended by the commandment.

The way we know that is because Jesus told the story about the good Samaritan. And the bottom line of the story of the good Samaritan is we, as Jesus' followers, as his people, we are to be a neighbor to anybody who comes across our path that has a need that we can meet.

Jesus told his disciples, told everybody who heard that day, your neighbor is anybody in your life that has a need that you can meet.

And we should demonstrate neighbor love by helping them, trying to meet their need if possible. But you know, it's not just Jews in the first century who thought in terms of just loving their own kind.

[8:25] Don't we just naturally think the same way? Think about it. We may not say it.

We may not have really just dwelled on it so much. But we tend, don't we, to love people who look like us, who think like us, who live life the way that we live.

But Jesus issues a new commandment that has a new focus. Love one another, meaning all you brothers and sisters in Christ. Think about this.

When we became Christians, we became a part of the family of God. That's how the church is referred to in several places throughout the New Testament.

We're part of the family of God. And the family of God is made up of all kinds of people. Male and female. Rich and poor. Black and white.

[9:27] Northerners and southerners. Tigers and Gamecocks. Gamecocks. Just look around this room. We're all different, aren't we?

We have different opinions. Different personalities. Different interests. Just look around.

Everybody's different. Some people are just playing off. I mean, there's some weird people in this room. I know some.

But that's the way it is in your family, isn't it? You've got to. You have a big family gathering. You've got some people there. They're your blood kin. Deep down, you love them.

But some of them are just as weird and odd as they can possibly be. If you think, I don't know who that is in my family, you're it. Because everybody has it. And if you don't think anybody in this

church is sort of odd, weird, or strange, then that means you are the one who is odd, weird, or strange.

[10:33] Now, how do we develop loving relationships with all of our brothers and sisters in Christ and really be a united church family?

Well, we start by not focusing on our differences. We don't focus on our differences. We don't think about the oddness and weirdness of other people.

Because that will always keep us apart. If you just always think about someone, about how different they are, how different they talk, where they're from, it's totally opposite of you.

If that's all you think about, you'll never really draw close to them, be able to. What we need to do, first and foremost, is to focus on our most basic, common denominator as Christians.

And that should be, must be, really, our love for Jesus and our desire to please Him. I mean, if you're a Christian, you love Jesus.

[11:53] You want to please Jesus. You know, I know that I don't love Him as much as I should. I certainly don't please Him as I should. But I do love Jesus.

I want to be a faithful follower of His. I do want to please Him. And as Christians, that is a common thing that we have.

That kind of love for Jesus. So, in spite of our differences, if we'll first focus on that, this common love for Jesus and desire to please Him, we can find some unity.

We can find some unity. We can find that common ground. And we can live together and work together and enjoy life together as one church family. Let me ask you, as an individual, don't think about other people.

Think about you. Are you enjoying that kind of love with your church family? Are you as a church enjoying that kind of unity because you're bound together by your common love for Jesus?

[13:02] Now, let's think about what this love that Jesus is talking about does not mean as well as what it does mean. Loving one another does not mean that you cease to be different.

Loving one another does not mean that you cease to notice how you're different. You can't do that. There will always be, in any kind of gathering, even in your extended family, in all seriousness, there's always going to be different kinds of personalities, different kinds of interests, different kinds of opinions and so forth.

That's true of the church. If we talk about loving one another, I want you to be clear. Everybody in this church will not be best friends. Think about this.

Even Jesus had an inner circle. Peter, James, and John. Think some of the others sort of presented that.

Jesus told Peter, James, and John, I want you to come with me and left the rest of them behind. I mean, wouldn't you? It's natural. It's normal. We're not going to all see everything eye to eye, and that's okay.

[14:15] Everybody's not going to be best friends. Put it more bluntly, you won't have warm feelings for everyone in this church. But you can love them. You can accept them as your brother or sister in Christ.

Here's another thing. When Jesus is talking about love, loving one another, he's really talking more about actions than emotions.

Later on in this passage, this is Jesus in the upper room with the disciples. John 13, 14, 15, and 16. Jesus, as he talks with them, as he instructs them, he's going to say things like, if you love me, you'll obey me.

Because Jesus defined love more in terms of action than emotion. There's no doubt that the disciples truly felt loving emotions toward Jesus.

But that was not sufficient for Jesus. He said, if you love me, do what I say. There's other passages he's talking about, we truly love God, we'll obey him.

[15:38] That's what God wants us to do. That's how we live out our love. Such love we're talking about now. Action love.

That requires that we care about each other. We're not best friends. We're not just warm, fuzzy feelings for everybody in this room.

But we care. And when we love out this, we care enough to notice when people are going through a rough time. Or people have certain needs.

And if we have the ability to step up and meet those needs, love will compel us to do so. Love will compel us to step in there, that person that is your brother or sister in Christ. You don't have a long relationship with them. You don't have a very close relationship. But they have a need. They've got something going on in their life that you, by God's grace, you could help them if you would.

[16:43] So let me just ask you this. Are you allowing your differences to keep you at a distance from other members of this church? Or is your common love for Jesus and your desire to please Him by loving like this, are you allowing that to draw you closer to other people in this church?

Are you allowing it to draw you closer as a church family? Is it happening overall? This passage also tells us that Jesus gives us a new model for our love. Love like He loves.

He says, just as I have loved you. Love one another just as I have loved you. The Old Testament command was to love your neighbor as yourself. You were the model for that love, the way you love yourself.

By the way, the Old Testament command, love your neighbor as yourself, is not a command to love yourself because we do that. Normal people love themselves and the idea of that, we take care of ourselves.

We look out for ourselves. We take relatively good care of our body. We feed ourselves. We go to work. We have money.

[18:04] We have things. We buy things for ourselves. What Jesus is talking about or what the Old Testament law is talking about, love your neighbor as yourself. You care about yourself. You meet yourself, your own needs, the best you can.

Do that for other people. That was the idea of the Old Testament law. But here, Jesus says, love one another just as I have loved you.

He's the model for what our love should look like. I want us to look at two ways Jesus models how we can love one another or should love one another. Number one, Jesus models a humble, serving love.

John takes the first 20 verses of chapter 13. That's where we are right now. The first 20 verses describe Jesus' great example of humble, serving love.

He washed his disciples' feet. Now notice what Jesus said after he finished in verse 14, chapter 13. If then, your Lord and teacher, if I then, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

[19:16] For I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done to you. Jesus truly humbled himself to do that, didn't he? He was their Lord and teacher.

He was above them. He was their superior, yet he chose to get down on his knees and wash the nasty feet of his disciples.

And keep in mind, Jesus knew that within a few hours, Judas would betray him. Peter would deny him.

And all of them, all of them, would abandon him. Jesus truly humbled himself to do what he is for the disciples.

I mean, you think about it. If Brian's nasty feet really had to be washed today, I would at least think about it.

[20:17] But if I thought, after this is over, he's going to tell me, I don't have any use for you.

Don't ever bother me again. I ain't washing your feet. That's why, isn't that how you feel? That's normal human nature. But Jesus does not demonstrate normal human nature.

He humbled himself before these men who were not going to stay with him. These inferiors. He washed their feet.

Now, if we're going to love one another as Jesus loves, we can't ever think of ourselves as over superior to anyone because we really aren't.

All of us, all human beings are created in the image of God. That makes us all of equal worth and value. In the church, we're brothers and sisters in Christ.

[21:23] we're on the same level. So we cannot ever consider ourselves to be above going out of our way, being inconvenienced, do some humble acts of service for one another.

I want to encourage you this morning. Think about beginning that in your home. to be in the church. You know, home is where we really should be practicing what it means to be a Christian person.

And I want to encourage you as parents, as children, as brothers and sisters, we're to love one another as Jesus loves the church.

At first, that means humble, practical acts of service. I want you to also know, just real quick here, Jesus met a real need.

He didn't just do this out of the blue for no reason. I'm sure Brian doesn't need his feet washed this morning. I'm sure he took a shower at least two or three days ago anyway, if not this morning.

[22:41] But Jesus, Jesus and his disciples, they wore sandals everywhere. Roads were dirt. At times, they were dusty. At times, they were muddy. So wherever you went, when you got there, your feet would be dirty.

Well, the disciples should have washed Jesus' feet immediately. They should have washed their own feet. They got ready for the evening meal as they were going to do with Jesus. But they didn't. So Jesus did what needed to be done. He washed their feet. Now, if we're going to love one another as Jesus loves us, we've got to get involved in one another's lives to the point where we notice needs.

we can see in someone's life there's something going on. They need some help.

We've got to notice the needs and then we've got to do what we need to have to do if we're able to meet their needs. So let me just ask you, how observant are you of the people in your Sunday school class or other small groups you're in?

[24:00] It's not going to happen much in this kind of gathering. This is a worship service. We've come together to praise God, to pray together, to study His Word, but we don't really get to know one another here.

It's going to be in small groups. It's going to be away from the church doing things together. We've got to notice we've got to care and we've got to act because we're going to love what Jesus calls us to love.

Now, Jesus doesn't just model humble servant type love. He models sacrificial love. Jesus repeated this new commandment and gave the ultimate example of sacrifice in chapter 15 of John.

We're in 13. Move over to chapter 15. Look at this. Jesus said, This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this than someone to lay down his life for his friends.

Jesus loved us enough to lay down his life for us when there was nothing about us that should compel him to do that. From motivation of love, Jesus chose in obedience to his heavenly Father, but he chose to die on the cross as our substitute.

[25:24] He suffered the wrath of God that we deserve because of our sin. Jesus died on the cross as our substitute.

He paid the penalty for our sins. And by doing that, Jesus satisfied God's justice. The penalty for sin is death.

And Jesus died for our sins. He died so that we wouldn't have to. He satisfied God's justice so that we could experience God's forgiveness and know the love of God as our heavenly Father.

If you're not a Christian, I want you to understand that Jesus died on that cross to save you to pay the penalty for your sins. And if you will confess your sin, repent of your sin, turn from your sin, and trust Jesus that He died for you.

He paid the penalty for your sins. And commit your life to Him as your Lord. He will save you, forgive you, make you a child of God. Put the love of God in your heart so that you can love other people like Jesus loves.

[26:46] If you are a Christian, you have experienced the benefits of Jesus' death. You've experienced the benefits of His sacrificial love. Now Jesus calls you demonstrated.

Do like I have done for you. You know, most of us, we're never ever going to be called to give our life for another person. Most of us. The majority of us.

But, we are called to demonstrate sacrificial love for other people. I want you to look at something that John also wrote in his first letter that talks about self-sacrifice, self-giving.

It's in 1 John chapter 3. John writes, But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?

Little children, let us not love in word or talk, but in deed and in truth. We can't even think, shouldn't even think of ourselves as loving people if we just close our eyes to what's going on in their life and refuse to get involved when there's something that we could do to help them.

[28:17] Following Jesus' model of sacrificial love will sometimes require us to give of ourselves, give of our money, give of our talent, some of the abilities that we have to meet the needs of a brother or sister.

We can do that. Are you in the habit of demonstrating sacrificial love in your home, first, and in this church?

Are you living out what Jesus said when he told us to love one another as he loves us? What you see next in verse 35? Jesus gives us a new purpose for our love.

He says, and the idea is to demonstrate that we are Christians and be a positive witness. Jesus says it like this, by this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

Jesus' commandment for us to love one another is given so that if we'll do it, it'll have such a positive impact on people, it'll make a difference in their life.

[29:25] If we truly love one another like Jesus, people will know that we are Christians by our acts of love. He's saying that our love for him should be attractive to other people.

Attractive love is used by God to draw people to himself, to draw people to churches. You know, when you people come here to this church and get involved for a few months, what will they observe about how you relate to one another in the various small groups that are here?

You people come in, they don't really know you, but they're in your Sunday school class, they're in some small group. What will they observe over time about your love for one another? Will they see evidence tangible evidence of what you're doing in one another's lives, how you're sharing life together, or that will they just see a bunch of different people who come together for superficial fellowship and then just go on their way when they leave here and forget about one another?

Let's make this more personal. Do you, as an individual, try to help new people feel loved and accepted in this church? do you try?

Do you put forth an effort to help them feel like they belong? They're a part of the family. Lisa and I have learned what it's like to join a new church where you know very few people at all.

[31:06] Prior, for the last 40 years, when we've gone to a new church, I was a pastor and it's very easy to get to know people, people want to get to know you, it just happens.

You don't have to do anything. It just happens. But when you're not the pastor and you just go into a church where you don't really know anybody, you know very few, it's just way hard.

You feel like a stranger. You are an outsider. We know what it feels like to be that way. Never really knew what that was like.

Being a part of a church family doesn't happen quickly. And it certainly doesn't happen automatically. It takes time and effort. I want to say to you, if you're a visitor or you're a relative of a new member here, you've got to do your part to feel at home.

You've got to get involved. You will never feel a part of this church family if all you come to is the worship service. You've got to get involved. In small groups, you've got to even get involved with people.

[32:24] And then you've got to be patient and give it time. Because relationships don't just birth and blossom overnight.

Now, if you're a long-time member, some of these old members I was referring to a while ago, I encourage you, make a real effort to get to know new members.

There's been people at Village Church since we've been there that have come up to us and just introduced themselves, tell us what they do. We've met people who are retired like us and they want to know, you know, where are you from?

And they tell us about themselves. They make it a point. And they've helped us to get to know them, break down some barriers, some fears.

I want to encourage you, long-time members, you have a responsibility before God to welcome new members into this church and to help them.

[33:33] belong. Feel like this is my church family. Now, loving one another like Jesus is not something that comes naturally to us and it's not easy.

The last thing we're going to look at is Jesus promises that God will give us what we need to do. We can love one another as he loves us. Fourth, Jesus promises us new power to love, the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus went on that same night, John chapter 14, beginning in verse 15, he says this, if you love me, you will keep my commandments and I will ask the Father and he will give you another helper to be with you forever.

Even the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him or knows him, you know him for he dwells with you and will be in you. ever since the day of Pentecost, you read about Acts 2, when a person becomes a Christian, the spirit of God comes to live within them.

The spirit of God lives in you and me if we're Christians. Now Paul explains how we're empowered by the Holy Spirit. He says this in Romans 5, he says, God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

[34 : 52] God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. If you're a Christian, you can love others as Jesus loves you because the Holy Spirit, the spirit of God, the spirit of Christ will enable you.

I love what Paul says in Philippians 2, 13 about God giving us the desire and the ability to please him. I want you to look at this. For it is God who works in you both to will, to want, to desire, and to work for his good pleasure.

We can love one another in our church family if we want to because the Holy Spirit living within us will help us.

He'll give us the desire to love. He'll give us the ability to do things to demonstrate our love if we'll obey him. You know, we're never going to love one another perfectly like Jesus loves us.

No one can love like he loves exactly. But if we make it our goal, our desire, we pray, we ask God to help us, we put forth effort, we can love one another by the power of the Holy Spirit to some degree.

[36 : 14] All of us. And I want to ask you now, will you make that commitment this morning? Will you ask God to help you to love your brothers and sisters in Christ first in this church?

To love that Jesus has shown you. Will you also ask God to help you to love the people in your house, in your home?

That same kind of love, a sacrificial love, a serving love. I want to close by reading the best description of Christian love ever written.

It's in 1 Corinthians 13, beginning in verse 4. Paul writes, love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast. It is not arrogant or rude.

It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

[37 : 19] Love never ends. That's how Jesus loves us. I encourage you now, ask God to help you to show that kind of love to your family and your church family every day.

let's pray together. Father, we need help to love like Jesus loved. But we know from the promise of your word that you have given us all we need in the indwelling Holy Spirit.

You have poured your love into us through him. So we pray now, Father, convict us of our sin. Help us to be truly repentant of indifference, of unconcern, of a lack of love.

Help us, Father, to make the commitment that by your grace, by the power of your Spirit, we will put forth the effort to love, to meet needs, and really work on doing what we can to make this one church family, brothers and sisters in Christ.

Show us all how we should respond to you. Help us not to put it off, but to respond to you now in obedience and go all and put it into practice.

[38 : 35] Put it into practice in our church family as well. It's in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen.