

ALIGN__4

Pursue Authentic Community

Love from the center of who
you are; don't fake it.
- Romans 12:9, MSG

Now that you've cleaned
up your lives
by following the truth,
love one another as if your
lives depended on it....
So clean house!
Make a clean sweep
of malice and pretense,
envy and hurtful talk.
- 1 Peter 1:22 & 2:1, MSG

As a Christ-follower, you are called to re-align your life (daily!) so that you “love from the center of who you are” (vs 9). As a repository of God’s love, you have both the privilege and responsibility of sharing that love with others. And as a result, your own life will be richer and deeper.

Welcome

Have you ever been drawn by the loving devotion of an older couple for one another? The care within a small circle of friends? If so, share the details.

Word

Read Romans 12:9-13

1. Love must be sincere. Express what that implies, both in both positive and negative terms: “*To love each other sincerely means to _____ rather than to _____.*”
2. “Hate what is evil; cling to what is good” has more to do with one’s *inner attitudes* than with one’s *outward actions*. Does this distinction help you better appreciate its connection with the earlier admonition to love without pretense? [**Hint:** a more explicit connection is made in a similar passage, **1 Peter 1:22** with **2:1**. Read and discuss the parallels.]
3. The devotion in verse 10 implies loving another when they need it the most, deserve it the least, and often at personal cost or inconvenience. Which of these elements comes easiest to you? Which is hardest? What else comes to mind when you think of devotion?
4. Let’s face it, sometimes we serve for ulterior (and self-focused) reasons. And when we do, we’re often left discouraged, disappointed or angry. Has this ever happened to you? Share an example. According to verse 11, what’s the key to maintaining our spiritual fervor?
5. Genuinely loving others isn’t always easy. In fact, it can be downright exhausting at times. However, verse 12 provides three practical strategies for handling a difficult person or situation. It requires an “upward focus.” Exactly what it involved in each of these three strategies? Which of these would be an appropriate course of action for a situation that you are facing presently? Explain.
6. We are called to be aggressive in our love for one another. In verse 13, the word, “practice,” literally means “*to chase after,*” much as a hunter pursues game. On a scale from 1 to 5, how would you rate your level of being attentive or proactive in pursuing the needs of fellow believers?

Works

How have you been challenged by tonight’s discussion? How should you respond? What is one way you can keep this in front of you during the next couple of months?

Worship

Incorporating the Lord’s Supper into your worship time would be a fitting conclusion to your time together. **John 13** would be appropriate in this regard (particularly Jesus’ statements in vss 15, 34-35). “Come, Share the Lord” (364), “Love One Another” (719), “Bind Us Together” (704), and “A Common Love” (705).