

A Love That Defines Us, by Emmanuel Snogba. October 26, 2025

Gracious Lord, we come before You with humble hearts, seeking Your presence and guidance. Help us to grasp the importance of loving one another as You have loved us. May Your Spirit dwell in us, transforming our hearts and minds, so that our lives may be a testimony of Your love. Bless this time of worship and reflection and may Your Word inspire us to be better followers of Christ. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, today we gather under the divine mandate given by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in John 13:34-35: *"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."* This is not a suggestion but a divine command. We are called to make love the center of our Christian lives. In a world filled with hatred, division, and injustice, the love Christ asks of us is genuinely different. It pushes us to stand out as people of hope and compassion. At its core, love is the foundation of our faith and what brings us together as God's children. As we look at this sacred text, let's remember that love is not just a feeling. It is something we do that can change hearts, heal wounds, and bring us together as one body of Christ.

The Context and Significance of the New Commandment

In John 13, Jesus is with His disciples in the upper room, just before His crucifixion. While the disciples are confused and sad, Jesus quietly washes their feet, showing them real service and love. In this moment, He gives them a new commandment: to love one another as He has loved them. This goes beyond earlier commandments about loving your neighbor or God. Jesus sets a higher standard – love that is selfless, giving, and without conditions. This kind of love is deep and lasting, coming from who Christ is. This commandment is important because it calls us to follow Christ's example of humility, patience, forgiveness, and grace. When we love like Jesus, we show the world what God's kingdom looks like. Paul also reminds us in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 that love is patient, kind, and never gives up. This love is what marks us as followers of Christ and makes us different from the world. The Apostle John writes in 1 John 4:8 *"God is Love"*. This reminds us that love is not just something we do, but something we are meant to live out because we are made in God's image. When Jesus tells us to love one another as He has loved us, He is showing us the divine nature within each of us. Love is a key part of who God is, and we reflect that when we show grace, mercy, forgiveness, compassion and kindness to others.

Relating Scripture to Our Lives and Cultures

The call to love one another goes beyond cultures and countries. In Liberia, a country that has endured civil war and hardship, Christ's love has brought healing. Churches and communities have shown this love by forgiving and coming together, proving that love is stronger than division. During Liberia's reconciliation, Christian leaders encouraged everyone to love as Christ loved us, working for peace and healing. In Canada, a diverse society, Christ's love encourages believers to welcome others, care for newcomers, and serve with humility. This shows how love can bring people together, no matter their difference. Both examples remind us that Christ's love is powerful and can inspire us to be kind, no matter where we come from. The hymn "Heart with Loving Heart" also shares this message, calling us to love sincerely, just as Christ loved us, no matter our background or situation.

Love as a Transformative Power

Nelson Mandela, a visionary leader and thinker, once emphasized that love is the most potent force in the universe because it creates change from within. He argued that love is not merely an emotion but a revolutionary act that challenges systems of oppression and injustice. Mandela believes that when we love authentically, we dismantle walls of separation – whether racial, economic, or social – and foster a community rooted in equality and mutual respect. His words remind us that love is a conscious choice – a daily act of resistance against hatred and fear. As followers of Christ, we are called to mirror this love in our actions, embodying the divine love that Christ exemplified on the cross. Just as Mandela urged us to see love as a tool for social change, Jesus reminds us that love is the mark of discipleship – an unwavering commitment to care for one another beyond superficial gestures.

Love in Action (the Call to Service)

Poet and activist Maya Angelou once proclaimed "*Love liberates. It doesn't enslave.*" Her words remind us that love is an active act of liberation that sets both the lover and the beloved free. Angelou's poetry and life exemplify the transformative power of love – her words inspired generations to see beyond prejudice and to embrace the humanity in every individual. She understood that love in action requires courage, vulnerability, and a willingness to serve. In the context of our faith, this means loving not only in words but in deeds – feeding the hungry, visiting the imprisoned, comforting the broken-hearted, and standing against injustice. As we reflect on Jesus' commandment, let us remember that love is the greatest act of resistance in a world that seeks to divide. When we love as Christ loved – selflessly and sacrificially – we become witnesses to God's kingdom here on earth, shining as lights in dark places.

Conclusion

To close, Jesus' command to love one another as He has loved us is both a privilege and a responsibility. It shows who we are as His followers and reveals God's presence in our lives. The stories from Liberia and Canada remind us that love knows no boundaries, it brings healing and unity. Let's join together in singing the hymn "Heart with Loving Heart". This song is a prayer that reminds us to open our hearts to God's love and to share that love in real ways with others. Nelson Mandela and Maya Angelou showed us that love can change lives and set people free. When we love each other as Jesus asks, we show the world that we are His followers. Let's leave here today ready to live out Christ's love in everything we say and do. By doing this, we become living examples of His love – a love that heals, brings people together, and changes lives.

Let us pray: Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your Word and for the reminder to love one another as You have loved us. Help us to carry this love into our daily lives, reflecting Christ in everything we do. Empower us by Your Spirit to be faithful disciples and witnesses of Your love. As we go forth, may your love shine through us and draw others closer to You. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen.