

1 Thessalonians Ch4v9-12 - Love More & More

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[0 : 00] Oh yeah, there we go. If you have the church Bible, page 1187, 1187. And in fact, you do love all of God's family throughout Macedonia.

Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more. And to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life. You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you. So that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders. And so that you will not be dependent on anybody. Johnny, let me just pray for you. Father God, thank you for Johnny.

Thank you for the amazing servant he is to this church, faithfully bringing your word to us every week. We ask that you fill him with your Holy Spirit. That it be your message that he preaches today, not his own.

And fill him with wisdom, fill him with your words. In Jesus' name, amen. Thanks, Charlie. Thanks so much, Connor.

[1 : 28] Thank you for leading today and for directing us to the theme of love. I look forward to catching up with you afterwards over tea and coffee if you're able to stay.

That'll be good to do. Let's keep our Bibles open in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. You can follow along.

So William Grimshaw was a minister in the north of England in the mid-18th century. I never met him personally, but he was obviously quite a character.

I'm well known for his dealings with his congregation. And on one occasion, it came to his attention that a well-to-do couple in his church had been spouting, boasting about their good Christian lives. Mr. Grimshaw didn't like such talk, so decided to confront them. So one cold night, he dressed up as a beggar and went knocking on their door.

[2 : 35] His only request from this couple was that they'd give him a piece of bread and somewhere to sleep. The husband refused. Mr. Grimshaw, still in disguise, asked again, pleading on their Christian charity.

Once again, there was a refusal to help. Well, that was when Mr. Grimshaw took off his disguise and revealed his true identity to the shock and horror of the elderly couple.

And he berated them at the door for their hypocrisy, their hard-heartedness and their lack of love. Now, the method may have been pretty harsh, although quite funny, I think.

The message was very clear. Christians should be known for their love. In fact, love is the mark of genuine Christianity.

True Christians, as our text says this morning, are to love each other more and more. And that's the theme today.

[3 : 46] Three things we're going to look at. How we're taught to love. How we grow in love. And how we work out love. How we're taught, how we grow, and how we work it out.

First, we are taught to love. So it's good to see you here this morning, class. You are all in good time.

And today, we're going to learn how to love. In the Bible, God tells us how to love. Our teacher, Connor, already told us that love fulfills the law.

So I'd like you to look at the screen and follow with me in our learning this morning. Can you read this verse with me? Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself.

I am the Lord. Leviticus 19, verse 18. So your homework, it's very simple. Go home and love your neighbor as yourself.

[4 : 58] Simple. Or is it? You see, we don't have to go very far into our day when we realize that loving others is actually very difficult and very hard.

Forgiving others is hard. Keeping a grudge is easier. Serving others is difficult. Whereas loving yourself is much, much easier.

You see, the problem is, I could sit in a class. We could all sit in a class. We can all learn about love for others. We can look at every verse in the Bible about love.

We can know the Hebrew for love. We can talk about hesed, steadfast love. We could maybe tell the difference in our Greek between agape and Philadelphia.

We know what love is. But we could sit in any amounts of classes. We could go to MBC College and learn all about love.

[6 : 07] But that doesn't mean to say we will love. And the reason is, we need to be taught to love.

Look at verse 9. Now, about your love for one another. We do not need to write to you. For you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other.

Now, that doesn't mean knowing a whole lot of information. Rather, it requires a heart transformation. It means that God teaches us inside.

That God works in our hearts by his Holy Spirit. It's actually a call to conversion itself. The prophets, people like Ezekiel and Jeremiah, looked forward to the day when God would teach his people by his Spirit.

But here's what Ezekiel says. This is what God says through Ezekiel, rather. He says, I will give you a new heart, and I will put my spirit in you, and move you to follow my decrees, and be very careful to keep my laws.

[7 : 33] So all the laws and all the decrees that we can read about in Scripture, all about how we should love God and love one another, and how they struggle to do that, God says, I'm going to send my Spirit, who will enable you to be able to love as I commanded.

Jeremiah said something similar, where he said God's laws would actually be written or engraved on your heart. Now thankfully, we live in an age when the Spirit of God has come.

So when we turn to Christ, when we repent of our sins as we trust in him, he gives us, he works in us by his Holy Spirit.

God teaches us by his Spirit, enabling us to love one another in a way that is not possible by ourselves.

Here's how Paul put it. I think this is a helpful reference. He's writing to the church in Rome. He says, You see, loving each other is not about learning memory verses.

[9 : 01] It's not about the command to learn. It's not about information. It's about transformation of our lives on the inside.

It's an overflow of God's love that will bubble out towards others. By his Spirit, he enables us to do what we could never do ourselves.

You might think of it a bit like this, of two young lads who turn up to football training. Neither of them have ever gone to training before.

It's their first time. They arrive down at the pitches. The first one is unsure what to do. Do I pick the ball up? Do I kick it? Do I hand pass it? Which way? What do I do?

The second lad is straight in there, in the thick of it, kicking, passing, and he's got all the skills to go. And his friend says to him, Well, how do you know what to do?

[10 : 03] How do you learn so quick? Well, he says, My Father taught me. He learned me. You see, he already had those abilities within him.

Now, I know it's not a perfect illustration, but in a sense, it's reminding us that we too need to be taught by God the Father. It's much more than just learning information.

It must be an internal transformation of our hearts. It's a supernatural work of God. We cannot do this on our own.

We must be taught by God. So first, how are we going to love? Well, we must first be taught by God.

We must become Christians. Second, we're to grow in love. Now, this church that Paul is writing to, we're a church that loved each other deeply.

[11 : 07] We see that if you go back to chapter 1 and verse 3. Chapter 1 and verse 3. He says, We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love.

So all their serving, all their doing, all their work came from a heart filled with love. And have a look at chapter 3, verse 6.

This is after Paul had gone away and he sends Timothy to see how the church is doing. And he writes and he says, chapter 3, verse 6, Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love.

And chapter 4, verse 10. And in fact, you do love all of God's family throughout Macedonia.

So they didn't just love one another deeply. Their love was infectious. It spread beyond them to the other local churches around them. But, it seems that wasn't enough.

[12 : 23] Look at the rest of verse 10. Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more.

Now I'm thankful, and I hope you are too, to be in a church where people sincerely and deeply love you. You're a people who give generously when there's need.

you pray and care for one another when you're facing struggles. You serve diligently and continually in ministries in the life of the church.

Your love does overflow to one another. Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more.

Johnny, come on, you can't be serious. I mean, I do love. Do you not realise how much I give?

[13 : 25] You want me to love more and more? Sounds like a stick to beat us with. You must do better.

You must work harder. Love more and more. In fact, it can easily begin to feel that I must do more and more.

If God is going to love me and accept me, I've got to do more and more. What I'm doing is not enough. I must do, note to self, do more acts of love.

And if I do more and more, God will love me more and more. Now, that's a terrible mistake to fall into.

We mustn't think like that. This isn't a stick to beat us with. Rather, it's an encouragement to grow us. Let me help us think this through a little bit more, this more and more.

[14 : 30] Have a look on the screen here. There's a verse from 1 Peter. It's not more and more, but it's once and for all.

It's talking about the death of Jesus. It said, Christ died for sins once for all. The righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to God.

It's telling us that Christ's death was a once and for all act by which we are made right before God.

It's like what we looked at earlier, being taught by God.

It's a one-off act where we are converted, we are changed, we become Christians. That means God has forgiven me, he's accepted me, he loves me.

That will never, ever, ever change. it's once and for all. There's nothing I can do to make God love me more and there's nothing I can do to make God love me less.

[15 : 39] It's once and for all. And now that I have been loved by God, I am now to grow in my love for others.

I am to please God by loving others. Have a look in Thessalonians chapter 4 verse 1. We get the same phrase here, the more and more phrase.

Let's read from verse 1. As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God as in fact you are living.

Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. verse 10. And in fact, you are pleasing God.

You do love all of God's family throughout Macedonia, yet we urge you brothers and sisters to do so more and more.

[16 : 44] It's not more and more so that God will love me more and more. It's God does love you once and for all. it will never cease, it will never end.

Therefore, I will in response seek to grow in my love for others more and more. But is it really possible?

I mean, think about it. All the loving we do, is it possible that I can love you more and you can love me more? well, yes it is.

But not by sheer determination, not by sheer will power, I must love more, I must love more, I must love more. No, instead we come in our weakness and we ask God to enable us to do what we cannot do, which is to love.

Look at chapter 3 verse 12. It's a wonderful little prayer. chapter 3 verse 12.

[17 : 53] May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else.

Lord, fill me with your love. Pour into my life your love by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Fill me so that it overflows more and more. So that when people come to me and ask me, I will respond in love more and more.

You see, there's no level of love at which we can reach and say, that's it, no more, I've done it, I've made it, I'm the lover of lovers.

No, there's no level. It's always more and more. And God will always increase our love for each other by his Holy Spirit filling us to overflowing so that we can love more and more.

[19 : 08] Not by ourselves, but by the supernatural in-working Spirit of God. So we're taught to love, we grow in love, and third, we're to work out our love.

So what does loving one another look like in practice? Well, we heard this morning that it could involve going to the cinema or surfing, but that's not what this says here.

let's read verse 11. So love more and more, verse 11, and make it your ambition to lead a quiet life.

You should mind your own business and work with your hands just as we told you. Now I find it helpful for just single words to summarize.

summarize. So we've got three words that summarize verse 11 to help us think about what love is like. Love is quiet.

[20 : 24] Love is quiet. Isn't that what it says? Verse 11, make it your ambition to lead a quiet life. love. Well let me tell you a minute how much I prayed for you this week.

Do you know how much I give to the church, shall I tell you? And next week I'm planning on inviting three people for coffee and two families for dinner.

and if anybody else wants to come, just come and tell me I have so much love to give. No. Love doesn't need grand announcements.

You don't need to broadcast whatever you did from Mr. Old Jones. Love is quiet. It doesn't seek repayment or acknowledgement.

Love just quietly gets on. Setting up, serving, visiting, offering hospitality.

[21 : 26] No grand announcements. Love is quiet. So let us love quietly. Second word is humble.

Look at the middle of verse 11. You should mind your own business. That's a great phrase isn't it?

You couldn't possibly say that. No, the Bible says it.

Now I can say it. Our job is not to be finding out what people do and how often they're doing it. I am not the standard of love and you're not the standard of love.

We're not to be busy looking around going, oh, they're always late and they always leave early. I wonder why they do that. M-Y-O-B mind your own business.

How people use their time and their gifts is not your business. We're not judge and jury of the love committee. The truth is we don't know what people's circumstances are.

[22 : 37] We have no idea what people have been going through or what their burden is. perhaps they're the person, instead of criticising, we need to love more and more.

Love is humble, not judgmental. It doesn't compare with others. It doesn't keep records. Love minds your own business.

Love is humble. So quietly, humbly, and third, generously, you should mind your own business, verse 11, and work with your hands just as we told you.

In other words, use the gifts God has blessed you with, both the abilities that we have and the resources that we have received.

if you're gifted in some particular way, use it to love others. If it's baking, bake. If it's DIY, go do some DIY.

[23 : 51] If it's visiting, visit. If it's teach, teach. He's made us with all kinds of wonderful talents and abilities, and all of us are different. We've all got something different to bring, and we use them to love one another.

Work with your hands. And what about all the resources God has given to us? Again, we are to steward them well for the blessing of others.

If you're no longer in full-time work, use your time to encourage. If you have extra financial resources, use it to bless others.

If you've got a home, offer hospitality. If you've got a car, offer a lift. Work with your hands. Our abilities and our resources are to be used generously.

Don't hold back. Don't settle for minimum. It's always love is more and more. Love is filled with generosity.

[25 : 03] So what does love look like? Well, it's done quietly, humbly, and generously. In fact, our love for one another has a profound impact on those around us who are not yet Christians.

Did you see that in verse 12? So here's the flow of thought. God has taught you how to love, verse 9. Love more and more, verse 10.

Quietly, humbly, and generously work out your love, verse 12, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders.

Love is quiet, but it is seen. Love is humble, but it is felt. Love is generous, and it's experienced. You see, our daily lives, soaked in love, filled by the power of the Holy Spirit, where love bubbles out and over, will have an amazing effect on our community.

[26 : 16] It will, verse 12, win the respect of outsiders. We will begin to look like what we talk about, if we proclaim God loves you, well, we will be a people that love too.

We will reflect that love in our words and our actions. I've had this happy experience recently of someone telling me that the reason they started coming was because the love they received from the people.

Love never underestimate how your love for one another can affect those who look on and see what's happening.

Love wins the respect of others. You see, what we've been thinking about this morning is really an outworking of Christ's love in us.

As God teaches us, as he gives us his Holy Spirit, we are enabled to love because Christ loves me and he loves you.

[27 : 34] In love, Christ quietly came. No big announcements, no shouting and making noise. He entered the world through an unknown teenager in an outhouse.

He came to seek and save. He came in love so that we might know him. In love, Christ humbly served, not demanding his rights or seeking his wants.

He didn't judge or condemn. He humbled himself. He made himself nothing. He became a servant for you and for me.

In love, Christ generously gave. He held nothing back. He sacrificed. He gave of his life on the cross, suffering from my sin and your sin.

Christ loved us to the very end. And guess what? He still loves us today. Look at Christ.

[28 : 48] See the wonder of his love who quietly came, who humbly served and generously give. May God fill us with his love today so that it will overflow more and more to one another and to the community in which we live.

Let's pray. For you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other.

Yet we urge you and encourage you to do so more and more. Father God, would you pour your love into our lives.

Help us that we may experience your love afresh by your Holy Spirit so that we may overflow in quiet, humble, generous love towards one another.

Thank you for loving us so much. Thank you for the love of one another. Thank you for this loving church.

[30 : 26] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Well, we're going to sing a song that brings a love.