

Q&A; Session for February

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[0:00] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. Take your Bibles if you want and turn with me to Matthew chapter 16. You're going to need your Bible out. You're going to be looking up a lot of Scripture today.

I hope you take notes. I promise you the goal of this message is to help you love church and each other and Jesus more. And I think that's going to be very obvious to you as you study this passage of Scripture.

The word church is an extremely unusual word. It's a misunderstood word. When we talk about church, we're often talking about buildings.

People, when you say, did you see that church? They don't say, did you see that church building? They use the word church like as though it had to do with a structure. And we even have words that, or we even have opinions that looks like a church.

And so now modern churches, especially churches like ours, the meeting warehouses, people come by here and say, I don't know, that's not a church. They got a church sign, but it's not a church. Because we have this idea. But in the Bible, that word church always means the same thing.

[1:06] It is an assembly. The very word is assembly. The word means assembly. You can't be the church unless you're together.

The word church is assembly. If you take the word church out and put in the word assembly, you get the idea. Jesus said, I will build my assembly. And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

You say, well, brother, he's talking about a universal assembly. Yeah, he is. When he takes us all home, we will be assembled. And we will be assembled there with him. Amen?

And so that's what's going on. The word church means assembly. One another ministry shows us that we need each other. I want you to know that church was never meant to be a spectator sport.

It's not about coming to watch a show or even to listen to a sermon. It's about doing life together. The word church is assembly. It is us getting together.

[2:02] And in the Bible, there are quite a few one another's. The fact is, approximately 59 one another's in scripture. And the first thing I want to show you about the one another's is that we are to love one another.

Of the 59 times that the one another's are mentioned in the Bible, approximately, 21 of those talk about us loving each other. Kind of hard to love people you don't ever see.

Kind of hard to love people you don't ever spend any time with. So let me read with you, if I could, Romans chapter 12 and verse 10. I hope you write that down and look it up. We are to love each other very much.

We are to love each other very much. The Bible says in Romans chapter 12 and verse 10. Be kindly affectionate one to another with brotherly love in honor preferring one another.

Read that verse with me. Be kindly affectionate one to another. There's your one another's. One to another with brotherly love in honor preferring one another.

[3:02] In that verse, underlie two times. One to another, one another. This is one of those verses about what we're to do. Love is evidently the most important thing we will do with each other.

The Bible said when Jesus asked him about the great commandments, he said the first one is to love God. The second one is to love each other. That was the commandments. He said love your neighbors. So in our community of brothers, we need to learn how to love each other.

If you notice in the verse, did you look at the verse? It says be kindly affectionate one to another. Be kindly affectionate one to another. That's the idea of like being devoted to your family.

It's a natural love that one in a family has for another one in the family. It's the idea of being super loyal one to another. It is the love that brothers have for each other.

In the Bible, it's saying, hey, Austin, you should love these people that are a part of the church, the assembly that you're a part of. You should love them like you would your brother.

[4:04] And you know what? I could even fuss with my brother, but you best leave him alone. I might have an argument with my wife, but you best keep your nose out of it. Amen? And because that's my family. So he said, hey, I want you to love the brothers that attend your church.

I want you to be kindly affectionate. I want you to be devoted to them. I want you to be loyal to them. I want you to love your brothers and sisters in Christ.

And then he tells us how to do it. If you would look at Romans 12, 10, you're looking at it right behind me. Be kindly affectionate one another with brotherly love in honor, preferring one another.

Underline that. In honor, preferring one another. We're to show that love by preferring the other person. That means I give the other person the advantage over myself.

It means I let the other person come first. It means that I recognize the worth of the other person. I prefer them. I give them the honor that I would like to have for myself.

[5:00] I give it to them. And so you know all about that. You get on the public transportation and there's a sign that says, give the elderly your seat. And so the idea in the Bible would be, hey, prefer the elderly people is what they'd say on the bus.

It's the idea I'm going to treat people right. It's the young man standing as the lady walks in the room. It's giving honor to the other person. There's a wild story told in the Bible. And I'm sure you remember the story, but there's this guy named Mordecai.

It's in this book of Esther. In fact, if you want to write it down for later, Esther chapter 6 and verse 7. And there's this bad guy in the story. His name is Haman. And Haman wants desperately to be honored.

He is hung up on himself. He wants honor. He prefers himself. He prefers honoring himself. And so one day the king has found out that Mordecai, who is related to Esther, he's found out that Mordecai has really done him a great service.

And so Haman walks in the room and the king says, Hey, Haman, if you wanted to honor somebody greatly, if you wanted to help me honor somebody greatly, how about telling me what you do?

[6:08] And Haman's like, he's talking about me. That's going to be great. I can line out exactly what I'd like to have happen. And this is going to be fantastic. And so in Esther chapter 6 and verse 7, he said, For the man whom the king delighteth to honor.

And he said, well, give him the royal clothes. Clothes that you've worn and everybody knows you've worn them. Let him sit on the horse that you have ridden upon. Put your royal crown on his head and get one of your most noble princes and let him go down the street in front of him saying, This is how the king honors the guy that he wants to honor.

Haman's like, man, this is going to be good stuff. I am looking forward to this honor he's going to give me. And then the king says, okay, go do that for Mordecai, who was his enemy.

That's a lot different than what the Bible's telling you to do, but it's the exact same idea. Most of us are pretty hung up on getting honor for ourselves. We like to be treated right. We think we have certain rights.

We think we have certain expectations of the way people ought to treat us and how we ought to be received. We got this whole opinion. I go to church. I expect this. Here's what Jesus said. Stop expecting honor and start giving honor.

[7:15] Stop expecting honor and start giving honor. Stop looking for what you get and start seeing what you can give. And that's what he said. Go back, if you would, to the verse in Romans chapter 12. If you would, and read that verse of me again, be kindly, affectionate one to another with brotherly love and honor, preferring one another.

So if we're going to love each other, I'm going to have to think more about you than I think about me. I want to come to this church and say, man, I've got to be a blessing to that person. I can't come to this church saying, nobody shook my hand.

I got to say, I got to shake a lot of hands because I'd like my hand to be shaken. So I'm going to shooen or shaken or whatever gets done. But I'm going to do that to a lot of other people because I'm going to prefer them.

I know I'd like people to speak to me. So I'm planning on speaking to a whole lot of people. I am going to prefer my brother. Another thing he told us, number two, he told us to love our brothers and sisters in Christ like Christ has loved us.

Look at John 13, 34. John 13, 34. This is like the wildest verse in the Bible about knowing who a Christian is. Knowing who is a part of Christ.

[8:22] I mean, you know, you would think it would be about our doctrine. You would think it would be about our standards. You would think it would be about something else. But he says in John chapter 13 and verse 34, a new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you.

That you also love one another. You should mark it to one another's there in that verse. Verse 35, by this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one to another.

So I come to church and here you are. You're my brothers and you're my sisters in Christ. And I come to this church. And what's the attitude? Let me just tell you this. If this, if what he's teaching in the Bible were to happen in an assembly, in an assembly, in a church, lost people would even be like, man, I like that place.

That is one great place. I mean, nobody's looking out for themselves. Everybody's thinking about the other person. And now you're going to love each other like Christ loved the church. Can I remind you how he loved us?

Can I remind you? Make a note of this because it's how you need to love me and how I need to love you. He loved us first. Well, that's a great one. He loved me when I didn't deserve to be loved.

[9:30] But God committed his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. He loved us. Romans chapter 5, 8. We love him because he first loved us.

1 John chapter 4. And so he loved me when I was unlovely. Everybody can love the lovely guy. But it's hard to love the guy that's not so lovely. Who does Jesus love?

He loves first. And so we want to love other people. Don't wait on them to come to you. Don't be hesitant. Show your love first. Take the initiative.

Take the initiative. Number two, when he loves us. I just picked out some. He seeks what is best for us. He seeks what is best for us. To be honest with you, the whole plan of salvation is not about God.

It's about us. Yes, it's about God and what he did. But he did it for me. I don't deserve it. But he did it for me. He looked out from heaven and said, you deserve to go to hell, Austin.

[10:29] But I love you. And I'm going to do what's best for you. I'm going to make a way for you to be saved. I'm going to do something for you. And he came in human flesh and died on the cross. And he was thinking about what's best for me.

You come to church, it ought to be, how can I be a blessing to everybody else? What can I do that will help them? What can I do? Here's another thing. He doesn't hold our past against us.

How about that one? You should write that down. He doesn't hold our past against us. You might be in our church and you might think, well, you know, if you just knew all of my past, you wouldn't love me. But if I love you like Jesus loves you, if I love you like Jesus loves me, Jesus says, what past?

You don't have a past. That past is under the blood of Jesus. Amen. Did you know that if you look in the past of a born again believer, you know what you'll find? I don't care if he was a murderer before.

If you look at his past and you look at the records that God keeps in heaven, you will find the sinless perfection of Jesus Christ. That's a beautiful thing, isn't it? Did you know your police record, your criminal history, your sin history in heaven has been replaced by the perfection of Jesus Christ.

[11:38] And all of your slop and all of your mess was put on Jesus. Now, if I come to church here, I'll not walk in this room and look at somebody and judge them by maybe the way they're dressed or maybe the past they have.

Maybe the marks of sin are on them. Maybe you see something in them. You say, I bet that person had a rough past. You ought to say, hey, I don't care about the past. It's been forgiven by my father. It's been forgiven by my savior.

And I'm forgiving it too. I'm going to love you just like you are. He forgives us completely. He forgives us completely. Isn't that wonderful? You know, he forgives us so completely that he just, he doesn't even remember what I did.

If I went to God right now and I said, hey God, do you remember? He said, no, I said, I will remember them no more. If I went to God and I said, God, you got a record on my past. He said, no, I erased it and I nailed it to the cross of Calvary.

In case anybody ever came, I put on it. It's already paid in full. Don't bother that guy. Amen. That's pretty good stuff. I've been forgiven. So I ought to come to church with that attitude about all my brothers. Hey, I don't care what you've done in the past.

[12:39] You're forgiven because I'm forgiven. Amen. That's pretty good stuff. Let your love be genuine. Let your love be genuine. When you love like Christ loves the church, you will have genuine love.

Look at Romans chapter 12 and verse 9 with me if you would. Romans chapter 12 and verse 9. Now listen to what the verse says in Romans 12, 9. Let love be without dissimulation.

Well, that's a big hard word, but underline that in your verse. Dissimulation. That means no faking. Abhor that which is evil, cleave that which is good. Don't fake it.

Let it be genuine love. It's not like, I love you. Not really. Huh? Plastic politician. I love you.

After you vote for me, I won't care about you. That's not what it is. It's I love you. Say amen. I love you with a true love. A genuine love. Not a fake love. In 1 Corinthians chapter 13, verses 4 through 7.

- [13:38] You'll find the definition of love written by God himself. The word that's used is charity. And you might say, well, that's a ridiculous word. Actually, it's a perfect word. Because what it's shown is it's a love that's not deserved.

Charity is what you give when you expect nothing in return. Amen? You give charity when you expect nothing. God said, that's the kind of love I want you to have. Love that expects nothing. I'll love her. I'll love him if they give me back what I deserve.

No, that's not what it is. So notice some things about that love. It says that charity suffers long. Real love is patient. Real love is patient.

Love expands your capacity to put up with difficult people and desperate situations. Well, you can't be a part of a church without being around some difficult people. That's just the way it is.

But what does the Bible say about that? Well, I want you to love them like Christ loved the church. And you know what? Then he told you, I want you to have a patient love. Put up with desperate situations and difficult people.

- [14:37] Realize that you're patient. You're patient. That's what love is. You might say, I love my child. Then I say, are you patient with your child? You say, nope. I say, well, maybe you don't. Anyway.

Number two about that kind of love. Genuine love is generous love. It's generous love. It says it's got love. Charity is kind and charity envies not. Generous speaks of being kind.

You see, I'm giving what I don't necessarily get back. I'm giving out of a good heart towards you. Genuine love brings pleasure to those.

Genuine love frees you from envy and jealousy. Real love doesn't get jealous. Boy, do you know what causes more problems than anything else in the church? The preacher mentioned that person's name and left mine out.

You know what causes more trouble in the church? Everybody's friendlier to that person than they are to me. But love has not got envy. And real love frees you from that. Real love is humble.

- [15:35] Real love is humble. Charity vaunteth not itself. Is not puffed up. Seeks not her own. Humility means you're not a windbag. You're not constantly talking about you. It's not about you.

You're thinking about the other person. Real love doesn't have to get its own way. Humility is showing genuine interest in others. Love frees us from worrying about ourselves. By the way, have you ever noticed a mom and how she is?

I remember my wife got a phone call after our oldest daughter had sat by the side of her baby. Who's now like 15 years old. But she had sat by the side of him as he was in the bed and he was sick. And she had loved him all night and put cold compresses on his forehead and given him medicine and hugged him.

And she had been up for hours and she was exhausted. And she called her mother and said, If you love me anything like I love this little boy, you have real love. A mother forgets herself and loves her child.

Say, man, that's the kind of love I'm supposed to have towards you. That's the kind of love you're supposed to have towards each other. Love is generous. Love is humble.

[16:36] Love is not rude. Does not behave itself unseemly. Let's learn to say the nice words. How about please, thank you, and I'm sorry. Nice words.

You had to say them when you was a kid. You forgot them when you became an adult. Learn to listen. Really listen. Intently listen. Most of the time when we're discussing something, people were only waiting until they hush so we can say what we got to say.

I don't care what you got to say. I got something to say. Finish and I'll tell you what I got to say. I'm not listening. Not being rude means not saying some things. If you're not going to be rude, there's some things you're just going to keep your mouth shut about.

You don't highlight faults and weaknesses. You think the best of them. Real love covers a multitude of sins. Love thinks right. The Bible says charity is not easily provoked.

Thinks no evil. It's not irritable, touchy, easily offended, or upset. In the Bible, there's a story. You know, and all these stories refer right back to Jesus. He is love.

[17:38] And by the way, he shows all of this love towards us and then tells me, I want you to do what I've taught you how to do by doing that for you. And in the Bible story, there's a story about the prodigal son.

And the really bad guy in the prodigal son story is not the prodigal son. The real bad guy is a good church member who stayed there and always did what was right. In the story, the prodigal son gets mad at his dad, demands his stuff, and rebels against God, and runs off and does his own living and does his own thing.

And then when he comes back, the guys that hung out at the church are like, What? I've been here all along. I've been doing my stuff. And they were good people and they followed all the rules, but they had a cold, stony heart.

They were mean, like good church people. Amen. I'm the one that's done right. Let's judge him. Let's be rough. He had done his duty and he was right.

He was loyal. He was hardworking. He got angry when he saw his brother loved and honored. Love has selective memory. It only remembers the good.

[18:43] Isn't that what God does with us? This guy in our ministry in Adiquipa, he had been a terrorist and he'd gone to jail when he was like 16. He's a missionary in Peru today, in Chile today. And one day he came to me and he said, He said, I've done so much bad.

I want to do something good. I want to give my house for the church. He said, I was a terrorist. And I said, well, you don't need to do that to gain favor with God. There's no paying God back. I said, God doesn't remember you were a terrorist.

He looked at me and he said, well, you mean God doesn't remember? I said, well, what does he do? God's got selective memory. Amen. You see what God said? He said, God said this. He said, I will erase your sin.

I will bury your sin in the deepest sea. I will separate your sin as far from you as the east is from the west. I will remember it no more. And I said, so if you go to God right now and say, God, you remember back when I was a terrorist?

He'd go, hmm. Refresh my memory. I don't remember that part. Isn't it wonderful? What a good God you got. If it is, say amen. And that's why I love other people because I have been loved that way.

[19:50] Love rejoices in the truth. It rejoices not in iniquity, but it rejoices in the truth. You don't get joy out of saying you're not as bad as somebody else. You do know that when it says rejoice is not in iniquity, that doesn't mean that you go off and get drunk and rejoice in it.

What it means is I really like you're doing bad because it makes me look better. You know, I've always had this little weight problem. I mean, I was 145 when I got married and, you know, I'm way, way bigger than I ever was then.

You know, Betty now hugs me with chalk. She hugs as far as she can and marks and then runs around and gets the rest of me. And when I got married, she could wrap her arms all the way around me twice. And I've had this weight problem.

And sometimes I rejoice in iniquity. I love going to Golden Corral because when I go to Golden Corral, I look around and I say, baby, that's fat, not me. I like that. I don't like to go where skinny people are.

Don't take me to that veggie bar. Amen. Because everybody in there looks like they're dead already. And I don't really want to go there. And what does rejoice in iniquity mean? Some of us, some of us just really get happy that there's meaner people in the church than us.

[20:58] It's like, I'm not the meanest one in this church. That's the meanest one. You're never supposed to rejoice in that. You're supposed to rejoice in Jesus. You're supposed to rejoice in truth. And therefore, you're not comparing yourself to the worst, but to the best.

And you want to serve Jesus. Love keeps on. It doesn't stop. The Bible says, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

It just doesn't quit. Love just doesn't quit. So number one thing. I want you to see two things I divided into two. You are to love your brother.

You're to love your brother. 59 times or so, there are one another's in the New Testament for the church. 21 of those are about love.

Love is summed up in God loving us. If you want to know what love looks like, check out Jesus. If you want to know what love looks like, check out God who gave his only begotten son and placed all my sin on him and let him die for me and take my place.

[22:06] That's love. And when you get a bunch of people that have been forgiven all in the same room, they all walk in like, man, I don't deserve it. I have a wonderful, sweet, loving, kind God. I got to be like my father.

I want to live out who he is. Say amen. So love. Love means you prefer the other. Love means you love like Christ loves us. Romans chapter 14 and verse 13.

Number three. You love by not causing your brother to fail. You see, love says I'm here to help. Love says I'm here to help.

In Romans 14, 13, the Bible said, let us not therefore judge one another. Underline that. There's a one another. Let's don't judge one another anymore, but judge this rather that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

There are two main things I want you to see in the verse. Number one, I want you to look at the first part of the verse. Let's don't judge each other. This church, this church, this verse has a contrast in it. Typically, we walk around like this.

[23:09] Check him out over there. Check him out over there. I'm here to judge you and I'm here to say I could see some stuff in that person and I could see some wrong in that person. And yeah, yeah, that's really bad over there.

And so I'm judging everybody else in the room. I'm quit. Let us therefore not judge one another. Let us not therefore judge one another anymore. Quit looking around the room.

Quit figuring out what's wrong with everybody else. That's what he's saying in the passage of scripture. That means we don't pass judgment on our brother. That means when you're judging out of jealousy and bitterness, that's wrong.

That's wrong. When you're judging wrong, when you assume that you know all the information, including the motives. You judge wrong when you judge by human standards and opinions like your preferences and you judge somebody else.

You judge wrongly when you don't first judge yourself. Jesus said, what are you doing looking at a splinter in that guy's eye when you got a beam in your own eye? Take care of your own problem first.

[24:09] And so the idea is I will judge myself and what I'm doing. Look at the verse, would you? Look at it. Let us therefore not judge. Let us not therefore judge one another anymore, but judge this rather.

Don't do this. Do this. Says let's not judge one another anymore, but judge this rather that no man put a stumbling block or occasion to fall in his brother's way.

Is what I'm doing likely to cause him to stumble? So am I am I am to be thinking of what will help my brother more than what will help me? I'm to examine my life and see if what I'm doing will help my brother succeed or if it hinders his life.

When we walk in this church, when we get in the assembly, when we come together, man, there ought to be a real sweet spirit here. That cranky, ugly person that comes like a little chihuahua dog in a big old human body.

And they looking down their nose at other people and they're figuring out what their past was and they have a judgmental attitude. They've come in judging each other. The other person walks in and said, man, today I got to be a blessing.

[25:13] I am not going to hurt anybody's feelings. I'm not going to hinder anybody else. When I leave today, they're all going to be like, man, seeing him today, seeing her today made me want to serve Jesus more.

Read the verse. Read the verse. It says, let us not therefore judge one another anymore.

We're assembled and we come in. I can't believe you're wearing that. I can't believe you're dressed like you're dressed. I can't believe the way you, what you put on Facebook.

He said, stop it. Stop it. Walk in the room saying, man, when I leave, I'm going to have been a blessing. This is an assembly.

This is an assembly. Have you ever been to one of them family reunions? That's a kind of assembly. And you know that so-and-so brings joy. Man, they walk in the room and they light the place up. And you know, here comes Grumpy.

[26:11] Grumpola is on her way in. And everybody's trying to figure out, can they get to the kitchen and wash dishes? I mean, anything would be better than hanging around Grumpola. There are church members like that. If you don't want to say amen, you can say, oh me.

Amen. Number four. We're to accept each other. You see, it's all about Jesus. And Jesus doesn't come judging. If he did, you'd go to hell.

If he came in his room saying, oh, sinner, I see you burn in hell. Sinner, burn in hell. Sinner, burn in hell. That's not how he comes in the room. He comes in the room like this. I'm here to help.

Today, I've got a message of good news. I paid your sin debt and you can be saved. Amen. And everybody's all around him going, man, the Savior is here. The very word Savior screams, I was in trouble and he came and helped me.

Amen. So, how do you come to church? The next one is Romans 15, 7. Wherefore, receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.

[27:16] What a crazy verse. I should accept you like Jesus accepted me. Look at that verse. I should accept you like Jesus accepted me.

We accept each other. We receive each other like Christ has received us, has accepted us. That's a wild verse, isn't it? I come in the church and instead of coming around judging, I go, you know, who does he save?

He saves sinners. Who does he save? Rotten people. Who does he save? Desperate people that deserve hell. And he says, and he receives them.

By the way, he took the guy who called himself the chief of sinners, the big dog of sinners. He figured himself to be the worst sinner and he led him right over a third of the New Testament. That's our Lord and Savior.

He's a wonderful, wonderful Savior and I'm to receive you like Jesus received me. And here's the deal. Well, you may look around the room and think everybody else in this room seems to have it all together.

[28:16] I'll give you a hint. Nobody in this room has it together. And if it wasn't for Jesus, it'd all fall apart. Nobody in this room. Hey, there's no good people don't go to heaven.

Good people go to hell. All people have sinned. All have come short of the glory of God. And Jesus died. He's the one that makes a difference. Here's some truth about how he loves me and how he accepted me and how he receives me.

He loves me where I am now. Now, some Christians are like this. Well, when you change, I'll like you. I'm glad Jesus isn't like that. Amen. He doesn't look at me and say, hey, when you change, Austin, I'm going to like you.

Because I'll just be honest with you, I can't change myself. He changed me. He made me a new creature. He did the work in me. It's not about what I do. It's about what he did.

There's nothing that I can do to make him love me more and nothing I can do to make him love me less. Did you know this? You want to hear a wild one? It's not a performance-based relationship.

[29:13] He's not up in heaven saying, lose weight or I ain't going to like you. He's not up in heaven saying, don't skip church or I ain't going to like you. He's up in heaven saying, I love you. You say, well, I didn't go to church last week.

That's all right. I love you. Well, I went to church 50 times last week. I love you. You love him? Yeah, I love him. He didn't go. I know. I'm not loving you because you went or didn't go.

I'm loving you because I'm a stinking good God. Amen. I'm loving you because I'm Jesus. I'm loving you because I'm God and God is love. He accepts us unconditionally.

One of the most famous invitation hymns in Baptist history is, just as I am with not one plea. I don't have any reason he should accept me, but he does.

I come just like I am. You don't have to quit smoking, cussing, drinking, dancing and going with him to do. Just come to Jesus today. He loves you.

[30:12] You don't have to quit anything. He loves you. You say, brother, does that mean that you think it's okay to sin? Absolutely not. But salvation was based on what Jesus did, not what you do.

And when you get saved, he'll take care of that. He'll clean you up. He accepts us unconditionally. He accepts us based on what Jesus did for us instead of what we have done.

Now, here's a wild one. If I turn my nose up at Sergei over here and I don't want to love Sergei because, well, I don't really like Sergei. I am rejecting the guy Jesus received. So Jesus walks in the room and says, hey, Sergei, that's my buddy Sergei.

And you're like, I don't like him. And you'd be like, I love him. What's your problem with him? I love you. I love him. What are y'all doing fighting? That's not where we live. Say, man. Receive each other.

We should accept each other no matter what our past looks like. That's sometimes hard for Baptists because Baptists who claim to believe in salvation by grace means salvation by grace for me and not you.

[31 : 18] Those who believe in total depravity believe in it for you, but not them. They ain't that depraved. Isn't that amazing? We should accept each other in spite of our past, in spite of our differences.

I love the fact that Vision Baptist Church is full of different colors, different ethnic backgrounds, different social levels, and you love each other.

Thank the Lord for that. That's the way it's supposed to be. You get to heaven, you might just find that white's a minority because there sure are a lot of others in heaven that got saved and you don't even know because you're in the southeast of the United States.

We should fully receive each other so that the world has to think of us as being loving, kind, and accepting. People pass judgment on the church. Boy, those are critical people there. Those are judgmental people there.

Those are mean people there. Well, they're not the real people because the real people of God are like, no, we got accepted and we accept. That doesn't mean you accept falsehood. It doesn't mean you accept sin.

[32 : 18] It just means you love people and that's supposed to be a part of us. Accepting means no desire to manipulate or change. Five minutes to three points.

You ready? Let's hurry. Loving means we serve each other. The one another's tell me to serve each other. Galatians 5.13, the Bible says, For brethren, you've been called unto liberty.

Only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. A church is about loving and serving one another.

We can serve by making others feel welcome. A smile, holding the door, helping them find a seat. We can serve by helping them achieve their goals. We can serve by helping them grow spiritually.

Maybe getting them hooked up in foundations and teaching them the foundational truths of the Bible. We can serve by listening to people. We can serve by encouraging them in their ministry and in their life.

[33 : 14] They've been kicked enough out there, by the way. They come in here, they've already been beat up on enough. Everybody's beating them up. They ought to come to one place and just like, grace everywhere.

Love everywhere. Joy everywhere. Because this is Jesus' house. Amen. Let me tell you, Santa Claus ain't got nothing on Jesus. You guys act like Santa Claus brings happiness.

He don't even know how to spell the word. Jesus brings happiness and salvation and everything. And when they come to the church, I'll be like, wow, I'm here. I'm in the house of God with God's people full of love and grace and kindness.

It's a wonderful place to be. Be a friend when they don't deserve it. Serve by sharing. Serve by accepting. Serve by being grateful.

Number six. Ephesians 4.32. We forgive each other. He told us to forgive. He serves. Oh, he serves us. Amen. He saved me.

[34 : 08] He changed me. He's blessed me. He answers my prayer. What a wonderful Savior I have. And I should be a servant like him. But he forgives me. And the Bible says in Ephesians 4.32, And be ye kind one to another.

We're tenderhearted, forgiving one another. Even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you. God forgave you because of Jesus. That's what the last part of that verse says.

Kind, not time to talk about it. Tenderhearted, not time to talk about it. We'll just talk about forgiving. When you forgive, you let the offender off the hook.

I'm not going to hold this over your head anymore. Isn't that what Jesus does to us? Can you imagine if he saved me? And I had this dark past.

And I came in. I said, Lord, I'd like to trust you. He said, all right. I'm going to let things slide. As long as you. But heavy, heavy hangs over your head.

[35:11] You mess up. The hammer's down, buddy. That's not what he does. He said, I just went ahead and took care of it. I paid your debt. I nailed it to a cross. He forgives us.

He lets the offender off the hook. It means I leave God to take care of justice. You're still going to get offended. There's still going to be people that hurt you. But that's not your problem. He'll fight your battles. You leave them alone.

Forgiving is deciding not to think about the offense. And not to bring it up again. Forgiveness is not based on what the person does. When Jesus is on the cross being crucified. When they're nailing him to the trees.

He says, Father, forgive them. That's ridiculous. If I'd have been him, they'd all been dead. Amen. I'd have said, Father, forgive them after you kill them. Amen. But he didn't do that.

He's a good God forgiving them. Jesus asked his Father to forgive. Forgiveness means I give up my desire to control the situation. Forgiveness is a decision. Don't say I can't forgive.

[36:06] You can. You don't want to forgive. I decide to let go of the resentment. I give my emotions to the Lord and I trust the offense and the person to Jesus. Say, where's all that fit in the context of the assembly?

Well, how do you get one another's without one another? You know, there's a bunch of one another's in this room. And if we all stay at home, we don't have to worry about each other. But we come together. We do life together.

That means you don't just come on Sunday morning. It becomes your lifestyle. You learn to hang out with each other. You're doing foundations together. You're playing together. You're praying together. You're studying the Bible together.

You're doing family. You're doing life together. Because we are the assembly. We're his. I'll be honest with you. What you hear about church today is not real church. When you come and watch a preacher on a screen or a preacher and all you do is watch and leave, you haven't understood the assembly.

And the assembly means, I've got to learn to put up with you. You've got to learn to put up with me. That's a great thing. Amen? We all got that crazy uncle wants you to pull his thumb. But we're going to learn to love him anyway.

[37:10] We all got that family. We are a family. He made us a family. He's the father. He's the big brother. Amen? And he saved us. Look if you would, Hebrews chapter 10.

Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 24. Last point. Hebrews 10, verse 24 says, let us consider one another. Let's think about each other and figure out how we can provoke, stir up, motivate unto love and to good works.

So we're going to get together. I'm going to walk in. I'm going to go, Lamar, I'm trying to figure out a way to help you love Jesus more than love others. There's more. You do that to me. I'll do that to you. Oh, Muhammad Ali came down the hall. Every fight he was going to go into and everybody's going, you're the greatest.

You're the greatest. You're the greatest. But when we come to church, we're supposed to be said, he's the greatest. But I can tell you how to love more. Let's love more. Let's challenge and motivate each other. Verse 25 says, don't forsake the assembling, the churching of yourselves together as a manner of some is, but exhorting one another.

And so much the more as you see the day approaching. Write this down. Let's think about how to stir each other up. Let's agitate. This church should be full of agitators.

- [38 : 18] What are we agitating for? Love. I'm going to figure out how to get you to love people more. Figure out how to get you to love God more. You're going to figure out how to get me to love God more. And good works. So we're all doing good works.
- We're encouraging each other to do more good works. Let's get together. Let's assemble. Let's meet with a purpose. We meet to worship God. We meet to learn the Bible.
- We meet to magnify Jesus. We meet to encourage each other. We're going to help each other do more for God than we would have ever done without each other. It's amazing that Weight Watchers knows you need to assemble.
- I mean, it's just a diet. Why do you need to go weigh yourself in front of somebody? Amen. Because people need people. And long before Weight Watchers thought of that, Jesus thought of it.
- And he made an assembly, a church. Not something to come watch. Not something you do because it's your religious habit. But you join in a big family, an assembly.
- [39 : 25] And you love each other. And one of your brothers is hurting, and you hurt. And one of your brothers needs help, and you're helping. Because you are an assembly. Jesus said, I will build my assembly.
- I will build my church. And the gates of hell. By the way, the word assembly in Matthew 16, 18. The word church in Matthew 16, 18 is assembly. It is an assembly.
- That's what a church is. So I want to challenge you this morning. Let's get together and love Jesus together. I hope when you come in here every week, I motivate you to want to serve Jesus more.
- I hope I motivate you to love him more and love his Bible and to love each other. I hope I motivate you. By the way, if you come at 420, we're going to motivate you on how to do more ministry. And if you'll get involved in foundations, we're going to motivate you on how to help other people.
- And if you'll come on Sunday nights, and if you come on Thursday nights, if you get involved, you're going to find out it's the most exciting thing in the world. Getting with God's people. My daughter-in-law just made a cake for the Austin Club.
- [40 : 22] You know those little Austin Healy, what is it? Not, no, Minnie Cooper. The little Minnie Cooper Club. She made a cake. Charged a bunch of money for the Minnie Cooper. Wool! If you've got a Minnie Cooper, you want to get together with the Minnie Cooper people.
- Well, I'm a Jesus people, and I like to get together with the Jesus people. Amen? My favorite place to be. Not the bar, but the church. Not the sports club or the golf club.
- And I'm all for all of those. But the favorite place is, you're my family. And he brought us together. And no, we probably wouldn't be hanging out together if it wasn't for Jesus.
- You probably wouldn't even like me. Is that fat white boy old man? I don't think I like him that much. But we can love each other because we are in the family by Jesus Christ.
- Amen? So today, if you're not loving and you're not serving, why don't you say, God, I'm going to help my brothers. If you realize you've had some bad attitudes, if you realize you've had some judgmental spirit, why don't you say, God, I want to give that up?
- [41 : 21] If you're here and you've never been born again, why don't today you trust Christ as your Savior? Today, he loves you. And every point we've looked at was about Jesus. He forgives sin. He comes to you where you are and cares about you and makes a difference.
- Let him work in your life. Father in heaven, I love you. And I thank you for the opportunity to study your word. And I pray you'd help us to assemble and be a church like you want us to be. Help us to be a loving group of people, a forgiving group of people, a serving group of people, an encouraging group of people, a group of people set aside to serve you.

And I will give you honor and glory for all you do. This message was recorded at Vision...
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