

Week of January 24, 2010
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Monday

John 13:35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Did we forget this somehow? As we focus on witness and worship in the local church, the test and promises of faith are found in our love for one another. Note there is no exception clause in the verse, like we will love only when others are lovable, or when we are in agreement, or when we get our own way. There is no time specified in the verse, like we will love one only when it is convenient, or when we are young, old, or almost dead. God poured so much of His love in us that the unique character of love becomes the clear mark of His children, and the obvious place to see Christ in the church. "By this all men will know..."

Tuesday

1John 4:11-12 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

Don't do it! Don't do it! Don't say you love God and then treat others in the body of Christ as if they are of no value. The scripture is clear, the way you demonstrate your love for God is in the open demonstration of your love to your church family. Love is not some vague feeling toward deity. Love is specific, intentional acts of grace toward others in the body. You 'love' by your words of encouragement and 'hate' through bitterness and lack of forgiveness. You 'love' in your deeds of ministry and 'hate' when you fail to be involved. The scripture is clear, love is tangible, practical, touchable, audible, and focused in the local church.

Wednesday

Heb. 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

In the politic of our day, it seems normal to mistrust, resent, or be embittered against anyone in authority or leadership. We often look closely for faults and assume poor character. Such is not God's plan for the church. Blind allegiance to mere men — never. But God requires open respect of His called servants. To love, respect, and properly submit to our leaders is to honor and make healthy the church. To speak harshly of, resent, or seek to undermine is to damage the body. The believer who seeks God's will will seek to build up God's pastor and leaders.

Thursday

Prov. 27:17 Iron sharpens iron, So one man sharpens another.

Iron sharpening iron sounds like a great and noble idea — unless you're the iron. The process of sharpening requires a grinding wheel and polishing stone. So, obviously Christian character formation includes irritations and abrasions. The forming of 'sharp' Christians may include contact with less than Christian-acting brothers and sisters. The irritants of immature siblings may be a need of your life, developing a gracious heart, a tough skin, and a forgiving attitude. I don't like it when God sharpens me by such means, but He has the right to do so. And I have the opportunity to grow. How about you?

Friday

Eph. 5:32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.

Right in the middle of a passage on marriage Paul makes this unique point. Why? Perhaps because the two greatest proving grounds of a maturing Christian walk are found in the midst of our relationships at home and in the church. In these more than any other place, our nature is revealed. Here more than at any other point our character is tested, our patience is tried, our love is tempted, our commitments are revealed. The two go together more deeply than we often realize: church & home.