



Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Romans 12.9-13 | April 30, 2017

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I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue our series They Will Know Us By Our Fruit, looking at the marks of discipleship we are aiming for as a church, as we invite all people into a Christ-centered life in God's family.

This week, we are looking at the fruit of Welcoming Warmly.

II. Connecting with One Another

What do you think of when you hear the word "hospitality"?

III. Study the Text

a. Read Romans 12.9

The first four words of verse 9 ("Love must be sincere") function as a sort of title or heading for the section. The word "sincere" literally reads "unhypocritical" (which, as I type it into Microsoft Word, gets a squiggly little red underline, meaning it's not really a word – thus the translation as "sincere").

In Greek, "hupokrites" meant, literally, "to play a part on stage." During this period of history, stage actors would use multiple masks to play different characters.

How are you tempted to love hypocritically – "wearing a mask" or "playing a part" of loving someone – instead of loving them sincerely?

b. In John 13.34, "John calls love for one another 'a new command' not because it had never been said before but because it is now part of the new covenant and bound up with Jesus' love for us. This new love existing first between the Father and Son and then between the Godhead and us is the basis of a new degree of loving relationships in God's community." (time permitting, see also Leviticus 19.18, Psalm 52.3, 97.10, Amos 5.15, 1st Corinthians 13.13, and 1st Peter 2.12)

Who is easiest for you to love? Why?

Who is hardest? Why?

c. Reread Romans 12.9, then continue through verse 13

With "Love must be sincere" as the heading to this section, the following thoughts through verse 13 explores how we can accomplish such authentic love.

Which is the most difficult command for you to embody? Which is the easiest?

If you're working through this study guide in a group, be sure to spend some time discussing these questions.

- d. Being "devoted to one another" (verse 10) envisions the church as a loving family: "*Devoted* occurs only here in the New Testament but was used in the Greco-Roman world for the tender affections of family life... Believers are to feel the absolute devotion that families naturally have for one another."

How have you experienced this devotion within a Christian community?

Where are you most devoted to the Good Shepherd family?

- e. Verse 11 reveals "the great energy needed to put our spiritual gifts to work."

When are you most energized to join in the mission of God? Write down whatever comes to mind:

- f. Verse 13 specifically engages our relationships. His first command requires "sharing financially in the needs of others." We recently engaged this in Acts 2.42-45 and 4.32. See also Romans 15.26-27, 2nd Corinthians 8.4 and 9.13, Galatians 6.6, Philippians 4.15, 1st Timothy 6.8, and Hebrews 13.16.

Paul's second command is simply "Practice hospitality." Which isn't so simple, is it?!

Grant Osborne explains: "Hospitality is a natural outgrowth of love and a requirement for leaders in the church (see Hebrews 13.2, 1st Peter 4.9, 1st Timothy 3.2 and 5.10, and Titus 1.8). In the first century, inns were both very expensive and somewhat dangerous as well as filthy (in one Greek play the characters compared inns on the basis of which had the fewest cockroaches), so Jesus' mission also demanded hospitality (see Mark 1.29, 6.10-11, 14.3)."

How is hospitality a "natural outgrowth of love"?

Why do you think the New Testament requires it for leaders in the church?

- g. Osborne continues, "In our day [hospitality] is needed because most people are lonely and need someone who cares. In our individualistic society there are too few willing to share their homes."

When have you experienced hospitality? What effect did it have on you?

Do you agree with Osborne's last sentence? Why or why not? If you agree, why do you think that is?

- h. Read Luke 5.27-39

In their book *Becoming A Contagious Christian*, Bill Hybels and Mark Mittelberg write, "By any standard, [Levi] was an unlikely candidate. Tax collectors just weren't known for becoming evangelists. Yet that's exactly what happened... [Levi] put on a big banquet for all of his tax collecting buddies in an effort to expose them to Jesus and

the new life He offered... [Levi] didn't confront or intellectually challenge them, nor is there any mention of his telling them the story of what had happened to him...

Rather, he relied on the relationships he'd built with these men over the years and sought to further develop their friendships. He invited them into his home. He spent time with them and ate with them. He did all of this because he genuinely cared about them, and he wanted to influence them toward considering the claims of Christ."

What relationships have you developed over the years that you could extend into your home?

What one person could you "practice hospitality" for this week?

How would you do so?

- i. Time permitting, read through 1st Corinthians 12-14, looking for similarities with Paul's thoughts in Romans 12. (Many scholars believe Paul wrote to the Romans while in Corinth during the early to mid 50's. As such, Paul's encouragement to love one another may have arisen due to similar challenges in these two communities.)

IV. Pray

- a. Let's return to Question C above (the most difficult or easiest command):
 - Start by thanking God for the fruit shown in the easiest command for you to follow – and ask that God would use it powerfully to bring Him glory and make disciples of Jesus Christ,
 - Then, take time to lift up the most difficult command, that by the same power through which God raised Jesus, He would continue to equip you to bear fruit,
- b. Ask God to open your eyes to the hospitality you've received from others and to equip you to practice hospitality for those around you,
- c. Pray that Good Shepherd would be – and would continue to become – a church community that invites all people into a Christ-centered life in God's family by welcoming warmly.