



## Mt Lebanon Evangelical Presbyterian Church

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*Making and Growing Followers of Jesus*

### WHAT IF?

By: Rev. Andy Wahl, Elder

What if? What if Christians truly obeyed Jesus' command to love one another? In the Gospel of John 13:34–35, Jesus declares, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another." And again in John 15:17, Jesus says, "This is My command: Love each other."

What if humanity truly understood the depth of God's love proclaimed in John 3:16 – that God so loved the world He gave His Son?

The Apostle Paul paints a vivid picture of what this love looks like in Letter to the Romans Chapter 12. This love is not infatuation. It is not mere emotion or fleeting passion. The love God commands is agape love – a steadfast, unconditional, sacrificial love that endures and gives without demanding anything in return. If Christians truly understood God's *agape* love and consistently lived this kind of love out, it would transform a culture shaped by fear and selfishness into one marked by compassion and grace. Jesus did not suggest this love – He commanded it.

In Romans Chapter 12, one key verse is where Paul specifically instructs how Christians are to love one another. In verse 10, Paul makes it unmistakable: "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love." Using the Greek translation, the verse literally means 'love your fellow believers with a brotherly love like a family member...' Believers, love fellow believers with a loyalty-shared bonding love like the love found in a family. What a powerful starting point, that Christian believers would love one another with that kind of faithful commitment – and from there, that love could flow outward into the world!

Such love would break down social, racial, and national barriers. It would cultivate compassion over competition, service over exploitation, and hope over fear. It would move us from a mindset of scarcity to the reality of abundant love and grace. This *agape* love does not depend on feelings, nor does it require the other person to be deserving or grateful. We do not love because people are lovable; we love because God first loved us – and because His love now lives within us.

So the question becomes personal: regarding God's love, am I a fountain or a drain? Do I love expecting something in return? Is my kindness rooted in self-interest? Do I offer love only to those I deem worthy? When others experience my presence, does it feel life-giving – or depleting? Looking over my life, is there a sense of love rooted in the fruit of the Spirit where others get a glimpse of a refreshing, overflowing, soaking love being poured out – a joyous representing of God's inexhaustible, life-giving affection? The question is, am I a fountain or a drain?

Here is the hard truth: living a life defined by Christlike love is one of the most demanding aspects of discipleship. We cannot love this way in our own strength. Left to ourselves, we fall short.

But when we are in union with Christ – when we abide and trust in Christ, it is only then we can love like Jesus, and let His love flows through us. Galatians 2:20 reminds us, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” And Philippians 4:13 assures us, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

This *agape* love is a fruit of the Spirit produced in believers who walk closely with Him. When we choose to be a fountain instead of a drain, we embrace the opportunity to serve others in love as a reflection of Christ’s character. This is the result of a renewed mind and a renewed heart; we become a fountain – pouring out encouragement, forgiveness, and hope.

If you desire a deeper understanding of God’s love, consider listening to the Max Lucado Podcast 357, “More Like Jesus: Love.” ([www.maxlucado.com/podcast/357-357-more-like-jesus-love](http://www.maxlucado.com/podcast/357-357-more-like-jesus-love))