

D GROUP LESSON

Better Together: Love Like Jesus

Sermon by Andy VanKlavern — August 16, 2026

Series: *Better Together: Growing in Unity as One Church*

Primary Text: Romans 13:8–14

Take Home Truth

Because our salvation is nearer than ever, Christians must put on the character of Christ by actively loving one another, preserving unity, and fulfilling God's law through love.

HOOK

What Is Distracting You?

The sermon opened with a video showing two guards who had one job: to protect the ship. They became so distracted by an argument that they completely lost sight of their mission.

Talk About It

- What are some things that distract us from what really matters?
- What kinds of things can distract Christians from loving people and making Jesus known?
- Why is it so easy to get caught up in arguments about things that may not ultimately matter?
- Have you ever been so focused on winning an argument that you lost sight of the relationship?

The Connection

The Roman church had a similar problem. Jewish and Gentile Christians were divided over cultural and religious practices. Their disagreements were becoming a distraction from their mission.

The question for us is: Are the things that divide us keeping us from the things God has called us to do?

LOOK

1. We Are Called to Love

Read Romans 13:8–10

Paul tells us to “let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another.”

The love Paul describes is **agape**—a selfless, sacrificial love that intentionally seeks the good of another person.

This isn't simply a feeling.

Biblical love is a choice that becomes an action.

Discuss

1. How is agape love different from the way our culture typically defines love?
 2. Why is it sometimes difficult to love someone when we don't feel like loving them?
 3. What does it look like to intentionally seek the good of someone else?
 4. Who is someone in your life who may need to experience Christ's love through your actions?
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2. We Love Because We Have Been Loved

Read 1 John 4:7–12

We don't have to manufacture God's love on our own.

God is the source of our love.

Jesus has already demonstrated the greatest example of sacrificial love by giving His life for us.

We have received something we could never repay. Instead of trying to pay God back, we **pass His love forward**.

Discuss

- How has Jesus demonstrated His love for you?
- Why should experiencing God's love change the way we treat other people?
- What is the difference between loving someone because they deserve it and loving someone because Christ has loved us?

- Is there someone you need to extend Christ's love to even though they haven't earned it?

Key Thought

We don't love others to earn God's love. We love others because we have already received God's love.

3. Love Fulfills the Law

Read Matthew 22:37–40

Jesus said the greatest commandments are:

Love God.

Love your neighbor.

When we truly love God and love others, our actions begin to reflect God's heart.

If we love our neighbor, we won't want to hurt them, steal from them, lie to them, or destroy their relationships.

The goal isn't simply **rule-following**.

The goal is **heart transformation**.

Read Ezekiel 36:26

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you.”

Discuss

- What is the difference between simply following rules and having a transformed heart?
- Why can Christians sometimes become more concerned about rules than people?
- What would change if we began asking, “**How can I love this person?**” instead of simply asking, “**What am I allowed to do?**”
- Where do you need God to transform your heart?

Remember

The only way to love like Jesus is to be transformed by Jesus.

LOOK

4. Don't Waste the Time You've Been Given

Read Romans 13:11–12

Paul tells the church to **wake up** because salvation is nearer than ever.

Every day brings us closer to Jesus.

That gives our lives urgency.

We don't know how much time we have with the people God has placed around us.

Discuss

Imagine Jesus returned today.

- Is there a relationship you would wish you had repaired?
- Is there someone you would wish you had forgiven?
- Is there someone you would wish you had loved more intentionally?
- What would you stop wasting time on?
- What would suddenly become much more important?

Key Thought

We don't have time to waste on things that keep us from loving people and making Jesus known.

LOOK

5. Unity Doesn't Mean Uniformity

Read Romans 13:13

Paul specifically mentions **dissension and jealousy** as deeds of darkness.

Division can begin with something incredibly small.

Different preferences.

Different opinions.

Different traditions.
Different personalities.

The problem isn't that we're different.

The problem comes when our differences become more important than Jesus.

The church doesn't need everyone to be the same.

We need everyone to be **centered on the same Savior.**

Discuss

1. Why do differences sometimes create division?
2. What are some things Christians can allow to become more important than Jesus?
3. How can our differences actually strengthen the church?
4. What spiritual gifts or abilities has God given you that can be used to serve others?
5. How can you use those gifts to help build unity rather than division?

Key Thought

Unity isn't everyone becoming the same. Unity is different people centered on Jesus.

LOOK

6. Put On Christ

Read Romans 13:14

“Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ...”

Paul brings everything back to Jesus.

To “put on Christ” means that His character should become evident in our lives.

We should begin to look more like Jesus in the way we:

- Speak
- Forgive
- Serve
- Respond to conflict
- Treat difficult people

- Love our neighbors
- Use our gifts
- Care for those around us

Discuss

If someone spent a week watching your life, **what characteristic of Jesus would they see most clearly?**

Then ask:

What characteristic of Jesus do you want them to see more of?

TOOK

Love Like Jesus

The challenge from the sermon is simple:

“Who can I intentionally love today the way Christ has loved me?”

This week, don't just think about that question.

Act on it.

Each morning, ask God:

“Jesus, who can I intentionally love today the way You have loved me?”

Then look for an opportunity to put that love into action.

It could mean:

- Forgiving someone
- Encouraging someone
- Calling someone who is lonely
- Serving someone without being asked
- Helping someone who is struggling
- Reaching out to someone you've avoided
- Refusing to participate in gossip
- Choosing relationship over winning an argument
- Serving someone who cannot repay you

D GROUP CHALLENGE

Before leaving tonight, have everyone identify **one person** they will intentionally love this week.

Complete this statement:

“This week, I am going to show Christ's love to _____ by _____.”

Encourage everyone to share their answer with the group.

Then, next time the D Group meets, begin by asking:

“How did you put Christ's love into action this week?”

CLOSING

Know Jesus. Make Jesus Known.

Jesus loved us when we didn't deserve it.

He gave Himself for us on the cross.

We can never repay that debt—but we can **pass His love on to others.**

Don't let distractions, disagreements, preferences, or pride keep you from the mission.

Stay in the light. Stay centered on Christ. Love people well.

Final Question

If Jesus came back today, is there anything you would wish you had done differently in the way you loved the people around you?

Take a moment of silence, then close in prayer.

Prayer Focus

Ask God to:

- Give us transformed hearts.

- Help us love sacrificially.
- Protect our church from division.
- Help us keep Jesus at the center.
- Show each person who they can intentionally love this week.
- Give us courage to make Jesus known through our actions.