

# **Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion**

**Date** : 1 Jan 2023

**Sermon Title** : Love People Genuinely

**Speaker** : Rev Reuben Ng

**Text** : John 13:34-35

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## **INTRODUCTION**

On this 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of 2023 called Vision Sunday, we want to remind ourselves that whatever happens in 2023, we are not alone because God loves us and He is with us. God is already in 2023 before we reach 2023 because God lives outside of time. He is an eternal God and He is there for us, watching over us and guiding our every single step. We are called to believe Him and hold on to Him who is a good God who loves us. If God is for us who can be against us?

Our church vision is “Transforming Lives, Changing the World” and that is what we have been trying to live out all these years. We believe that God wants to transform our lives, and through us transform the lives of others, so we can change the world and make an impact in the world for Jesus, for His glory and name. Because of that, we had been emphasizing on ‘Know God Intimately’ last year. This is because as we know Him, He works in our lives the knowledge of who He is, and the truth of who He is will then transform us to form and mould us to grow into the likeness of Jesus Christ. This year, we are moving on to focus on ‘Love People Genuinely’.

Christians are called upon to love people, but why the emphasis on loving people genuinely? Human beings are generally self-centred and selfish. There is a tendency for us to focus on what we want or our interests, to consider ourselves before others. If we are not aware of or deliberate and careful about this tendency, we can make loving people about loving ourselves. Donating or giving to someone may appear to be out of loving the person, but if it is so that people know that we are giving or donating or that our name may appear somewhere, it is for our own interest, not genuine love. We need to examine our motivation of giving and caring, whether it is out of love for others or for self-interest such as recognition. Loving people genuinely is putting other people’s interest above ours. We need to start by loving the people at home both in our families and in our Faith Methodist Church family. The last thing we want is for people to say that Christians are hypocrites who talk and sing about love but cannot stand one another in church.

## **Love one another – A New Commandment (John 13:34)**

Before Jesus was captured, He gave a new commandment to His disciples to love one another. Just as He has loved them, they also are to love one another.

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*For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7*

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- To love one another is a commandment – not just a nice idea or something we may want to consider or try, but what we must do.
- It is not a new thing to love people - Loving others is mentioned throughout the Bible and is not a new concept. Deuteronomy 6 tells us to love God and Leviticus 19 tells us to love our neighbour as ourselves.

**What is new is that now, Jesus is included in this commandment to love one another:**

We are commanded to be like Christ in the way He loved His disciples

1. Jesus is the standard, pattern or model or example – In the same way that Jesus loves the disciples and us, we have to love one another.

Although it is impossible to truly love like Jesus because only Jesus' love brings salvation and our love for each other will not give salvation, we can learn from Jesus' unconditional love, to be supportive and encouraging, placing the considerations of others before ours and to love one another to the end - with His heart on the disciples even when He was going to be captured. (John 13:1)

2. Jesus is the source or spring or starting point of love for us to love others – Without Jesus' love, there is no way we can love one another. *“We love because he loved us first.”* (1 John 4:19).

It may be true that there is no way we can love according to the standard of Jesus' love but there is a solution to this when we recognize how much God loves us despite how we may appear to Him in our sinful state - how He first reached out to us, initiated a relationship with us regardless of how unlovable, sin-filled, rebellious, and disobedient we are, not following, obeying or worshipping Him, God still loved us. When we abide in the truth that God first loved us, then in moments when we are tempted to show an unloving or unkind behaviour, knowing how God has been patient and kind to us even when we are unlovable giving us chance after chance, will help us to reconsider. Because if God can forgive someone like us over and over and still show us kindness, who are we to hold back and not lavish love on others?

3. Love one another – Signature of Christians  
*“Everyone will know by this that you are my disciples – If you have love for one another.”* (John 13:35)

People usually spot Christians by them carrying a Bible on Sundays, wearing a cross or even saying grace with bowed heads before meals. However, Jesus says the genuine way to distinguish followers of Christ from the rest of the world is whether we have love for one another. Conversely, it means that if we do not have love for one another, we all lose – there is no winner even if the church does well in all our outreach,

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programmes and preach the best sermons with the best worship team, it does not matter at all.

*“But it is mainly the deeds of a love so noble that lead many to put a brand upon us. ”See,” they say, “how they love one another,” ...”see how they are ready even to die for one another”...Tertullian, Apology XXXIX*

## **Love one another – Practical Steps**

Love is the basic thing often heard in church but also one of the toughest things to live out. This year, let us spend time learning to love one another and transformation of our lives will follow, so we can then think about changing the world.

### **Two Action Steps we can take immediately:**

- (i) If you know someone is upset with you in this church or in your family, or there is something you have done or said that has hurt the person, meet the person to apologize. Seek forgiveness from that person.
- (ii) If you are in the position where you have been angered or hurt by someone and have not received an apology from that person, take the first step and make the effort to bless the person by extending forgiveness.

## **CONCLUSION**

We are called to love one another genuinely for who they are just as Jesus loved us. Reflect on our motivation for our kind and loving acts – is it for the interest of others or is it for ourselves? Let us spend time and effort to love one another genuinely by relying on Jesus as the source of love for us to love others. If there are anger and grievances within us, let us also offer them up to God. Allow Him to take the pride and pain away from us so we can reconcile with Him and with one another, then God’s love will shine through our lives for a transformative work in us – to love one another as Christ has loved us, so the world will know that we are His disciples!

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## **A. Review Sermon Application**

***Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.***

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for 2022 on 'Know God Intimately'?
- 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?
- 1c. What are your personal and group plans for 2023 on 'Love People Genuinely'?

2. Appoint someone to read John 13:34-35 aloud slowly.

- a. How does verse 34 speak to you personally?
- b. Do you have a concern regarding who Jesus says are His disciples in verse 35?

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## **B. Relate Sermon Content**

***Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.***

3. Reflect on your motivation for serving, giving and caring. Is it mainly for self-interest such as to feel good/fulfil your duty or be recognized or for the interest of others?
  - a. Being aware of your motivation, how can you continue serving, giving and caring with genuine love like Christ, putting others above Himself even to the end?
  - b. Since Jesus is the source of love for loving others, what is one thing you need to do to achieve 3a. above?
  
- 4a. Is there someone you have hurt with what you have said or done in your family, church or your small group?
  - (i) What is one thing you can do to love that person genuinely as Christ has loved you?
- 4b. Have you been hurt or offended by someone in your family, church or small group but the person has not apologised?
  - (i) What is one thing you can do to love that person genuinely as Christ has loved you?
- 4c. How can your group members help or encourage you to achieve 4a(i) and 4b(i) above, in the following week(s), until your next meeting?

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## **C. Testimonies, Prayers and Action**

***Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.***

5. Share your personal testimony on how you have experienced God's love in forgiving and redeeming you in your unlovable state. Share how this has impacted you on loving others whom you find are unlovable.

OR

Give thanks to God for loving us first so we can love others.

6. With prayer partner, take time to pray for the changes/steps you have committed to make in Questions 3 and 4 above, submitting to God your fears, challenges and difficult conditions in working towards reconciliation.

As a group, pray also for the Holy Spirit to be upon you, your family, small group and our church as we embark on 'Love People Genuinely' in 2023 so we may love just as Christ loves us, and the world will know that we are His disciples by our genuine love for one another.

### Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. Holy Forever – Chris Tomlin [\(2069\) Holy Forever by Chris Tomlin \[Lyric Video\] - YouTube](#)
2. Make A Difference – City Harvest Church  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrPMxtUeONE&t=21s>
3. I Offer My Life – Don Moen <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c-rntNG0xm0>

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