

Topic	Building Gospel Centered Communities The foundation for Gospel Centered Communities
Reference	John 13:31-35
Date	6 January 2019
Speaker	Elder Arnold Lim

34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. **35** By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

The context is very simple. There are three lines to the context. The first thing Jesus said in verse 31, he is going to be glorified. He gives it a clue in the next verse, he says my children I will be with you a little longer. This means that he is going to go away. So obviously the verse is talking about the cross and the cross glorifies God, the cross glorifies Jesus. Verse 34 is about the church, because now he shifts, he is no longer going to be with them. This is how you behave. So, three points:

- We are hardwired for community
- The attitude of the community
- The power in the community

HARDWIRED FOR COMMUNITY:

The first thing that Jesus tells them

34 "A new command I give you: Love one another.

Jesus didn't say, be holy which is also very important. Jesus didn't say, you have to die for the cross, which is also very important. Jesus didn't say, serve the Lord, read your Bible, which is also very important. Jesus said to love one another. Why? Because if a church doesn't do that it is not a church. If you come to a church because the sermons are great and they are very biblical, but if they don't love one another, it is not a good church. If you come to a church and the worship is fantastic and you feel so lifted up, but they don't love one another, it is not a church. Go to a church where there are power and signs and miracles and healing, but if they don't love one another, it is not a church. That's what Jesus is saying. That's how important this is. That's your building block.

Now what is the difference with everything that I told you with loving one another? Because everything that I just mentioned which are important in the church, good Bible study, good worship, service, they all involve others. When Jesus says love one another and you are a regular person in FBC, you are all part of the solution or you are part of the problem. So, the moment, people say the church is bad, you can't blame anyone else and consequently people say that church is good based on that, you can take credit. Why is this so important?

One way is to find other places in the Gospel of John where we have a similar reading of this.

12 "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

That's pretty close, almost exactly the same thing. So, we know that the two are linked, but look at what this verse say

9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.

So why does Jesus say this, because the father loves him, and you find something similar going on in the first verse

1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.

We see in this verse that Jesus and God are very intertwined. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit love each other deeply. What is John telling us in the gospel. The nature of God is community. So, you are made in the image of God. You have God's DNA. If God is community it makes you community as well.

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness,

We are hardwired for community. We are not meant to be a solo player. So, if you come to FBC and I say this in love, year in and year out and you sit at the back and you are very happy that way, you are not acting in your natural self, not in your divine God given self. You are hardwired for community in church. It is like sitting on a chair, it has four legs, but one leg has been removed. You can still sit on the chair, it is just difficult. Now why is this so important?

You go to a Mamak store with your friends and even if the food is terrible there you will enjoy the food. If you go to a high-class Japanese restaurant alone, it is also terrible. So, the company makes the eating experience great. We are hardwired to be with people and the church has to reflect that and people, not just people who talk nonsense and football over the Mamak store, people who

love one another. Now why do people not do that? It goes back to the fall. Because God said, let us make man in our image and then he made Adam and Eve which is community and they were both naked and they felt no shame before God. So that's the ideal relationship. Community with one another, with God, with no shame. Then sin entered and the first thing that happens is the one by which relationships break down. That is people hide things. A wife hide things from her husband and vice versa. You come to church and you put on a front because if people knew who you are, you are afraid you will be rejected. We hide, that's the first thing the fall tells us. That's why a lot of people like to come to church, they come to church to hide.

It takes a risk to open up and when you open up people talk and it go around, people judge you and so people hide. Here is the other thing that sin does. So, we are now caught in a tension. On one hand, we want to have relationships, but relationships are difficult. 50% marriages end up are in divorce, 30% of people want to get married but can't get married. Those who remain in marriages, 30% are not happy. So those who are in happy marriages are in a minority. Relationships we want but once we get into it, we mess it up.

Here is the second reason which is found in the man. Man are completely not intelligent. Let me tell you the fact, they blame the wife and so the first thing happens. There was a church in which people were fighting each other. Someone went there and prophesied. He said the reason of this fight is because of the temple next door. The argument was because of the temple the church is in disarray. They say, it is the temple's fault. I told them it is not the temple's fault, it is your fault.

It is easier to blame others, but to take the blame is very difficult. At one point Jesus tells the disciples, you guys are very good at looking at things to the world and sensing the weather for your agriculture but you can't see spiritual things. There is something going on out there in this age which you need to know, your husband is not good to you, go to social media. You don't have friends, go to social media. Just plug and think and the computer will give you a partner, a friend that doesn't talk back, doesn't argue with you, accepts you for all you are. You can hide everything you want, you can blame everyone in the world, and it will love you. Look at the implication, it is happening now. The church respond is community, love one another.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE COMMUNITY:

Let me give you a wrong attitude. I try to love but they don't accept me. Helicopter parenting is something where you so love the kid you hover over the kid; hence the term helicopter parenting is grounded in very deep love for the kid. I am going to read something for you from a teenage blog

- Around age 13, I expressed to my mother that I thought I might be having clinical depression. She snapped at me and told me "not to joke about things like that." I stopped telling my mother when I was depressed.
- Around age 15, I caught my mother reading my diary. She confessed that any time she saw me write in my diary she would sneak into my room and read it, because I only wrote when I was upset. I stopped keeping a diary.
- Around age 18, I had an emotional breakdown while on vacation because I didn't want to go to college. I ended up seeing a therapist for - surprise surprise - depression.
- Around age 21, I spoke on this panel with my mother in the audience and afterwards I mentioned the diary incident to her with respect to this particular Q&A. Her eyes welled up and she said, "You know because I was worried you were depressed and going to hurt yourself, right?"

<https://fangirltothefullest.tumblr.com>

The mother loves the child, but her love is her way. Here is one another example in marriage. Men say they love their wives, but you don't love your wife in your language. She wants you to respect her and you maybe not doing that. Sometimes wives don't know how to love their husbands the way the husband feels it. Sometime a guy needs space because man don't talk a lot. So, our problem isn't loving, because of sin we are loving people our way. So, Jesus sets the record right. It is not loving others their way, he puts it very simple, you love the people the way he loved us. That's it. That's why it is a new commandment. Because the Old Testament has a lot of verses about loving others.

As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

Jesus loved his disciples

John 13: 1 It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. **Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.**

That's the key. So you now know chapter 13 verse 1 is tied to verse 13 and everything between it tells you how to love others. So how do you do it? And he gives you an image. Because we are so thick skin, we don't know how to do it. We don't like theology, he gives you an image. That's how you love another. That's your attitude.

If you read the text, the King of Kings, the word become flesh, God puts on the robes of a servant and washes the feet of his disciples. Now how is this radical, because Peter says you can't do this, you are God, how you can wash my feet. So, we know for example, it is not natural for us. We know this up here, but it is not natural to us. So, let me give you three simple ways and it has been very helpful for me. How do we love each other in church? We put so many people here, sure fight will come. We are supposed to love one another, not like one another.

How do I love you in a meaningful manner?

Three ways. The first is found in the way these two are tied. Now look at the two verses

34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

This is a parallel verse. So, what is the example. The example of the washing of feet is an example of a servant attitude. How does this workout in real time? here is another way he looks at it, entitlement. If the King of Kings, God of universe becomes a slave to wash people's feet, our entitlement has no value except it is a privilege to serve and if I don't get that I am not fit to be here, and I mean it with every inch of my being. Entitlement is very subconscious to us. If I can get rid of my entitlement as an Elder of the church, as a father, as a husband, a company owner and I don't say I deserve this, we will get on with one another. The problem with all of us is that we say I deserve respect, I deserve appreciation, I deserve you to listen to me, I deserve grace and you deserve

wrath, which is wrong. It is only by the grace of God that we are here. So, if we all remove entitlements and we come in as servants to serve, because the servant has no entitlement, we will build a church with a right attitude of love.

When Jesus washed the feet, the feet were very stinky and smelly, full of mud and washing it and he doesn't do it to one, he washed the feet of 12 disciples. It means that we must have an out of comfort zone attitude. So, in relationships when you come to church, you see people that are not in your gang, and if you don't make any effort to talk to these people, you are in a gang.

THE POWER IN THE COMMUNITY

Jesus is giving us a pattern, that means you love others as I love you. There is a model but here is another way of reading it. Because Jesus has loved me, I can now love others. It is no longer a pattern, it is power.

To love others out of your comfort zone, you need to abide in the Lord. Without this you cannot do, because you will get tired. Why? Because you are loving others by your own strength. You have to love others by the power of God. Again, because we are so stupid in chapter 13 he gave us an illustration of washing feet. Jesus gives us another illustration, the vine and the branch. Because we don't get it and he mention unless the branch is so entrapped around the vine, you do this in church you will get tired, you need power and we find that again in the verse. He says in John 13. In this verse glorification is the cross. So here is where we get it wrong. Because the question is, what is the gospel? For most Jesus died for my sins. This is half of the picture because at the end of it at chapter 17 he uses the same word, but the glory is more than that

24 "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. John 17:24

John is taking us back to verse 1, to what is the gospel. Paul tells us in Ephesians, the gospel is more than just Jesus dying for our sins. Paul says

8 Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ,

The gospel isn't just Jesus dying for your sin. The gospel is you being the branch and Jesus is the vine. Unless everyday you breathe in Jesus, you meditate on Jesus, you live on him, you so want to soak him in, he permeates every part of

your being, you and I will never be able to love one another. That's why the last verse now make sense.

35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

So last application. In a big service like this if you don't have God's love, that power in you, if you don't treat each other like a servant attitude, you don't look out to people who are outside your comfort zone, you don't do practical things, this is not church, it is a concert hall. People come as consumers.

In a small group, if you don't serve one another, you don't talk to people who have got marital problems, suffer from loneliness, you don't do practical things like bringing supper, it becomes a concert hall. This is the building block of the church. You are wired for community and you love each other this way. So here is one question, to all you regular people if new comers come to FBC will they be able to say, yes this is a church that loves one another. That's the challenge isn't it.

Let me end with an example. There was a movie called 'The Finest Hours'. In the movie at the end of it, it is a story about a ship trying to make its way back and the lighthouse is broken and there is a scene where they say that they are going to die, they are lost, the lighthouse is broken. What the community does is, the entire community take all their cars and they line up on the seashore, every car of the community and all of them put on their headlights and there is this scene of the boat in the distance and they see a seashore full of lights and they make their way to the light and they are safe. When Jesus says, you are the light of the world, he means that in community, not one of you shining but the church as a whole shines. When you shine you will lead people to God's salvation. May that be our desire for 2019.