

Skegness Community Church - Weekly Bible Study 2025
52 passages of Scripture that every believer should know

Week 24 - THE NEW COMMANDMENT

John 13: 34

“A new commandment I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”

The Bible reveals that the acid test of the Christian life is love. Love is not simply a virtue of the Christian life; it is the Christian life. It is the oxygen of the kingdom. There is no life without it. Everything - the spiritual gifts, prophecy, knowledge, wisdom - will come to an end, but love knows no end. It goes right through the portal of death and into eternity. Paul said that if we “have not love, (we are) nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:3). Last week we memorised the Great Commandment. Now, on the very evening before His crucifixion, our Lord gave us a “new commandment” that supersedes the others not only in attitude, but also in action.

A NEW RULE

“A new commandment I give you: love one another; as I have loved you”.

A casual reading of this text might tempt the reader to pass over two very important words. For one, this is a *commandment*. It is not a suggestion or a mere option. It has behind it all the authority of the Godhead. And it is a *new* commandment. Although the language of the New Testament reveals that this commandment is not new in time (God’s love has been around forever), this commandment is new in its expression. It is fresh; it is the opposite of worn out. Until now, on the very eve of the crucifixion, the best we could do was to live on the level of the old commandment. This old commandment is found in Leviticus 19:18 and referenced in the Great Commandment. That is, we are to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. This self-love is a love with limits. It is often conditional on such matters as time or conduct, situations or social standing. It can lend itself to selfishness because it speaks of self-love. It can also be changeable and fickle. But real love is expressed by a new rule. For thirty-three years Jesus gave us a picture of how real love was to be evidenced. Up until then, the best we could do was to live on the level of the old commandment of self-love. In essence, Jesus said, “For three decades now I have shown you real love. I am about to leave you, so before I go, a new commandment I am giving you. No longer are you to love one another as you love yourself, but “as I have loved you.”

A NATURAL REACTION “as I have loved you so you must love one another”

We are totally incapable of loving like this on our own. The only way this can become a natural reaction for us is to experientially know the love of Christ in our own hearts. This new commandment changes things. No longer are we to love on that self level. Now, we are to love as Jesus loved us - unconditionally. Once we receive His love, we are to release it to others in the same way He loves us. In order to love others on this level, we must know the kind of love Jesus loves us with. His love is *unlimited*. Paul said to the Romans that nothing “will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:39). To the Ephesians, he expressed it as the “width and length and depth and height” of God’s love (3:18). Not only is Christ’s love to us unlimited, but it is also *unconditional*. It is not conditional upon time or conduct or situations that may be in play. In fact, God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). His love is also *unselfish*, so much so that it took Him all the way to the cross. And of course, we should note that His love is also *unchangeable*. As the writer of the Hebrews said, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and for ever”. Yes, love *is* the Christian life. It is the oxygen of the kingdom. It is the acid test of our own discipleship. God did not write it in the sky or send a tract in order to reveal His love towards us. He sent His Son. Love did that. He demonstrated His love to us.

As you memorise this verse, meditate on the fact that the Bible reveals a picture of real love to us in everything Jesus said and did. Our challenge is now to obey the “new commandment” by loving others on this higher level of love, in the same way that Jesus loves us.