

EXEGETICAL GUIDE



John 13:31-35



**BE UNITED
IN CHRIST**

Be United in Christ

Exegetical Guide

John 13:31-35

BE UNITED IN CHRIST EXEGETICAL GUIDE

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Exegetical Guide John 13:31-35
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Be United in Christ

Exegetical Guide

John 13:31-35

Loving Like Christ

Jesus' approaching departure from His disciples made it critical that they love each other in His absence. Therefore, Jesus commands His disciples to love each other just as He had sacrificially loved them. When believers love one another they demonstrate that they truly are Jesus' disciples.

Christians must love other Christians. This was the Lord's command, and it confirms those who claim to be His disciples. Believers who experience Christ's love must extend His love to others, especially to those who are His. Jesus demands that those lovingly united to Him must be lovingly united to one another. Only by obeying Christ's new commandment will Christians Be United in Christ.

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HOW TO USE A BE UNITED IN CHRIST EXEGETICAL GUIDE

An exegetical guide models how to study a passage of Scripture. The Introduction provides the context, while **Connection to Be United in Christ** highlights the text's importance for Christian unity. The Passage presents the Biblical text being studied.

We begin by **Studying the Passage** because God's messengers must convey God's words accurately. The Passage Comparison presents the text in its original Greek or Hebrew alongside seven English translations. Comparing translations allows for a better understanding of the passage and provides insight into the intent of the original Biblical manuscripts. The Structural Layout divides the passage into its component parts, because to understand what God said we must understand how He said it. It is an essential step in Bible study, but do not be discouraged if this section seems unfamiliar or daunting. The Narrative Flow explains the Biblical author's flow of thought through the passage. The Passage Overview then presents a simple outline that will form the foundation of subsequent outlines and the sermon manuscript itself. The Passage Focus distills the text into a statement that will be the main idea of the sermon. We then identify several Resources to further your study.

Having studied the passage, we are ready to begin **Preparing the Sermon**. Good preaching feeds God's people on God's Word, so our messages must be both healthful and appetizing. This is why this section begins by laying out several Sermon Ingredients that will be used to prepare a nutritious and appealing message. We must present God's Word accurately and clearly so that God's people will understand it with their minds, embrace it in their hearts, and apply it to their lives. The Passage Outline presents the passage's structure and flow while the Passage Details provide the grammatical, historical, and theological information needed to understand and teach the passage. The message is then fortified with Applications and seasoned with Illustrations. These ingredients are combined to prepare a spiritual meal to feed God's children. The Sermon Outline rephrases the Passage Outline to make it more understandable to an audience. The Sermon Manuscript for Your Use then offers an example of how the passage might be preached. Then we identify several Sermon Examples that model good preaching on the text.

Thus, an exegetical guide presents both a comprehensive analysis of one particular Bible passage and a model for studying and preaching Scripture. We pray that God will use this guide to promote love for Him, fidelity to His Word, and unity in His church.

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INTRODUCTION

John held a unique place among the Apostles. In addition to being one of the twelve disciples, Jesus selected him for His inner circle of three, along with Peter and James. It was John who leaned on Jesus' breast at the Last Supper (John 13:23), and it was John to whom Jesus entrusted the care of His mother (John 19:26-27). John was also privileged to see the glorified Christ in Heaven through prophetic visions, which he described in the Book of Revelation.

The Gospel of John has an introduction (1:1-18), two main sections (1:19–12:50; 13:1–20:31), and a conclusion (21:1-25). The gospel presents Jesus as the Word made flesh, who came to reveal God's glory and allow sinners to become children of God (1:1-18). John's first section, the "Book of Signs," reports seven miracles, which signify the Messiah's divine mission from His turning water into wine (2:1-11) to His raising of Lazarus and its aftermath (11:1–12:50). The second half of John's gospel, the "Book of Glory," begins with the Last Supper and ends with Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection (13:1–20:31). John concludes with Jesus' restoration of Peter and an allusion to Christ's many unrecorded miracles (21:1-25).

The text of this exegetical guide (John 13:31-35) is situated at the Last Supper. After washing His disciples' feet (13:1-20) and waiting for Judas to depart (13:21-30), Jesus gave a lengthy farewell address (13:31–16:33) to prepare His disciples for His departure. Jesus began speaking to them in the upper room (13:31–14:31) and then continued talking on route to the Garden of Gethsemane (15:1–16:33; note 14:31b and 18:1) where He prayed the High Priestly Prayer (17:1-26). Jesus opened His final message with words of glory, of a separation and a seeking, and of a new commandment.

Connection to Be United in Christ

Jesus' command to love one another was meant for all His disciples. The obligation is enduring and comprehensive. Every disciple of Christ must love every other disciple of Christ, for love is an essential element of being a believer. Professing Christians who refuse to love other Christians invalidate their profession by their lack of love. Believers who love other believers authenticate their faith with their love. The love of Christians for one another demonstrates their discipleship and attracts non-believers to the Savior. Christ's example of love and His command to love should inspire all Christians to Be United in Christ.

PASSAGE: JOHN 13:31-35

³¹ Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; ³² if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately. ³³ Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' ³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

STUDYING THE PASSAGE

John 13:31-35

Loving Like Christ

PASSAGE COMPARISON

John 13:31-35

The Passage Comparison presents the text in its original Greek alongside seven English translations. Comparing translations allows for a better understanding of the passage and provides insight into the intent of the original Biblical manuscripts.

GREEK	NASB	ESV	KJV
³¹ Ὅτε οὖν ἐξῆλθεν, λέγει Ἰησοῦς· νῦν ἐδοξάσθη ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐδοξάσθη ἐν αὐτῷ·	³¹ Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him;	³¹ When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.	³¹ Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.
³² [εἰ ὁ θεὸς ἐδοξάσθη ἐν αὐτῷ], καὶ ὁ θεὸς δοξάσει αὐτὸν ἐν αὐτῷ, καὶ εὐθὺς δοξάσει αὐτόν.	³² if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately.	³² If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once.	³² If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.
³³ τεκνία, ἔτι μικρὸν μεθ’ ὑμῶν εἰμι· ζητήσετέ με, καὶ καθὼς εἶπον τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις ὅτι ὅπου ἐγὼ ὑπάγω ὑμεῖς οὐ δύνασθε ἔλθειν, καὶ ὑμῖν λέγω ἄρτι.	³³ Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’	³³ Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going you cannot come.’	³³ Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.
³⁴ Ἐντολὴν καινὴν δίδωμι ὑμῖν, ἵνα ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους, καθὼς ἠγάπησα ὑμᾶς ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους.	³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.	³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.	³⁴ A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.
³⁵ ἐν τούτῳ γνώσονται πάντες ὅτι ἐμοὶ μαθηταὶ ἐστε, ἐὰν ἀγάπην ἔχητε ἐν ἀλλήλοις.	³⁵ By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”	³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”	³⁵ By this shall all <i>men</i> know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

NKJV	NRSV	NIV	NLT
<p>³¹ So, when he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him.</p>	<p>³¹ When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him.</p>	<p>³¹ When he was gone, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him.</p>	<p>³¹ As soon as Judas left the room, Jesus said, “The time has come for the Son of Man to enter into his glory, and God will be glorified because of him.</p>
<p>³² If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately.</p>	<p>³² If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once.</p>	<p>³² If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.</p>	<p>³² And since God receives glory because of the Son, he will give his own glory to the Son, and he will do so at once.</p>
<p>³³ Little children, I shall be with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come,’ so now I say to you.</p>	<p>³³ Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’</p>	<p>³³ “My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.</p>	<p>³³ Dear children, I will be with you only a little longer. And as I told the Jewish leaders, you will search for me, but you can’t come where I am going.</p>
<p>³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.</p>	<p>³⁴ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.</p>	<p>³⁴ “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.</p>	<p>³⁴ So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.</p>
<p>³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”</p>	<p>³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”</p>	<p>³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”</p>	<p>³⁵ Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”</p>

STRUCTURAL LAYOUT

The Structural Layout shows how the passage fits together. The left column contains the Biblical text divided into its structural elements. Main clauses are aligned left, related elements are highlighted in color, and words added for clarification are placed in brackets. The right column explains how the various elements function in context.

<p>31 Therefore when he had gone out,</p> <p>Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him;</p>	<p>Judas’ departure to betray Jesus (13:30) prompted Jesus to begin His farewell address to His true disciples (13:31–16:33).</p> <p>Jesus’ coming crucifixion will glorify both Jesus ... and the Father, who is glorified in the Son.</p>
<p>32 if God is glorified in Him,</p> <p>[then] God will also glorify Him in Himself, and</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">will glorify Him immediately?</p>	<p>The first part of this conditional clause states the cause: because the Father.</p> <p>The second part of this conditional clause states the effect: God the Father glorifies the Son because, in doing so, He Himself is glorified.</p> <p>This phrase states the timing of God’s glorification of the Son: immediately at Jesus’ death.</p>
<p>33 “Little children, I am with you a little while longer. ...</p> <p>You will seek Me;</p> <p>and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you,</p> <p>‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’</p>	<p>Jesus indicates that His time on Earth with His disciples is coming to an end.</p> <p>This clause indicates what the disciples will do after Jesus’ departure.</p> <p>Jesus here refers to His words in John 7:34 and 8:21.</p> <p>Jesus restates His words from John 7:34 and 8:21 to tell the disciples that they will not be able to accompany Him where He is going.</p>
<p>34 “A new commandment I give to you,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">that you love one another,</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">even as I have loved you,</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">that you also love one another.</p>	<p>In light of His departure, Jesus gives a new commandment to the disciples.</p> <p>The new commandment that Jesus gives them is to love one another.</p> <p>This comparison clause sets forth Jesus’ love for the disciples as the model and standard for the disciples’ love for one another.</p> <p>This clause restates the commandment that Jesus is giving to and has modeled for His disciples.</p>
<p>35 By this all men will know</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">that you are My disciples,</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">if you have love for one another.”</p>	<p>This phrase states the outcome of the disciples’ obedience to Jesus’ new commandment.</p> <p>This clause states the content of the knowledge just mentioned.</p> <p>This conditional clause describes how men will know that Christians are truly Christ’s disciples.</p>

NARRATIVE FLOW

After Judas departs to betray Jesus (13:30), Jesus gives a declaration, an announcement, and a commandment. First, Jesus declares to His disciples that He will now be glorified and that this will glorify God (13:31). Because God is glorified in the Son, God will glorify the Son immediately through Christ's atoning death (13:32). Second, Jesus announces that after His departure His disciples will seek Him but cannot come with Him (13:33). Third, He gives them a new commandment—to love one another as He loved them (13:34), which will confirm to the world that they are His disciples (13:35).

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

John 13:31-35 contains three main parts:

- I. THE SON DECLARES HIS GLORIFICATION WITH GOD (13:31-32)**
- II. THE SON ANNOUNCES HIS DEPARTURE (13:33)**
- III. THE SON GIVES A NEW COMMANDMENT (13:34-35)**

PASSAGE FOCUS

Knowing that His glorifying death is approaching, Jesus tells His disciples not to search for Him but rather to love one another as He had loved them, which will confirm to the world that they are His disciples.

RESOURCES

Basic Resources

Bruce, F. F. *The Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983.

Burge, Gary M. *John*. New International Version Application Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000.

Kruse, Colin G. *John: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Downers Grove, IN: InterVarsity Academic, 2008.

Intermediate Resources

Carson, D. A. *The Gospel According to John*. Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991.

Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to John*. Rev. ed. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995.

Whitacre, Rodney. *John*. IVP New Testament Commentary. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Academic, 2010.

Advanced Resources

Keener, Craig. *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*. 2 vols. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003.

Köstenberger, Andreas. *John*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004.

Michaels, J. Ramsey. *The Gospel of John*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: MI: Eerdmans, 2010.

PREPARING THE SERMON

John 13:31-35

Loving Like Christ

SERMON INGREDIENTS

John 13:31-35

PASSAGE OUTLINE

I. THE SON DECLARES HIS GLORIFICATION WITH GOD (13:31-32)

II. THE SON ANNOUNCES HIS DEPARTURE (13:33)

III. THE SON GIVES A NEW COMMANDMENT (13:34-35)

PASSAGE DETAILS

John 13:31

Therefore when he had gone out

“Therefore” indicates that Jesus waited for Judas’ departure before beginning His farewell address to His true disciples. Verse 31 marks the transition to what is commonly called the Upper Room Discourse (John 13:31–16:33).

“When he had gone out” refers to Judas’ departure to betray Jesus (John 13:30). Now that Jesus is alone with His true disciples, He prepares them for His coming separation from them.¹

Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him

“Now” indicates Jesus’ approaching death on the cross. Earlier in His ministry, Jesus had insisted that His hour had not yet come (John 2:4; 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20). Now, however, the time has come for Jesus to fulfill His mission (John 12:23, 27; 13:1; 16:5; 17:1, 5).

“The Son of Man” was Jesus’ most common way of referring to Himself in the Gospels. The title refers to both Jesus’ humanity and His divine authority (Daniel 7:13-14) and occurs 13 times in John 1–13. It is often used in connection with Jesus’ being lifted up on the cross (John 3:14; 8:28; 12:34), which is unexpectedly glorifying (John 12:23; 13:31).

“Glorified” refers to Christ’s death on the cross (see also 7:39; 12:16, 23; 21:19), which puts God’s holiness and love on fullest display. Variations of the word “glory” occur five times in 13:31-32 and a total of 41 times in the Gospel of John, both in reference to God (5:44; 7:18; 9:24; 11:4, 40; 12:43) and to Christ (1:14; 2:11; 12:41; 17:5, 10, 24).

¹ “The departure of the traitor was a significant happening, for it meant that the little company was now purged [cleansed] of its evil element. It meant also that the betrayal was under way, and therefore that the great saving act to be consummated [completed] at Calvary was fairly launched. In these changed circumstances Jesus immediately begins His teaching” (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, rev. ed., New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995], 560).

John 13:32

if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately

The glory of the Father and of the Son is intimately connected. Jesus sought to glorify His Father (John 7:18; 8:50; 12:28; 15:8; 17:4; 21:19), and the Father glorified the Son (John 8:54; 16:14). When the Son is exalted the Father is exalted, so both seek to glorify the other (John 13:31-32; 14:13; 17:1, 4-5). Jesus' death on the cross gives glory to both the Father and the Son.

“Immediately” suggests that the Son's death is rapidly approaching.

There is some question as to whether the clause “if God is glorified in Him” is in the original manuscripts. (This is indicated by brackets in the Greek text.) However, all seven English translations in the Passage Comparison table of this exegetical guide do include the clause.

John 13:33

Little children, I am with you a little while longer

This is the only recorded instance of Jesus addressing His disciples as “little children.” John himself uses the term five times in his letters (1 John 2:12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4), and Paul uses the term once (Galatians 4:19). Jesus speaks tenderly to His disciples as He announces His departure from them.

“A little while longer” implies that Jesus' departure is coming soon. “I will be with you only a little longer” might refer either to Jesus' death or to His ascension. Both departures are addressed in the chapters that follow.”²

You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come’

Jesus refers to His words previously spoken to the chief priests and the Pharisees in the temple (John 7:32-36) and also to the Jews in the treasury (John 8:21). Although His disciples would seek Jesus with better motives than those groups, they could not yet follow where He was going. One day, however, Jesus will return to take all His disciples to the place He has prepared for them in Heaven (John 14:1-3).

² D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 483.

A new commandment I give to you

Jesus has the authority to issue commands that demand compliance (see also Matthew 28:20; Luke 6:46; 1 Corinthians 14:37).³ Obedience to Jesus expresses a believer's love for Him (John 14:15, 21) and demonstrates that he does in fact belong to Him (1 John 2:3; 3:22, 24; 5:3).⁴

The command to love was not itself new. Moses had given the Lord's commands to love God and neighbor (Deuteronomy 6:5-6; Leviticus 19:18), and Jesus had reiterated these commands (Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-34). Jesus' commandment here is new in three respects:

1. It commanded the mutual love of Jesus' disciples for one another. Jesus had already taught His disciples to love their neighbors (Luke 10:25-37) and their enemies (Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27, 35). Now He specifically tells His disciples to love one another. The love of the community of Christ must not only extend upward and outward but also inward (John 15:12; 2 John 5; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; Hebrews 13:1; 1 Peter 1:22).
2. It presented a new standard and model of love—the selfless, servant-hearted, sacrificial love that Christ Himself showed to His disciples (John 15:12; Ephesians 5:2, 25).
3. It was part of the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:29-34; Ezekiel 36:24-26; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25) and thus offered a new empowerment flowing from a transformed heart, the indwelling Spirit.⁵

that you love one another

“Love” is in the present tense, suggesting an ongoing, active love.

Jesus repeats this commandment twice more in this same farewell address (John 15:12, 17). It was a command that the Apostle John took to heart, for he repeats it six times in his letters (1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 10, 12; 2 John 5).

“One another” indicates that Jesus has in mind not a general love toward all people but the specific love believers should show each other. The mutual love of Christians is central to what it means to be a Christian (Romans 13:8; Colossians 3:14; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22).

even as I have loved you, that you also love one another

“Even as” indicates a comparison. Jesus makes His own love for His disciples the model and standard of their love for one another. The standard of Leviticus 19:18 was to “love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus' new standard is for His disciples to love “as I have loved you.”

³ Many Christian traditions observe “Maundy Thursday” as part of their Easter celebrations. The name “Maundy” comes from the Latin *mandatum*, which means “commandment” (hence the English word “mandate”). The mandate referred to is the “new commandment” given by Jesus in John 13:34, and the day is often celebrated with a foot washing ceremony.

⁴ For a clear and powerful presentation of Jesus' commands see John Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006).

⁵ “Its ‘newness’ would appear to consist in its being the Law of the new order, brought about by the redemption of God in and through Christ, intimated [suggested] in vv. 31-32.... So the ‘new command’ may be viewed as the obligation of the people of the new covenant in response to the redemptive act of God and His gracious election which made them His new people” (George Beasley-Murray, *John*, 2nd ed., Word Biblical Commentary [Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1999], 247).

By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another

“This” refers to the new commandment, which is for Christ’s disciples to love one another.

A “disciple” is a pupil or apprentice. In Israel, a student would follow a rabbi from whom he would receive instruction and observe it lived out in his teacher’s life. The goal of a disciple is to become like his teacher. Jesus’ call to follow Him was and is a call to discipleship. A Christian disciple is a follower of Christ, one who follows Jesus’ teachings, commands, and model. Jesus declares that selfless, sacrificial love for believers should be the identifying quality of His disciples. The world should recognize Christians by their love.

Jesus’ love for His disciples and their resulting love for one another is a witness to “all men.” The loving unity of Christ’s disciples is essential to making new disciples (John 17:23; 1 John 4:12). When believers love one another they have an attractive testimony for Christ (John 17:24), but unloving “Christian” communities can just as easily turn people away from Him.

ILLUSTRATIONS

- In Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables*, Jean Valjean is undone by the humble bishop’s love and spends the rest of his life sharing the love he himself has received.
- D. A. Carson comments, “Orthodoxy [right belief] without principal obedience to this characteristic command of the new covenant is merely so much humbug [nonsense].”⁶
- “In the midst of the world, in the midst of our present dying culture, Jesus is giving a right to the world. Upon His authority, He gives the world the right to judge whether you and I are born-again Christians on the basis of our observable love toward all Christians. In other words, if people come up to us and cast in our teeth the judgment that we are not Christians because we have not shown love toward other Christians, we must understand that they are only exercising a prerogative [privilege], which Jesus gave them. And we must not get angry. If people say, ‘You don’t love other Christians,’ we must go home, get down on our knees, and ask God whether or not what they say is true. And if it is, then they have a right to have said what they said.”⁷
- Jesus’ words were spoken directly after He washed the disciples’ feet. This act vividly demonstrated the sort of love Jesus had for His disciples.
- “In his commentary on Galatians 6:10, Jerome tells a famous story of ‘blessed John the evangelist’ in extreme old age at Ephesus. He used to be carried into the congregation in the arms of his disciples and was unable to say anything except ‘Little children, love one another.’ At last, wearied that he always spoke the same words, they asked: ‘Master, why do you always say this?’ ‘Because’, he replied, ‘it is the Lord’s command, and if this only is done, it is enough.’”⁸
- The North African writer, Tertullian, argued for the truthfulness of Christianity based upon the mutual love of Christians, which even the pagan world acknowledged: “See how they love one another! How they are ready even to die for one another!” (*Apology* 39.7).

⁶ Carson, 485.

⁷ Francis Schaeffer, *The Mark of a Christian*, vol. 4, bk. 3, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer, A Christian World View* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1982) 187.

⁸ John R. W. Stott, *The Letters of John: An Introduction and Commentary*, 2nd ed., Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 52.

APPLICATIONS

- The world notices when Christians are in conflict. It hears the church preaching love, peace, and unity but sees her practicing hate, discord, and division. Then non-believers do what believers do—they believe what they see rather than what they hear.
- Christians must confess that they have not loved other Christians as Christ has loved them. They must repent of the fact that they do not love other believers unconditionally, consistently, selflessly, and sacrificially as Christ loves them.
- Believers should worship with other believers regularly. They must be committed to living life together with a local church.
- Christians should love each other in small, tangible ways. They should greet and smile at one another, pray for each other, and perform small acts of service whenever there is an opportunity.
- Christ’s disciples must love without expecting anything in return. When believers love without acknowledgment or appreciation, only then are they beginning to love as Christ loves them.
- Believers can grow in love by meditating on how Christ loves. This is why Christians proudly display the cross on their steeples, their walls, and their bodies.

SERMON OUTLINE

Loving Like Christ (John 13:31-35)

INTRODUCTION (Image, Relevance, Overview, Connection)

I. THE SON DECLARES HIS GLORIFICATION WITH GOD (13:31-32)

II. THE SON ANNOUNCES HIS DEPARTURE (13:33)

III. THE SON GIVES A NEW COMMANDMENT (13:34-35)

CONCLUSION (Illustration, Prayer)

SERMON MANUSCRIPT FOR YOUR USE

Loving Like Christ (John 13:31-35)

INTRODUCTION

Image: Jean Valjean is a familiar name, even to those who have not seen *Les Misérables*. Victor Hugo's hero spent nineteen years in prison for stealing a loaf of bread to feed his sister's family. Then, when he was finally paroled, his prison papers labeled him as a felon wherever he went. Embittered by harsh treatment, he was at last shown kindness by a good bishop who gave him food and lodging for the night. Valjean repaid this hospitality by stealing some silver plates from the pantry but was captured the next day and brought before the bishop to be condemned for his crime and returned to prison.

However, instead of accusing Valjean, the bishop vouched for the ungrateful thief and then gave him a pair of silver candlesticks besides. Instead of justice, Valjean received mercy. Instead of condemnation, he received compassion. Instead of hate, he received love—selfless, sacrificial, undeserved, and unreserved love. And Jean Valjean was undone. Years of harshness and hate could not break him, but he was shattered by the humble bishop's kindness. As Valjean reflects on the way he was treated by this good man he sings:

*“Yet why did I allow that man
To touch my soul and teach me love?
He treated me like any other,
He gave me his trust,
He called me brother.
My life he claims for God above—
Can such things be?
For I had come to hate the world,
This world that always hated me.”*⁹

In the face of love and the wake of grace, a hateful man was transformed. Having been served so selflessly and sacrificially, having been loved so graciously and unconditionally, Valjean devotes the rest of his life to loving as he had been loved, to serving as he had been served. It is a moving story of the redeeming, transforming, and compelling power of love.

Relevance: This timeless tale communicates the timeless lesson that those who have been loved much should love much. And Christ intends this to be our story and our lesson as well, as Jesus makes clear in John chapter 13. So I invite you to open your Bibles to the Gospel of John, chapter 13, where we focus on verses 31-35.

Overview: The Gospel of John was written by the Apostle John, a fisherman from Capernaum who left his family business to follow Jesus. And he was not just any follower. John was selected as one of the twelve Apostles, and then he became part of Jesus' inner circle of disciples, along with Peter and James. And of these three it was John who was called “the disciple whom Jesus loved” and who was entrusted by Jesus to care for his mother, Mary (John 19:26-27). John is also the author of five books of our New Testament: 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Revelation, and the Gospel According to John. So when we open this text we are hearing the eyewitness account of someone who knew Jesus intimately and who was well acquainted with our Lord's life, love, teachings, and commandments.

⁹ Claude-Michel Schönberg, Alain Boublil, Jean-Marc Natel, Herbert Kretzmer, and Victor Hugo, *Boublil and Schönberg's Legendary Musical: Les Misérables: the Musical that Swept the World: in Concert* (London: Alain Boublil Music, 2003).

Our text today is set in Jerusalem in the upper room where Jesus celebrated His final Passover meal with His disciples. The first thirty verses of John 13 record Jesus washing His disciples' feet and then Judas' departure to betray the one who had just served him and placed a morsel in his mouth. This brings us to John 13:31-35. We will first read the text, then examine it, and then apply it to our lives.

Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately. Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Connection: Jesus conveys three main ideas in these five verses: glory (vv. 31-32), absence (v. 33), and love (vv. 34-35). These three ideas are closely connected. Jesus' glorification on the cross will result in His absence from His disciples, and their response to these two realities should be to love one another as Christ loved them. The glorious love Christ shows Christians compels them to love one another with the love of Christ in the absence of Christ until the return of Christ. Let us begin by looking at the glory of the Father and the Son in verses 31-32.

I. THE SON DECLARES HIS GLORIFICATION WITH GOD (13:31-32)

The opening phrase in verse 31, "**When he had gone out,**" refers to Judas' departure from the upper room to betray Jesus. With his exit, the final act of Jesus' earthly ministry is about to begin. The stage is set. The actors are taking their places. But before the action starts, Jesus gives a farewell address to His true disciples to prepare them for His approaching death (John 13:31–16:33).

Jesus first discusses how they should view the tragic events that Judas' treachery sets in motion. Jesus' betrayal, arrest, abuse, and crucifixion do not surprise or overtake Him, but rather He has been anticipating them. The reason for Christmas is Good Friday and Easter. Jesus came to us in order to die and rise for us. Christ's cradle lay in the shadow of His cross. His death was not defeat but victory. His humiliation at the hands of men led to His ascension to the right hand of God. Jesus was driven to His knees so that at the name of Christ every knee would one day bow. The Son of God's execution led to His exaltation, and to the exaltation of the Father who sent Him. Glory, not shame, is the triumphant consequence of the cross. Five times in a single sentence Jesus uses the same word to interpret His crucifixion: glorified, glorified, glorified, glorify, glorify. But how can crucifixion glorify the Son of Man and the Father who sent Him? How can treachery and torture produce glory and honor? The answer lies in what Christ's death accomplished and what it revealed.

Christ's death accomplished our eternal life. He bore the wrath of God so that we would not have to and paid the penalty for sins that we committed. The righteousness earned by His perfect life and atoning death has been applied to our account so that God can rightfully declare us just in Him, and "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). He made it possible for God to forgive us our sins without compromising His holy character. Christ, the firstborn, accomplished the adoption of countless other sons and daughters into the family of God. He redeemed us from sin and Satan and, through His death, defeated death and opened the doors to Paradise. Christ was afflicted that we might be healed. He was stripped that we might be clothed. He was cursed that we might be blessed. He was forsaken that we might be reconciled. Christ's death accomplished our salvation, and this makes His crucifixion glorious. This is why we proudly display the cross on our steeples, prominently hang it on our walls, and publicly wear it on our bodies.

This is why we determine like Paul to know nothing in our gospel preaching “except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). And this is why we sing with Isaac Watts in his well-known hymn “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”: “Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast, Save in the death of Christ my God! All the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to His blood.” So the cross of Christ is glorious, first of all, for what God accomplishes through it.

The cross is also glorious for what it reveals about God. The cross displays the glorious holiness of God who cannot allow sinners into His presence unless the penalty for their sins is paid. The cross highlights the glorious justice of God, whose righteous wrath fell fully on Christ at Calvary. The cross magnifies the glorious grace of God who sent His sinless Son to shed His precious blood for the sake of ungrateful sinners. The cross honors the glorious humility and obedience of Christ in submitting to His Father’s will to make so great a sacrifice for so unworthy a world. Most of all, the cross exalts the glorious love of God who “demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). And Christ so loved the world that He willingly came, humbling Himself and “becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8). The Son so loved His Father that he was crucified on Calvary’s tree to save wretches like you and me. Thus, Christ’s gruesome death demonstrates God’s glorious character, and this is why Jesus says, **“Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately.”**

But to glorify His father and Himself meant that Jesus’ time on earth with His disciples was at an end, which leads Him to announce His departure in verse 33.

II. THE SON ANNOUNCES HIS DEPARTURE (13:33)

“Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’” Note how gently Christ addresses His disciples as He introduces this painful subject. This is the only place in the Gospels where Jesus uses the tender term “little children,” although John would later use it six times in his letters. “A little while longer” may refer to Jesus’ death, His ascension, or both, but in any case, it indicates that Jesus will soon be separated from His disciples. Their sweet season with the Savior was coming to an end.

When a loved one leaves, it is natural to go and look for him. Yet Jesus cautions His followers not to search after Him, for it will be fruitless. He repeats to them what He had already twice told the Jewish leaders, “Where I am going, you cannot come” (John 7:34; 8:21). Unlike those occasions, however, Jesus goes on to say in John 14:1-3 that He is returning to claim His own: “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.” Rather than seeking Him, Jesus has a different way that He wants His disciples to demonstrate their loyalty and love in the light of His coming glory and absence. Look at verses 34-35.

III. THE SON GIVES A NEW COMMANDMENT (13:34-35)

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” In these famous verses we find first a command (v. 34) and then a consequence (v. 35).

The command is for Christ’s disciples to love one another. Jesus knows that although His death will glorify God, it will also grieve and trouble His disciples to be separated from their Master. No longer will they have Jesus physically present with them to watch His example, listen to His teaching, seek His wisdom, and draw upon His strength. Moreover, in the days ahead there would be great opposition, persecution, and confusing circumstances. In such situations it is easy to bicker, to separate, and to isolate. Stress, grief, and uncertainty do not typically bring out the best in people, and the disciples had repeatedly shown their tendency to argue and compete.

Knowing this, Jesus issues the comforting command that His disciples are to love one another. In Christ’s absence, while we await His return, He tells Christians to prioritize loving one another. It is like a father leaving on a long trip who tells his children to watch over things in his absence. While he is away it is all the more important that they help one another, support one another, and love one another. And so it is with Christ’s disciples, His “little children.”

And note that this is a command, not a recommendation or request. Jesus is Lord and has full authority to issue orders and make demands. He is the Creator, and we are His creation. He is the Redeemer, and we are His redeemed. He is the Master, and we are His servants. Christians belong to Christ by right of creation, redemption, and sovereign rule, and therefore we must obey what He commands. In fact, our obedience to Christ’s commands proves that we do in fact know Him and love Him. Listen to just a few of the many Scriptures that could be quoted to support this:

“Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46)

“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” (John 14:15)

“He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me.” (John 14:21a)

“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word.” (John 14:23a)

“You are My friends if you do what I command you.” (John 15:14)

“By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.” (1 John 2:3)

Jesus warns in Matthew 7:21, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in Heaven will enter.” And it is the will of the Father that we obey His Son, for all authority has been given to Him in Heaven and on Earth (Matthew 28:18). And it is the will of the Son that His disciples love one another. Failure to love other Christians is failure to obey Christ. However challenging it is for Christians to love one another, it is an absolute obligation laid on us by our Lord who made us, died for us, reigns over us, and will judge us someday.

It may seem odd that Jesus calls this commandment “new” since the command to love was not new. God commanded Israel through Moses to love their neighbor (Leviticus 19:18), and Jesus Himself quoted this passage when asked about the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-34). But upon further inspection and reflection, there are at least three ways in which this command is new. It involves a new audience, a new context, and a new standard.

First, the new commandment involves a new audience. Moses said we must love our neighbors. Jesus added that we must love our enemies (Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27, 35). Now Christ specifies that His disciples must love each other. The special obligation Christ gives Christians to love one another is repeated throughout the New Testament:

“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love.” (Romans 12:10a)

“So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.” (Galatians 6:10)

“Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.” (1 Thessalonians 4:9)

“Let love of the brethren continue.” (Hebrews 13:1)

“Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart.” (1 Peter 1:22)

In fact, Christ Himself repeats the same command twice more in John 15:

“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.” (John 15:12)

“This I command you, that you love one another.” (John 15:17)

There is no avoiding the inescapable fact that Christ commands Christians to love one another. Whenever believers slander, harm, neglect, and shun each other, they are directly disobeying Jesus.

Second, Jesus’ new commandment has a new context. Jesus gives this new command in the context of establishing a new covenant. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus satisfied the Mosaic Covenant and established the New Covenant in fulfillment of God’s promises (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; Ezekiel 36:24-26; Jeremiah 31:29-34). When God established His covenant with the Israelites, He gave them commandments that should characterize them as His covenant people. When Jesus established God’s New Covenant, He gave a single command that should characterize His covenant people—mutual love within the family of God. A key difference between the two covenants is the indwelling presence of God the Holy Spirit who enables believers to obey this new commandment. Thus, Christians have been given divine help to keep our covenant commitment to love. We cannot say that we cannot love, for God who is love has taken up residence in our hearts, and nothing is impossible for God.

Third, Jesus’ new commandment has a new standard. Whereas God’s people are commanded to love their neighbors as themselves and to do unto others as they would have done to them (Luke 6:31), Christ here commands Christians to love each other even as He has loved them. This statement had special significance for the disciples, for their feet were still damp from Christ’s washing. Their Lord and Master had humbled Himself to personally perform this menial task. They had seen Him love them all the days of their time together—so patient, kind, considerate, forgiving, servant-hearted. Their years of discipleship may be summed up as a divine tutorial on love. And they had not yet seen the full extent of Jesus’ love for them. They would soon see this perfect man hang upon a tree—for them and for us. These selfish sinners would watch the spotless Lamb of God sacrifice Himself on the altar of a cross—for them and for us. The Spirit would further reveal to them in the New Testament writings how He had come from Heaven to become a man to live and to die to save sinners—to save them and to save us.

When Christ commands His disciples to love other disciples even as Christ has loved them, He is telling us to love selflessly, sacrificially, unconditionally, perseveringly, generously, and graciously. When we love others without acknowledgment, appreciation, or expecting anything in return, only then do we begin to love as Christ loves us, for Christ loves us even though we are unaware, unappreciative, and unresponsive. When we love the unlovely who dishonor and hurt us in return, only then do we begin to love as Christ loved us, for we are unlovely and dishonor and grieve Him. When love requires us to forgive repeatedly, we are beginning to love like Christ, who forgives us repeatedly. In short, there is no love too difficult or one-sided if we are to love other believers as Christ loves us. This is the new command that Jesus gives us.

And this is hard to do. This is not our natural tendency. This is not the way the world loves. Yet this is how we are loved, and by God's grace this is how we can love. When we do, we put our discipleship on display for the watching world to see. This consequence of the command is stated in verse 35: **“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”**

When Christians love each other the way Christ loves them, this supernatural love makes the world take notice. No man ever loved like Christ. When we display Christ-like love, we confirm that we do in fact know Christ, have been loved by Christ, have been changed by Christ, and are following in the footsteps of Christ. In short, we prove that we are disciples of Christ. Christ-like love reveals the presence of Christ in us. Christ-like communities attract non-Christians to Christ, for even if people do not think they want Christ, everyone wants to be accepted and loved unconditionally, selflessly, and sacrificially.

It was this supernatural display of the Savior's love that helped the church grow in the early centuries after Christ. Here is how Luke describes the early church in Acts 2:

And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:44-47)

These early Christians lived their lives together, sharing their properties and possessions to help those in need. They enjoyed fellowship, prayed and praised together. And what was the result? They were “having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.” The public witness of the church's love moved many to join them, because everyone wants to be loved with a Christ-like love.

In the early centuries of the church, Christians served one another, provided for the poor in their midst, and encouraged those who were imprisoned for their faith. Churches cared for widows and orphans, and if someone was absent on Sunday, leaders from the church would take a portion of the Lord's Supper to him and check on him. When diseases broke out in the cities, the pagans would remove infected family members lest they contract the illness. Christians, however, continued to care for the afflicted, even at great risk to themselves.

A second century writer named Justin Martyr described the Christian community in this way:

We who used to value the acquisition of wealth and possessions more than anything else now bring what we have into a common fund and share it with anyone who needs it. We used to hate and destroy one another and refused to associate with people of another race or country. Now, because of Christ, we live together with such people and pray for our enemies.

The North African writer Tertullian wrote that the Romans observed the Christian community and expressed in astonishment, “See how they love one another! How they are ready even to die for one another!” (*Apology* 39.7). And as the world witnessed Christian love, many of them committed themselves to Christ and joined the loving community of Christ, the church.

A respected sociologist named Rodney Stark wrote a book called *The Rise of Christianity* in which he investigated how the early church grew so rapidly, especially in hostile contexts. A significant reason why they grew was the way that Christian love stood out so invitingly in an exceedingly harsh environment. Here is his summation:

To cities filled with the homeless and impoverished, Christianity offered charity as well as hope. To cities filled with newcomers and strangers, Christianity offered an immediate basis for attachments. To cities filled with orphans and widows, Christianity provided a new and expanded sense of family. To cities torn by violent ethnic strife, Christianity offered a new basis for social solidarity. And to cities faced with epidemics, fires, and earthquakes, Christianity offered effective nursing services.¹⁰

Acts 1 tells us there were 120 faithful followers of Christ praying together before Pentecost. By the middle of the fourth century, approximately half of the population of the Roman Empire identified itself as Christian.

Contrast this with today where conflicts and divisions between professing believers discredit our witness. The world hears us preaching love, peace, and unity but sees us practicing hate, discord, and division. Then they do what we do—they believe what they see rather than what they hear. And this is how it should be. This is how God arranged it. As Francis Schaeffer explains:

In the midst of the world, in the midst of our present dying culture, Jesus is giving a right to the world. Upon His authority He gives the world the right to judge whether you and I are born-again Christians on the basis of our observable love toward all Christians. In other words, if people come up to us and cast in our teeth the judgment that we are not Christians because we have not shown love toward other Christians, we must understand that they are only exercising a prerogative [privilege], which Jesus gave them. And we must not get angry. If people say, ‘You don’t love other Christians,’ we must go home, get down on our knees and ask God whether or not what they say is true. And if it is, then they have a right to have said what they said.”¹¹

In John 17, Jesus prays to His Father for His disciples to be one “so that the world may believe that You sent Me” (vv. 21, 23). Here in John 13, Jesus commands His followers to love one another so that the world will know that they are indeed His disciples. Love among believers is the way the world knows who truly belongs to Christ, for all true disciples live in love like Christ.

In John 13:31-35, Jesus spoke to His disciples about his approaching glorification and separation, and, in light of these, He issued a new command: that they love one another as He loved them. Christian love for other Christians confirms to the world who are the true disciples of Christ. So how do we respond to Christ’s words in this passage?

¹⁰ Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 161.

¹¹ Francis Schaeffer, *The Mark of a Christian*, vol. 4, bk. 3, *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer, A Christian World View* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1982), 187.

First of all, if you are not yet a disciple of Christ, then I plead with you to become one today. The Bible teaches that a holy God made this world and all who are in it. We, however, have lived our lives for ourselves rather than for God and have rebelled against His righteous requirements. As a result of our selfishness and sinfulness, we are separated from God and deserve to be separated from Him for all eternity in a horrible place called Hell. But “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Jesus became a man to live the perfect life we could never live and to die the death that we deserved so that we could be forgiven and reconciled to God. All that we have to do to receive God’s gift of salvation is to confess that we are sinners and accept Christ as our Savior and Lord. If you have not done this, then please do so today. Accept the offer of Christ, experience the love of Christ, and become a disciple of Christ today.

Second, for those of us who are disciples of Christ, we must confess that we have not loved other Christians as Christ has loved us. We must repent of the fact that we do not love other believers unconditionally, consistently, selflessly, and sacrificially as Christ loves us. We are not as humble as He is. We do not serve, forgive, or accept like Him. But we should. We must, because it is commanded. Therefore we must confess and repent of our lack of love.

Third, we must commit ourselves to obey Christ’s commandment. He is our Lord, and we must do what He tells us. There are no situations or circumstances that excuse or exempt us from this obligation. Every Christian is commanded by Christ to love every other Christian as Christ loves them. It is that simple and straightforward. It is not easy, but it is not complicated. Therefore, we must look to Christ, pray to God, and rely on the Spirit to enable us to obey what He commands. God says that if we ask according to His will He will answer, and we know that loving other believers is His will because it is His Son’s command. Therefore we can pray expectantly for our Heavenly Father to provide what He requires.

Fourth, we should start with small and simple steps. Greet and smile at other Christians when you see them. Pray for them as they come to mind. Perform small acts of service whenever you have the opportunity. If you cannot say something nice about them, then do not say anything at all. Look for the good in them rather than focusing on the negative. If you have wronged someone, then go and be reconciled. If you have been wronged, then forgive the offender his trespasses as God has forgiven yours. In all your relationships, whatever state they are in, start loving others today in every way.

Finally, consider the love Christ has for you and use this as a model and a motive to help you love other Christians. When you read in the Bible that Christ “did not come to be served but to serve” (Mark 10:45), praise Him and imitate Him by serving others rather than demanding that they serve you. When you read of Christ humbly washing the disciples’ feet, then praise Him and imitate Him by humbly serving others. When you read of His forgiving those who wronged Him, then praise Him and imitate Him by forgiving those who wrong you. When you take communion and are reminded of the Lord’s love, then commit yourself anew to obey the Lord’s new command. When you sing of “the deep, deep love of Jesus,” commit yourself to deeply loving all Jesus’ disciples. When you cherish “the old rugged cross,” then rededicate yourself to loving other believers as Jesus loved you. When you “stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene, and wonder how He can love you, a sinner, condemned, unclean,” then devote yourself anew to loving other sinners on His behalf. Let every cross you see remind us of the lovers we should be.

CONCLUSION

Illustration: The Apostle John is often called the “Apostle of Love” because of the great emphasis on love in his writings. Of the 388 uses of the word love in the New Testament, 121 occur in John’s writings. Yet he had another nickname during his discipleship. Jesus called John and his brother James the “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17). The nickname may come from, or at least is illustrated by, an incident that is recorded in Luke 9:52-56 in which these fiery fishermen wanted to call down fire from Heaven to consume those who rejected Christ. Instead, Christ rebukes them. The Savior came to save, not to destroy.

As John’s time with Christ continued, he witnessed Jesus’ love. He experienced Jesus’ love. In fact, he came to be called “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 21:20). As John witnessed and experienced the love of Christ, this “Son of Thunder” was transformed into the “Apostle of Love.” Knowing the love of Christ motivated and taught him to love like Christ and to become the great advocate of Christian love.

In his commentary on Galatians, the church father Jerome tells an interesting story about the Apostle John. “In extreme old age at Ephesus he used to be carried into the congregation in the arms of his disciples and was unable to say anything except ‘Little children, love one another.’ At last, wearied that he always spoke the same words, they asked: ‘Master, why do you always say this?’ ‘Because’, he replied, ‘it is the Lord’s command, and if this only is done, it is enough.’”¹²

Here was one of the original disciples, one of the inner three disciples, the disciple who was given unique revelations of Heaven. Of all Christ’s commands that John could have repeated, the one He emphasized was that Christians love one another. Brothers and sisters, let us place the same priority on loving each other. A new commandment Christ has given us: that we love one another, even as He loved us. And by this all the world will know that we are His disciples, if we love one another.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank You for this beautiful text and for the opportunity we have had to study it together. We thank You for the love of Christ that is so unrestrained and unconditional, so selfless and sacrificial. We acknowledge that we are obligated to obey Christ’s commands, yet we also confess that we have not done so. We have disobeyed and disregarded our Lord’s demand, and so we ask You to forgive us and to enable us to do better in the future. You have told us to love one another, but we can do so only by Your grace. Please make us more mindful of Christ’s matchless love for us so that we might be inspired and instructed, convicted and compelled to love other Christians the same way. We pray this in the great and saving name of Jesus who commanded this. Amen.

¹² John R. W. Stott, *The Letters of John: An Introduction and Commentary*, 2nd ed., Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 52.

SERMON EXAMPLES

Ash, Christopher. “The Home Prepared by Jesus (John 13:31-38).” *Christ Church Mayfair*. www.christchurchmayfair.org. (Accessed October 7, 2015.)

This clear, insightful, and practical sermon on John 13 explores the evidence for God’s presence among believers.

Begg, Alistair. “A Precept and a Problem: Part 1 (John 13:31-38).” *Truth for Life*. www.truthforlife.org. (Accessed October 7, 2015.)

This Scottish preacher examines the text verse-by-verse, preaching Jesus’ new command with an eye for detailed explanation and a heart for pastoral application.

Dever, Mark. “What Was Jesus’ Last Sermon All About? (John 13-16).” *Capitol Hill Baptist Church*. www.capitolhillbaptist.org. (Accessed October 7, 2015.)

This pastor models good preaching of a large section of Scripture that considers Jesus’ instructions, warnings, and promises.

Morris, Leon. “Exposition in John’s Gospel #1 (John 13:31–14:2).” *Pensacola Bible College*. www.monergism.com. (Accessed October 7, 2015.)

This chapel message from a New Testament scholar yields helpful insights from someone who has studied John’s writings extensively.

Nelson, Tommy. “Love, The Gospel Truth (John 13:34-35).” *Denton Bible Church*. www.dbcmedia.org. (Accessed October 7, 2015.)

This sermon outlines a command, a standard, and a reason for believers to love one another.

Piper, John. “As I Have Loved You, Love One Another (John 13:31-38).” *Bethlehem Baptist Church*. www.desiringgod.org. (Accessed October 7, 2015.)

This is a beneficial theological sermon that focuses on the newness of Jesus’ new commandment.

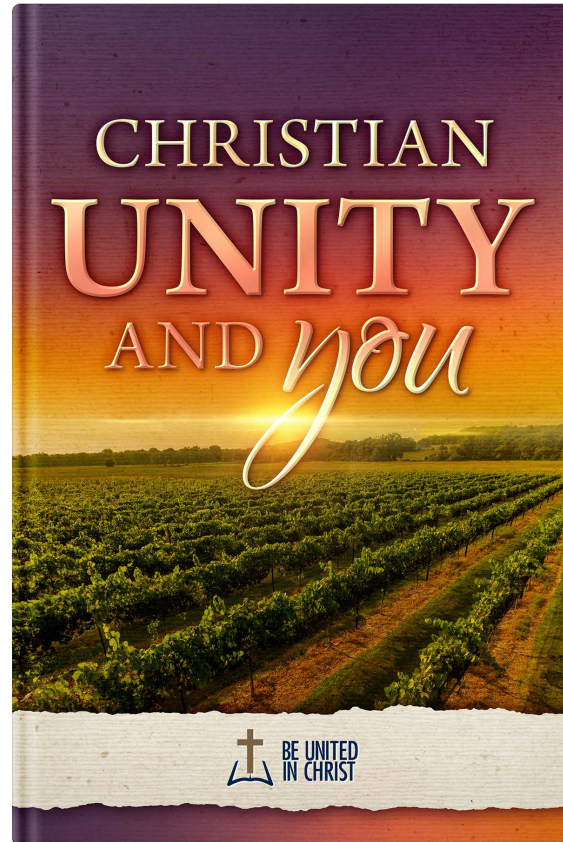
Schaeffer, Francis. “The Mark of a Christian (John 13–17).” *L’Abri Fellowship International*. www.labri-ideas-library.org. (Accessed October 7, 2015.)

This lecture on John 13 through John 17 provides a close reading of the passage, clear propositions, and pastoral encouragement. This lecture was published in his book *The Mark of the Christian*.

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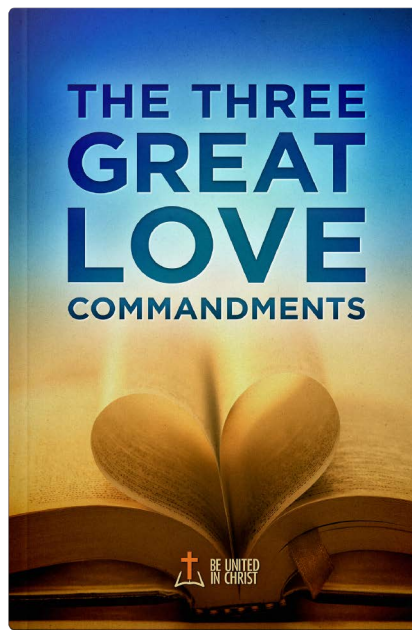
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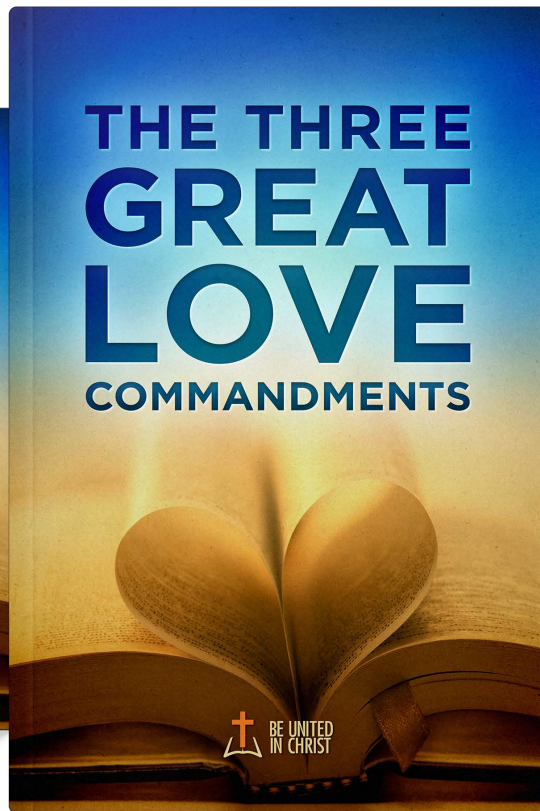
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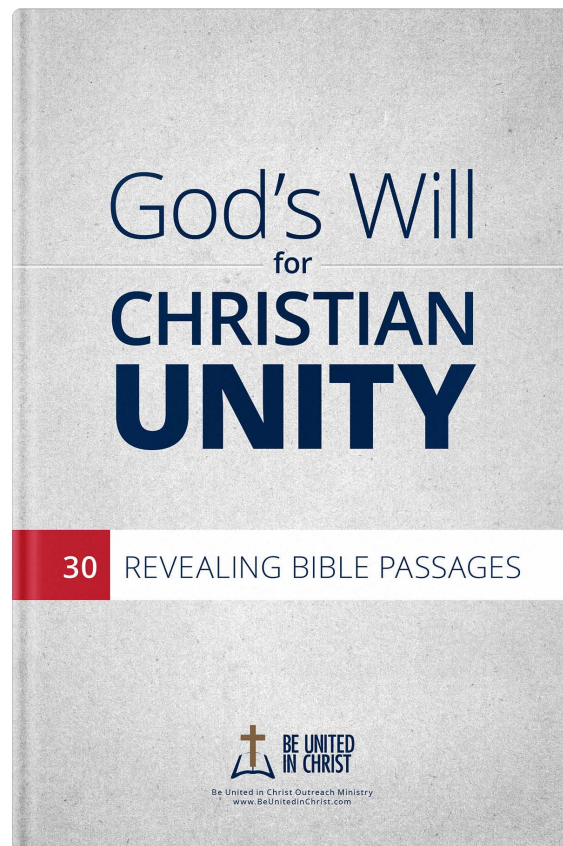
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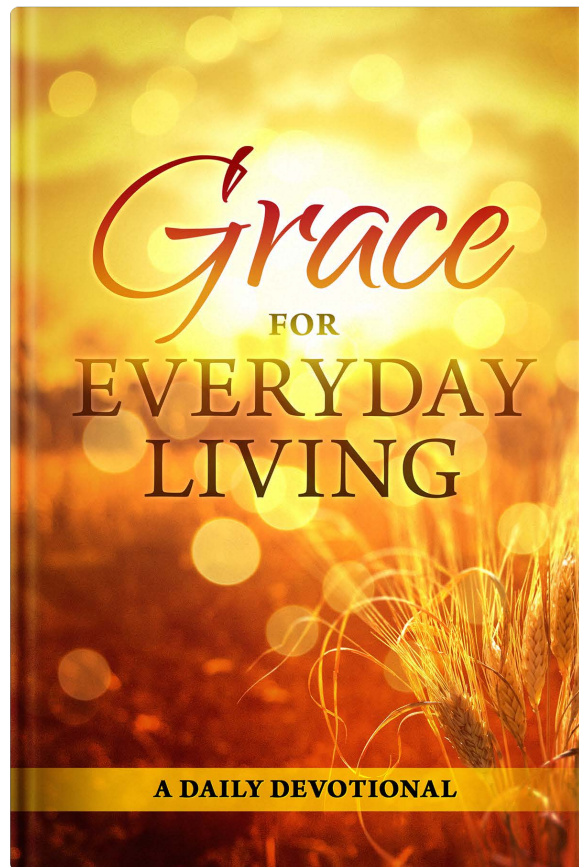
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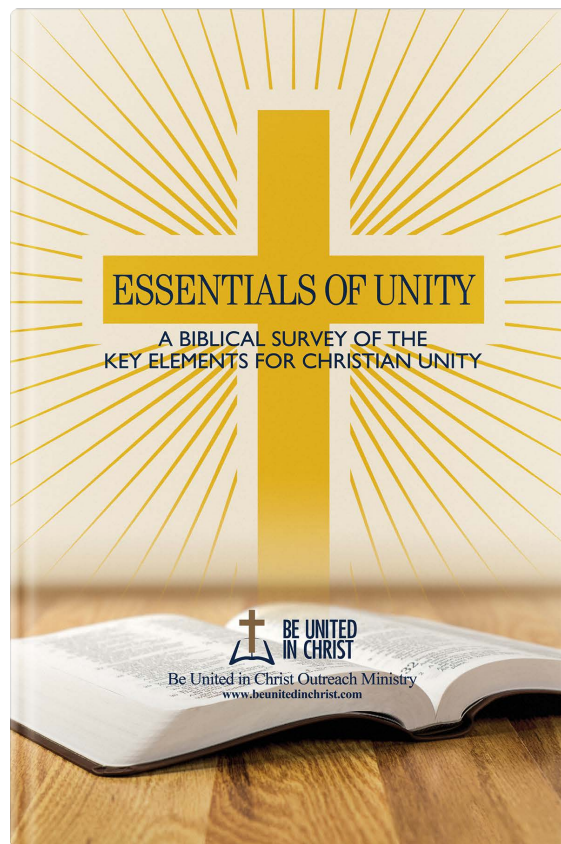
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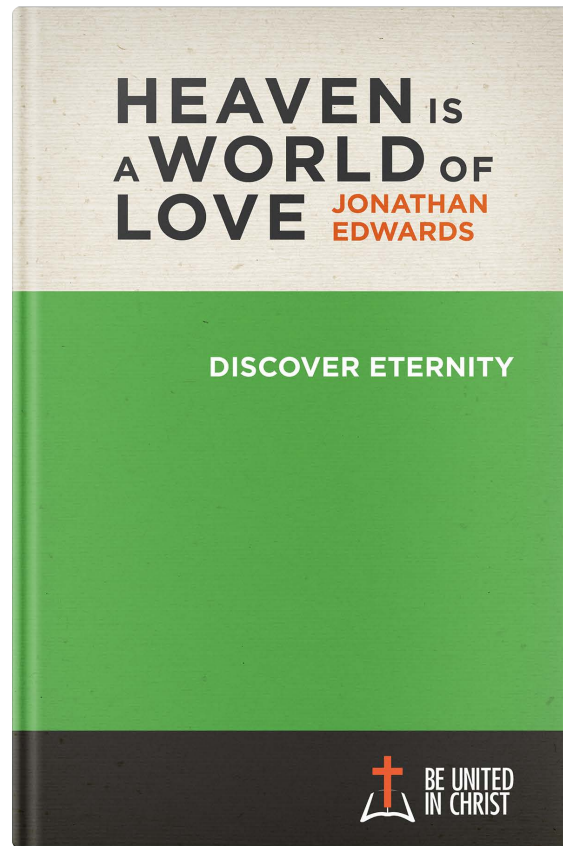
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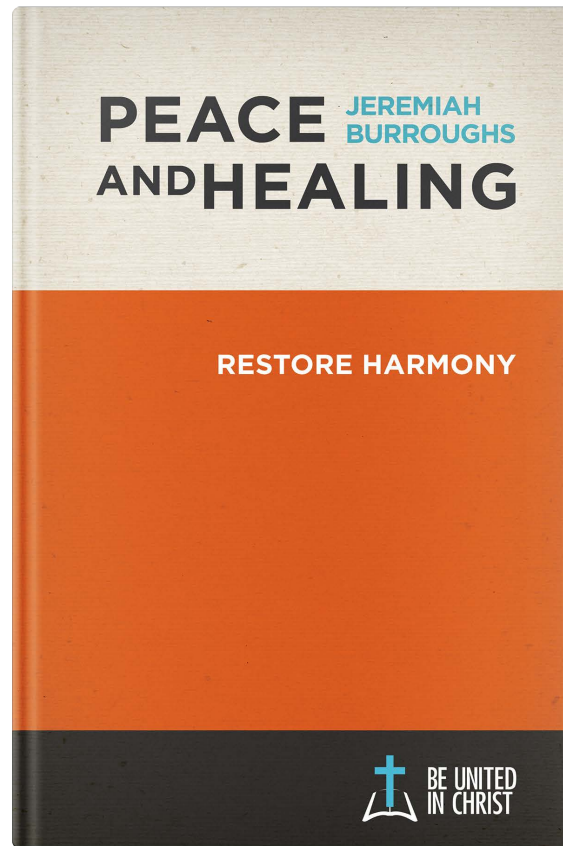
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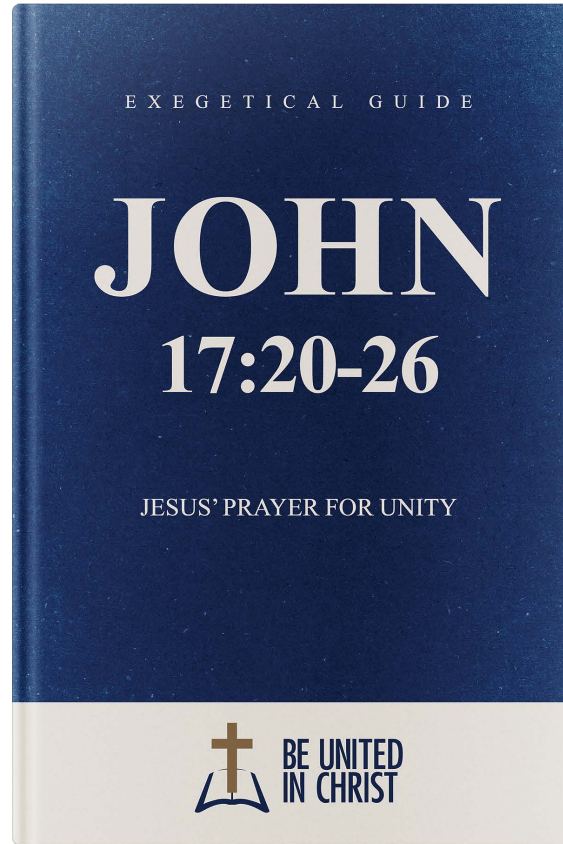


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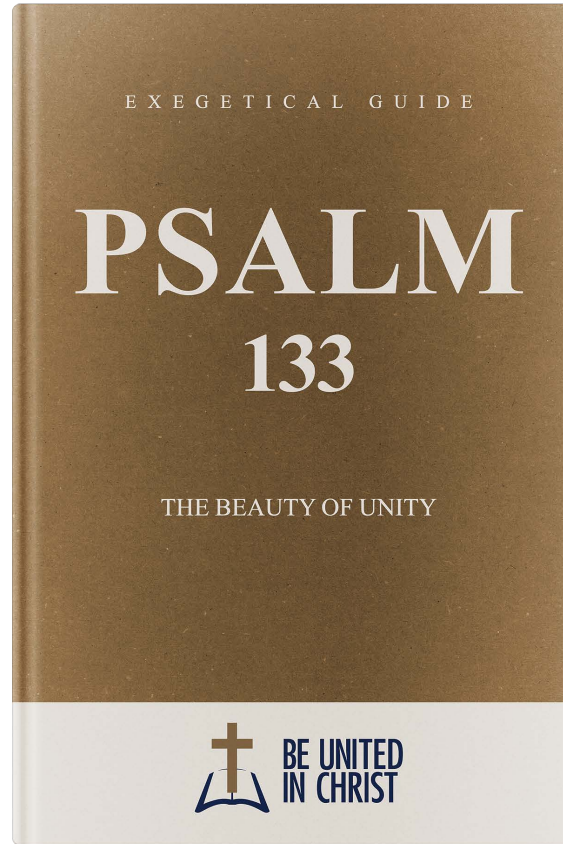
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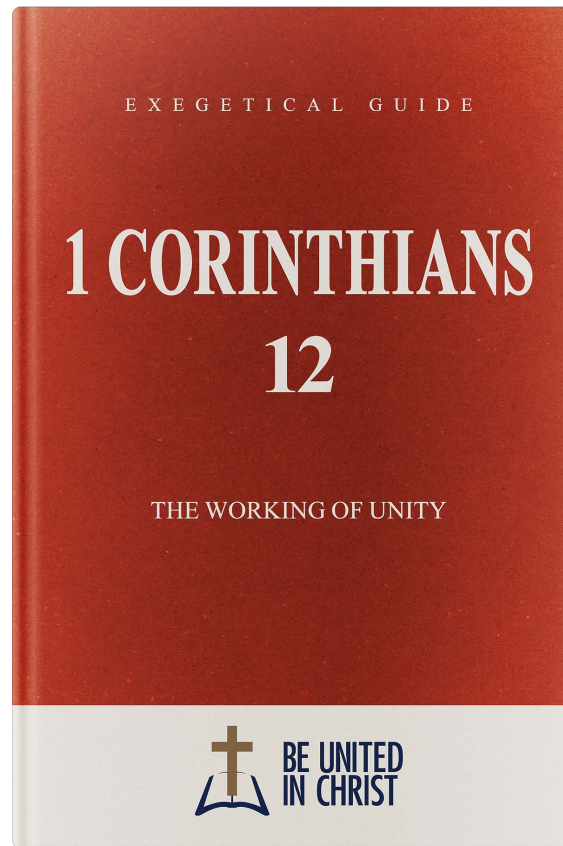
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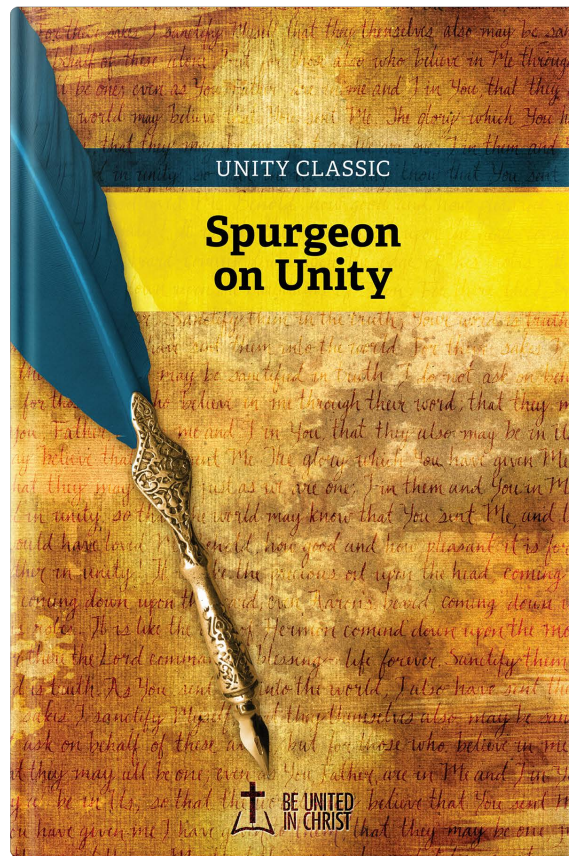
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