

# Faithful in Fellowship, Part 2

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**Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12, 25**

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## Introduction

Talking about a factor of faithfulness, which is fellowship—“Faithful to the Fellowship.” First Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 12 says, *“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ”* (1 Corinthians 12:12)—that is, Christ and His Body. Then I want you just to skip on down to verse 25. And, God says that He made us different and dependent upon one another in order that—and I begin reading now in verse 25: *“That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another”* (1 Corinthians 12:25). I want you just to underscore that phrase—“one for another.” That’s what I want to talk about.

But, I want to review, first of all, what we said this morning, as we talked about the fact that the Church is the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is His mystical Body. Christ is the head; we are the members of that wonderful Body called “the Church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

### A. The Function of the Body

And, we talked to you about the function of a body. A body manifests the person that lives in it. And, Jesus is to be manifested by the way that we live. The way this world will know the Lord Jesus Christ is through His Body, the Church. He mediates and manifests Himself through us. And so, a body reveals the person inside that body. The

Church is to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ. A body has life. The life of the Church is the Holy Spirit. The Bible has a purpose, and it is to do the will of the person who owns the body, who lives in the body. And, what is the purpose of the Church? To do the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, all of the parts of the body function together, just as we are to function together to serve our Lord. There's to be no disunity, but we're to have a common purpose, and a common function, and a common goal. So, we talked to you about the function of the body.

### **B. The Formation of the Body**

Then we talked about the formation of the body—how, when we get saved, the Holy Spirit of God baptizes us into the Body of Christ. (That's Spirit baptism.) Water baptism is a symbol of Spirit baptism, spoken of in verse 13: *“For by one Spirit [have] we all [been] baptized into one body”* (1 Corinthians 12:13). When you get saved, the Holy Spirit comes into you and then the Holy Spirit puts you into the Body of Christ. So, He's in us, and we are in Him. Hallelujah! And so, a Christian is in Christ, and Christ is in the Christian. And, we are in the Body, and Christ is the head of the Body.

### **C. The Fellowship of the Body**

Now, we talked to you not only about the function and the formation, but we talked to you about the fellowship of the body. And, we said that we are to be in fellowship. Why? Because we share the same life, we show the same love, we serve the same Lord. That's what I said this morning. You say, “Why didn't you say it that quickly this morning? Why did it take you all that time to say it?” Well, anyway, that's what we said this morning.

Now, we didn't get time to just kind of bear down on the part that I want us to look at tonight again, and look at it in verse 25: *“That there should be no schism”—that means “division”—“in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another”* (1 Corinthians 12:25). I want to talk to you tonight about caring for one another. You know, that's what makes Bellevue the wonderful church that it is—that we do care for one another. That is God's plan.

Now, I told you this morning, because we're members one of another, there can be no arrogance. I can't be proud and arrogant if I have a gift that you don't have. Or, you can't be proud and arrogant if you have a gift that I don't have. You can't be proud if you're an eye and I'm a foot. Oh, no—there can be no arrogance.

There can no envy. I shouldn't envy your gift; you shouldn't envy mine, because the Bible says, “God put every member in the body, as it pleased Him” (1 Corinthians 12:18). And, none of us has anything that God didn't give us, isn't that true?

And then, there should be no rivalry. When you prosper, I prosper. When I prosper, you prosper. The more God blesses you, the more I'm blessed, because you and I are

in it together. And so, I want you to prosper so I can prosper. If you are a member of a Body, you want the rest of that Body to be healthy, don't you? And so, we need, certainly, not to be envious over those and think that somehow their gain is our loss. Their gain is our gain. There can be no rivalry.

There can be no self-sufficiency. No member of the Body can say, "I don't need you." You need me; I need you. We need one another. There certainly should be no disunity, no schism in the Body. When the body begins to war against itself, you are tragically sick. As a matter of fact, we could call that "cancer" in the Body of Christ.

Now, we are to care one for another. I want to mention some ways tonight that you, as a Church—we, as a Church; you, as a brother or sister in Christ—we need to care for one another. In the Bible, God gives some "one another" commands. We call these "reciprocal commands." Now, there are many of them. As a matter of fact, I looked them up, and there were so many of them that I dare not even begin to try to elucidate on or expound on all of the "one another" commands in the Bible. But, I do want us to look at chapter 12, verse 25, where the Bible says we should care for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25). And then, I want to mention some ways that we should care for one another. And, these are all the "one another" verses that I have selected for us tonight.

## I. Love One Another

The first one is found in John 13, verse 34. Here's what Jesus said: Jesus said, "*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye [should] love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another*" (John 13:34). Now, all of the commandments had been given in the Old Testament. But now, along comes Jesus, and He says, "I'm going to give you a new commandment: you're to love one another." This was the last commandment He gave before His arrest, His mock trial, His crucifixion. He said, "I give you this command—that you love one another" (John 13:34).

Now, we don't need, as members of Bellevue Baptist Church, one of those little birds on our cars for people to know that we're saved. Or, we don't need a lapel pin with a cross or a fish. That's fine. As a matter of fact, I like that kind of thing. I think it's very wonderful. But, that's not the way that people are to know that we're His disciples. Do you know the badge that the Christian is to wear? It is the unseen (but always seen) badge of love. Listen to this verse—1 John 4, verse 20: "*If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*" (1 John 4:20). Again, in the Bible, Jesus said, "*By this shall all men know that [you're] my disciples, if ye have love one [for] another*" (John 13:35). The Bible commands us to love.

Now, this love is not optional, but it's not automatic. If it were automatic, we wouldn't be commanded to do it. Now, what is this kind of love? Why did Jesus say, "*A new*

*commandment I give...you, That [you] love one another*" (John 13:34)? In the Old Testament, we're told to love. Well, what is the new commandment? The new commandment is that we are to love as He loved—that is, with a new quality. Now, the love that Jesus is talking about here is not just merely doing our neighbor no harm, but it is seeking opportunity to do him good, even when he doesn't deserve it. That's what Jesus did for me. *"God commendeth his love toward [me], in that, while [I was] yet [a sinner], [He] died for us"* (Romans 5:8). Do you know what real love is? Love is not your giving me what I deserve; it is giving me what I need. Love is not giving me even what I want; love is giving me what I need. Love says, "You will do me good, regardless of what I do to you." We're to love one another. That's the way we care for one another, according to 1 Corinthians 15.

## **II. Receive One Another**

Now, not only are we to love one another—here's another command: we are to receive one another. Turn, this time, to Romans chapter 15, and just look at this passage of scripture. It's a very interesting passage—Romans chapter 15 and verse 7: our Lord says here, *"Wherefore receive ye one another"*—there's our word again—*"receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God"* (Romans 15:7). How are we to love? We are to love as He loved. How are we to receive? We are to receive as He received. Now folks, this is one of the most "needy" commands in all of the Bible—that we make people feel loved and welcome when they come into the church.

If you look at the early Church in the New Testament, what a background—what a mixture of backgrounds there were! They, the people, came from all kinds of religious backgrounds. Many had been raw pagans. They came from social backgrounds. Many of them had been divorced. Many of them had multiple marriages. Some of them were polygamists. Many of them had mixed marriages. Various races had married together. There were Jews, and barbarians, and Greeks. There were slaves; there were free. There were rich, poor. There were educated and ignorant, young and old, mature and babes in Christ, and they were all a part of the Body of Christ. Do you know what we have to do at Bellevue Baptist Church? We have to make everybody who wants to worship God feel welcome. Now, we must do that, folks. We must love one another. We must receive one another.

Turn to the Book of Philemon for just a moment—that's over near the end of the epistles—and see if you can find it. It's a very short little book. And, in the Book of Philemon—it's on page 1488 if you have a Bible like mine—there was a man named Onesimus. He was a slave. He ran away from his owner. Paul met him in prison. Paul led him to Christ and sent him back to his owner. And, look, if you will, in Philemon, beginning in verse 15—here's what Paul tells Philemon: *"For perhaps he therefore*

*departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; Now not as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?*”—and then, Paul said—*“If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself”* (Philemon 1:15–17). Paul said, “You take this runaway slave, and you receive him now. You, the rich man, you receive this man. Receive him as a brother.” And then, Paul said, “You receive him as if he were an apostle.”

What’s that going to tell us about any body who walks in those doors? Now, if any body comes to disrupt, obviously, we can’t allow them to disrupt. If any body comes to mock, obviously, they must be dealt with. But, any body who comes to worship God must be received. Say, “Amen.” We’re to receive one another.

Turn, if you will, to 3 John here for a moment. You know, a country preacher said, “There’s one-eyed John, two-eyed John, and three-eyed John.” You turn to three-eyed John, if you will, here—back almost to the Book of the Revelation—and let me show you about a man in the Bible who caused a lot of trouble in the church. Look, if you will, in 3 John and verse 5, I believe. Let’s look at it here for a moment—3 John, verse 5: *“Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers”* (3 John 1:5). That is, “Do faithfully to a stranger as you would to a brother.” And then, skip on down to verse 8: *“We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers [in] the truth. I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good”* (3 John 1:8–11). What does that tell us? It tells us we must receive one another.

Now, there are people in this church who don’t hold as high a standard as you may hold. They are weak in the faith. They don’t understand the deep mystery of God. Is a person like that to be made to feel unworthy? Are they to be looked down upon, if they come into your Sunday School class and they don’t know the books of the Bible, or they don’t understand theology, or they don’t understand all of the dispensational truth that you think you understand? Do you know what Romans 14, verse 1 says? *“Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations”* (Romans 14:1). What does that mean? “Don’t argue with him about tweedle-de-dee and tweedle-de-dum.” In the *Living Bible*, it is paraphrased this way: “Receive a brother into the church even if he scarcely believes Christ can save him” (Romans 14:1). That doesn’t mean that we put a premium upon weak faith. But, who is it that needs love? Who is it that needs care if it’s not somebody who’s weak? *This is a hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints.* We are to love one another. We are to receive one another.

Now, that doesn't mean we're to receive heretics or willful sinners. *Any church has a right to screen out the bugs when it lets in the light.* We're not talking about heretics. The Bible is very clear about that, also. Second John, verse 10: *"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed"* (2 John 1:10). We're to have soft hearts and not soft heads.

### III. Greet One Another

Now, here's a third thing: when we're to care one for another, that means we're to love one another. That means we're to receive one another. It also means, because we love and because we receive, we are to greet one another. Look again now in Romans chapter 16, verse 16—what Paul said to the church at Rome, which was a very cosmopolitan church. In Romans chapter 16, verse 16: *"Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you"* (Romans 16:16). And then, in 1 Corinthians chapter 16, verse 20: *"All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss"* (1 Corinthians 16:20). Second Corinthians 13, verse 12: *"Greet one another with an holy kiss"* (2 Corinthians 13:12). There are three times he said that, so I want you to turn to the person next to you... You say, "Now, wait a minute, Pastor. Do you see who's sitting next to me? If you think for a minute..." But, but what does this mean? What does this mean? Here it is: *"Salute one another with an holy kiss"* (Romans 16:16). *"Greet ye one another with an holy kiss"* (1 Corinthians 16:20). *"Greet one another with an holy kiss"* (2 Corinthians 13:12). Three times it's mentioned. We are to greet one another.

Now, what is a holy kiss? It's not an erotic kiss; it's not a kiss on the mouth. In the Bible, people kiss on this side and kiss on that side. The men would kiss the men, and the ladies, the ladies. That'll clear a lot up right there. And, it was just an embrace. As a matter of fact, I recently come from Spain. They do that in Spain. If you go in the Middle East, they do that in the Middle East. They still do that. Not a thing in the world wrong with that, but that was a custom then. Customs change. The Bible says that we're to "render custom to whom custom is due" (Romans 13:7). What that really means is show acceptance in a very warm and in a very wonderful way. By the way, there's absolutely nothing wrong with a holy kiss. If you want to do that and feel comfortable, that's fine. But, what this is saying is simply this—that we must demonstrate our love. There must be love. There must be receptivity. And, there must be the demonstration of that love and that receptivity. People need to be loved; they need to be greeted. This greeting needs to be personal. It needs to be warm. It needs to be impartial. You can't do it by radio and television or through mail. James chapter 2 and verse 9: *"But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors"* (James 2:9).



We call our radio/television ministry “Love Worth Finding.” We are now speaking of Bellevue Baptist Church as “a family of friends and a friend to the family.” Do you know what we need to do, folks? We need to show and demonstrate warmth and love to every person who walks in those doors, not just say, “You’re welcome to come and sit down.” But, we need to move toward them with a smile, a handshake, an embrace—and yes, a holy kiss, if that’s appropriate. But, what he is saying is this—that we need a warm fellowship. Does that make you uncomfortable when somebody touches you or if I say, “Now, reach out and take hands across the aisle, and let’s sing, ‘We’re One in the Bond of Love’”? Do you just kind of want to go, “I don’t want to touch anybody”? You know folks like that? I mean, they sit in church like this, you know. Hey, folks, there are people who are going to die and go to Hell because we’re so self-centered. You say, “Well, some people just don’t like that.” That’s true. Some don’t, but most do. And, the bigger we get, the more loving we need to become. Now, I’m not talking about pawing over people; I’m not talking about manhandling people. I am just talking about being warm, and loving, and caring one for another. We’re to treat one another as members of the same body. We are in the family together; and so, we are to greet one another.

#### **IV. Submit One to Another**

And then, I want you to turn to Ephesians chapter 5 with me for a moment. And, here’s another time the Bible speaks of “one another,” and it speaks of submitting one to another. Look, if you will, in chapter 5, verse 18—it’s a command to be filled with the Spirit: *“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit”* (Ephesians 5:18). Why did he say, “Don’t be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit”? Why didn’t he say, “Don’t commit adultery, but be filled with the Spirit”? Or, “Don’t steal, but be filled with the Spirit”? Because being drunk with wine is the devil’s substitute for being filled with the Spirit. He’s talking here not only in contrast, but in comparison. Being filled with the Spirit is a lot like being drunk with wine. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter said, “These men are not drunk, as ye suppose” (Acts 2:15). They were drunk on new wine; they were filled with the Spirit of God. And, when they were filled with the Spirit of God, they became free in their spirit. And then, verse 19: *“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”*—now, here’s our “one another” verse—*“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God”* (Ephesians 5:19–21).

Now, submission is not merely for women or for wives; it is for Christians. We are to submit ourselves one to another. What is biblical submission? It is one equal willingly and lovingly placing himself under another equal, that God may therefore and thereby be glorified.

Do you know, in a body, the various members of my body at various times have to submit to the other parts of my body? That's just all there is to it. We're in the Body of Christ, and we care for one another. Therefore, there are times when I must submit to you. I am the pastor, but I must submit to you. You must submit to one another. We all will come to a place and times when it is right to submit and for somebody to lead. I think it was Bill Gothard who said, "When you show people their rights, you'll have a revolution. Show them their responsibilities, and you'll have a revival." When a man says, "I know my rights," well, what rights does a dead man have? We are crucified with Christ, and we need to learn how to yield, and give to one another, and submit one to another.

## V. Forbear One Another

I want to mention another one now in Ephesians chapter 4. You're in chapter 5. Go back to chapter 4, and look with me, if you will. And, these are just some "one another" verses. I'm talking about the fact that the Bible says, "*There [shall] be no schism in the body; but [we] should...care one for another*" (1 Corinthians 12:25). And, I'm just looking at the verses that deal with one another.

Chapter 4, verse 1: "*I therefore*"—this is Ephesians 4, verse 1—"*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering*"—now, here's our "one another"—"*forbearing one another in love*"—"forbearing one another in love"—"*Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*"—and notice the next phrase—"There is one body" (Ephesians 4:1–4). You see that? Listen. Look at it: "*forbearing one another*" (Ephesians 4:2).

Turn to Colossians. Now, do you always get mixed up on these? I do. "**General Electric Power Company.**" All right. So, that's Philippians, Colossians... Turn to Colossians, and look, if you will, in chapter 3 and verse 12. Look at it: "*Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering*"—here it is one more time—"Forbearing one another, and"—we'll get to this next one in a moment—"forgiving one another" (Colossians 3:12–13). But, we're to forbear one another.

What is forbearance? Why does he say this several times in the Bible—"we're to forbear one another"? Forbearance is graciously enduring and putting up with the displeasing, offensive, or sinful attitudes or actions of other people. Now folks, everybody in this church is not lovely. As a matter of fact, only one out of three is. Would you look at the person on either side of you? If it's not them, it's bound to be you. In all seriousness, if you were to start with the pastor, the man standing up here, and look me over real good, you'd find so many faults in me it would be embarrassing. And,



in any member of this church, the same thing would be true. I don't mean that there's any sin in my heart or life at this moment that I cherish. As far as I know, I stand before you tonight with absolutely no un-confessed, un-repent-ed-of sin in my life—absolutely! I'd be ashamed to try to preach any other way. But, I am light years from perfection, and so are you. Amen? And, I know that I have habits, and faults, and foibles, and idiosyncrasies that may rub you the wrong way, and I think you just might have one or two. You know what we ought to do every now and then? Just go stand in front of a mirror and take a long look. Would to God some gift would give us to see ourselves as others see us! Isn't that what Bobby Burns said? Only, he said it in that accent. "Would to God somebody would get us to see ourselves as others see us." So, what we need to do, folks, is to understand that we're in it together, and we have to forebear one another.

You ought to try being the Pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church some time and read my mailbag. There'll be some who'll say, "Why don't we have more music like those four guys sang tonight?" There'll be somebody else who'll say, "Why do we have to have that grasshopper music in church?" There'll always be somebody who'll say, "Man, the sound system is great!" Somebody else will say, "When are you going to tune that thing down? It's so loud!" Somebody else will say, "Why do we always have to clap? It's not a theater." Somebody else says, "Oh, I love it when we praise the Lord and you say, 'Clap your hands, all ye people.'" Now, if you were pastor, what would you do? Hey, folks, we're all just a little different, and everybody's a little bit strange—except me, and Sorrell, and I'm not too sure about him.

Do you know what it takes to make a great church? Forbearance! Say, "Amen." I mean, we're different. We don't all like the same thing, but we love Jesus and we love one another. You see, we're to love one another. We're to receive one another. We're to greet one another. We are to forebear with one another.

## **VI. Confess to One Another**

I'll tell you something else we're to do: we're to confess to one another. Look in James chapter 5, verse 16: "*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed*"—don't criticize one another. Pray for one another. The confession of a fault is not a call to criticism; it's a call to prayer—"*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*" (James 5:16). We're to confess one to another.

Did you know that the failure to confess to one another holds back revival, forgiveness, and healing? You confess to one another, so that we pray for one another, so that we're healed. Do you know what real revival is? Real revival is not just getting the roof off. (That's fairly easy.) Real revival is getting the walls down. You say, "What do you mean?" Well, getting the roof off is saying, "God, forgive me. Here's thus and

thus and thus I have done.” But, when we go to one another and we confess our faults one to another and pray for one another, that’s when that real *koinonia* begins—that’s when that real fellowship, that caring for one another... Hey, there are a lot of us tonight who need somebody to pray for us, don’t we? But, we’re either so rotten proud or else we don’t trust that person that we don’t confess our faults one to another.

Now, be careful here. The devil can take anything and take it to an extreme. The circle of confession ought to be as big as the circle of need. Sometimes, there are some very personal and private things. Be very careful to whom you confess that. Sometimes there is somebody that you have wronged. Then you need to confess to that person. Very private sin—private confession. Personal sin—personal confession. Public sin—public confession. But, what we need to do is to begin to pray for one another. None of us is perfect. And oh, if there were less criticism in churches and more prayer, what a mighty healing there would be, physically and spiritually!

## VII. Forgive One Another

And, I’m coming to the close. But, I think all of these kind of come to a head in this last one. Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 32: *“be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another”—again—“as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you”* (Ephesians 4:32). An unforgiving spirit has ruined so many churches. Has somebody done you wrong? So, what’s new? When you fail to forgive—refuse to forgive—you destroy the bridge over which you yourself must travel, for Jesus said, *“If ye forgive not men their trespasses [against you], neither [shall] your [Heavenly] Father forgive [you] your trespasses [against Him]”* (Matthew 6:15).

That brings up a very interesting question: Can you forgive somebody if they have not yet repented? No! The Bible says, “If your brother sin against you seventy times seven and come and say, ‘I repent,’ you forgive him” (Matthew 18:21–22). Now, if he’s not repented, you can’t forgive him. And yet, you cannot have an unforgiving spirit. So, what do you do in a case like that? Well, if he repents, you always forgive him. But, what if he continues to sin against you? You can’t just say, “Well, I forgive—I forgive.” Even Jesus didn’t forgive like that. God doesn’t forgive unless there’s repentance. When Christ was on the cross, He didn’t say to those who were nailing Him to the cross, “I forgive you.” He prayed for their forgiveness. I believe that prayer was answered on the Day of Pentecost for many of them.

Well, what do you do in a case like this—I mean, when there’s somebody who has, perhaps, egregiously sinned against you, and you don’t want to carry that bitterness in your heart, and yet you cannot forgive because they have not yet repented—what do you do? What you do is you put that forgiveness in the bank in escrow. From your heart, you say, “There it is, Lord. I forgive them. And, whenever they write a check of

repentance, it's already in the bank, ready to be drawn." You see what I'm talking about? From your viewpoint, you've already forgiven them, but from their viewpoint, that forgiveness is not yet received until they do repent. But, as far as you're concerned, you have already forgiven them. Isn't that what God has done when Jesus died on the cross? There is a legacy of forgiveness for every one of us, but it never becomes ours until we claim it by repentance and faith. Yet, in the great loving heart of God, He died for every one of us. And, that's the spirit we've got to have, folks, in this church. That's what we've got to have.

## **Conclusion**

This church is a Body. We are the Body of Christ. We're to care for one another. We're to love one another. We're to receive one another. We're to forebear one another. We're to greet one another. We're to confess one to another. We're to forgive one another. And, when we begin to do that, folks—I mean, really do it—this church, or any church, will become a little colony of Heaven. What a fellowship! Isn't that what you want for Bellevue? That's what I want. So, let's just kind of make ourselves a committee of one to get it started.

Well, why don't we just stand and sing, "We're One in the Bond of Love"? Let's just stand and sing it. Brother Jim, I want you to lead us, and I want us to join hands across the aisle and do it—"We Are One in the Bond of Love."

Amen. Just, now, drop your hands, and bow your heads in prayer. And Father, let that love be the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.