I LOVE MY CHURCH: A PLACE TO SHARE

Very early in our lives we are taught a very important principle. And that principle hopefully is carried with us over the course of our lifetime. That lesson is the principle of sharing, that parts of life are meant to be shared with one another. From our toys to our time, sharing is an expression of Christian love. In our New Testament reading today, Paul is fleshing out the Christian life. Verses 9-16 give us a picture of a threefold Christian ministry: edification, evangelism, and exaltation.

Paul makes it clear the goals of the believer in the shared life of the church. In [1 Corinthians 14:26](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1Corinthians14%3A26&version=NKJV), he speaks directly to edification, the responsibility to build one another up, to encourage each other in spiritual growth through sharing of our love and spiritual gifts —to edify. We are to evangelize and share the good news of the Gospel of Christ, and we are to exalt the name of Jesus through praise and worship, not only with our lips but also with shared acts of love and service. Family, when we are full of God’s love, it overflows to others. And when we are full of God’s love, we can’t be full of ourselves. Love for God and God’s people becomes the motivation for all we do. Ray Prichard calls this the “Agape Factor.”

Christians serve in love because we are in a genuine sense “members of one another,” as [Romans 12:5](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans12%3A5&version=NKJV) tells us. [Ephesians 4:25](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+4%3A25&version=NKJV) tells us the same. In [Matthew 16:13-18](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+16%3A13-18&version=NKJV), Jesus declares that He will build His church, the Son of the Living God in action. In verses 24 and 25, He tells us of the cost of discipleship, following Him and dying to self. But it doesn’t speak of a bleak, timid death. Jesus is introducing the way to a rich and full life. The agape factor is faith activated ([Romans 12:10](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans12%3A10&version=NKJV)). There should be a grace effect emanating from our church buildings, affecting our society and culture—not the other way around. Our caring for one another—our love—must govern all our relationships. And a principle for us to remember is that we can never out-give God. John

Stott calls the passage in [Romans 12:10-16](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans12%3A10-16&version=NKJV) “Paul’s recipe for Love.” Stott says that Paul names twelve ingredients:

1. Sincerity,

2. Discernment,

3. Affection,

4. Honoring others,

5. Patience,

6. Generosity,

7. Enthusiasm,

8. Hospitality,

9. Kindness,

10. Sympathy,

11. Harmony, and

12. Humility.

And, Church, these are the ingredients for a healthy church. Sharing burdens and blessings with one another strengthens our church family. In the New Testament, no synagogue, temple, chapel, tabernacle, or building was ever referred to as “the church.” The term “church” in the New Testament always refers to the Christian assembly. The Greek word “ecclesia” literally means “called out assembly,” those called to share in life with one another. It all begins when our minds are renewed by the mercies of God ([Romans 12:1-2](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans12%3A1-2&version=NKJV)). This assembling equips us to serve and share with one another. The phrase “one another” comes from the Greek word “allelon,” which simple means “each other.” The word appears one hundred times in the New Testament. Fifty-nine of those instances are specific commands teaching us how to (or how not to) relate to one another. These statements form the basis of all true Christian communities. They impact our witness to the world. Here are some of these commands:

POSITIVE

Love one another ([John 13:34](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+13%3A34&version=NKJV)) – This command appears at least sixteen times.

Be devoted to one another ([Romans 12:10](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans12%3A10&version=NKJV))

Honor one another above yourselves ([Romans 12:10](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans12%3A10&version=NKJV))

Live in harmony with one another ([Romans 12:16](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans12%3A16&version=NKJV))

Build up one another ([Romans 12:16](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans12%3A16&version=NKJV))

Be likeminded towards one another ([Romans 15:5](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans15%3A5&version=NKJV))

Accept one another ([Romans 15:7](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans15%3A7&version=NKJV))

Admonish one another ([Romans 15:14;](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans15%3A14&version=NKJV) [Colossians 3:16](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians3%3A16&version=NKJV))

Serve one another ([Galatians 5:13](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians5%3A13&version=NKJV))

Bear one another’s burdens ([Galatians 6:2](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians6%3A2&version=NKJV))

Forgive one another ([Ephesians 4:2](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+4%3A2&version=NKJV); [Colossians 3:13](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians3%3A13&version=NKJV))

Teach one another ([Colossians 3:16](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians3%3A16&version=NKJV))

Comfort one another ([1 Thessalonians 4:18)](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Thessalonians4:18&version=NKJV)

Employ the gifts that God has given us for the benefit of one another

([1 Peters 4:10](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1Peter4%3A10&version=NKJV))

Clothe yourselves with humility towards one another ([1Peter 5:5](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1Peter5%3A5&version=NKJV))

Pray for one another ([James 5:16](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James5%3A16&version=NKJV))

NEGATIVE

Do not lie to one another ([Colossians 3:9](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians3%3A9&version=NKJV))

Stop passing judgment on one another ([Romans 14:13](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans14%3A13&version=NKJV))

Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other ([Galatians 5:26](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians5%3A26&version=NKJV))

Do not slander one another ([James 4:11](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James4%3A11&version=NKJV))

WE DO ALL THIS BECAUSE WE ARE IN A REAL SENSE “MEMBERS OF *ONE* ANOTHER” ([ROMANS 12:5](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans12%3A5&version=NKJV); [EPHESIANS 4:25](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+4%3A25&version=NKJV))

The sum of these specific commands is the agape factor. Undeniably, the agape factor is faith activated. The life in faith that we share together glorifies God when we follow these commands. And, Family, life is good when God is at the center of our lives. Loving God well means loving people well. It means being disciplined in investing in other people’s lives. We are most like Jesus when we, in love, share our lives together. With zeal and diligence, fervent is the spirit ([Romans 12:11](https://classic.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans12%3A11&version=NKJV)). “Fervent” comes from the Latin word “fervens,” meaning to boil. Paul exhorts us to boil with the living water of Christ within us. We must let our life in Christ boil over to impact the lives of others—caring for, showing hospitality, forgiving, and welcoming all according to the grace given to us, one body in Christ, sharing with one another.