

**We Are Here To Love the Church**  
**Mark 12:29-31**  
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**Main Idea:** Why are we here? We are here to love God with every aspect of our lives and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

**Key Points:**

1. **What is the connection between loving God and loving my neighbor?**
  - a. All human beings are made in the image of God and therefore are God's image-bearers (Gen. 1:26-27). The command to love our neighbor is a command to love those on earth who are most like God—humans created in God's likeness. This is why we cannot separate love for God from love for our neighbor. (See also 1 John 4:20-21)
  
  - a. The second connection between loving God and loving our neighbor is that God is a God of love. Love is an essential part of His character. God has graciously poured out His love on us. If we know Him and love Him, then we will seek to be like Him and love like Him. When we love our neighbor, we are acting like God. We are imitating Jesus and identifying ourselves with Him.
  
2. **Why should I have a special love for the church? (John 20:17; Rom. 12:10; Gal. 6:10; 1 Tim. 5:1-2)**
  - a. God calls us in Gal. 6:10 to do good to all, but especially to the "household of faith." We are family. We are brothers and sisters together with the same Father; Jesus is our elder Brother. The affection and love we are to have for fellow Christians is based on the work of Jesus Christ. We love the church because we love the Savior who redeemed the church and knitted us together in the same family.
  
  - b. What is your love for the church based on? If it's anything less than the love of God shown in the gospel than it won't last.
    - i. Don't love the church because of what it does for you. Sooner or later it won't do enough.
    - ii. Don't love the church because of a leader. Human leaders are fallible and will let you down.
    - iii. Don't love the church because of a program or a building or activities because all those things get old.
    - iv. Don't love the church because of a certain group of friends because friendships change and people move.
  
  - c. Love the church because of the One who shed His blood to obtain the church. Love the church because of the One to whom the church belongs. Love the

church because of the One who the church worships. Love the church because you love Jesus Christ and His glory.

**3. How do I love the church?**

a. The church is not a program or a building. It is people. As we genuinely love people, we are loving the church. Below are a few examples from the New Testament about how we can love the church:

- i. Be devoted to one another (Romans 12:5)
- ii. Honor one another (Romans 12:10)
- iii. Rejoice with one another (Romans 12:15)
- iv. Serve one another (Galatians 5:13)
- v. Carry one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2)
- vi. Forgive one another (Ephesians 4:32)
- vii. Encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- viii. Offer hospitality to one another (1 Peter 4:9)
- ix. Confess our sins to one another (James 5:16)
- x. Pray for one another (James 5:16)

**4. What is my next step in expressing the priority of loving the local church?**

- a. For some, the next step is to go from a weekend-attende to being a committed member.
- b. For some, the next step of growth is finding a practical way to serve in the church and to use your gifts for the building up His people (1 Peter 4:10).
- c. For some, the next step is to renew your affection for the church. You are doing all the right things, but you have lost sight of why you are doing it and your passion for serving and biblical fellowship has grown cold.

**Fellowship Starters:**

1. How is loving your neighbor an expression of loving God?
2. On what is your love for the local church based? Is your love based on certain friends, a particular leader, or specific activities and ministries? Or is your love because of the love God has shown in the gospel?
3. Have you allowed any offense to divide you from a fellow believer? What can you do to reconcile and pursue unity?
4. Look at the "one another" list under question #3. In what one area I can grow this year?
5. Are there any ways that your heart has grown cold toward the church? What would it look like to repent and cultivate a renewed affection for the church?

6. What is the next practical step (i.e., becoming a member, committing to attend and invest in care group, serving, etc.) you can take to express the priority of loving the local church?