

## Community of Devotion & Honor

Romans 12:9-13

### Scripture

<sup>9</sup> Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. <sup>11</sup> Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. (NIV)

### Main Idea

#### Background & Focus

It is extremely important to note that chapter 12 of Romans follows 11 chapters of Paul laying down the theological foundations of the gospel. This is where Paul is saying, "Here's how those 11 chapters of gospel truth impact our lives!" Notice that Paul moves directly from what Christ has done for us to the new community he creates (12:3-5). The implications of the gospel are always fleshed out in a living flesh and blood community of people.

The focus of this discussion is on the call of the gospel to develop devoted friendships that are characterized by the mutual giving of honor. Verse 9 is the topic sentence of this entire section in chapter 12 (12:9-21). Love is to be genuine or "without hypocrisy". Hypocrisy can be literally translated "without mask". The passage is a description of a community without masks, a community that loves authentically.

### Starters

- What are the hobbies or interests in your life that you are most devoted to? –OR—
- Share a story with the group about a time when you felt publicly honored.

### Discussion

Q1: Verse 9 says love should be "sincere". A more literal translation would be "Let the love of your community be without masks". What does it look like to be a part of a community that loves each other without the masks we often wear?

Q2: How does the second part of verse 9, "hate what is evil, cling to what is good", help us understand what authentic love looks like in a community? In other words, what is the relationship between love and the shaping of our moral character?

Q3: Noting the warm "family" words that Paul uses in verse 10, one author says, "Paul conceives of the church as a family that is even closer than one's biological family, for all are united to Christ as brothers and sisters" (Schreiner, Romans, p.664). What is your response to this?

Q4: What does a devoted friendship look like (verse 10)? What obstacles do we face in this group as we seek to become devoted friends (and how might we overcome these)?

Q5: Scripture often assumes that we naturally seek honor more than we seek to give honor. Is that true? What needs to change in us in order for us to become honor-givers instead of honor-seekers?

Q6: How can we as a community group celebrate each other's giftedness and talents and show appropriate honor for these?

## Prayer

Look at the list below drawn from Paul's list of spiritual characteristics created by the gospel (12:11-13). Share the one in which you are in the most need of the prayers of this community group. Spend some time sharing why and pray for one another. As a group, commit to praying for this specific need during the time in between your meetings.

- Zeal/diligence
- Service
- Devotion to prayer
- Spiritual fervor/fire
- Joy
- Generosity
- Patience in affliction