

## Children's Moment

August 9, 2015

**Title:** Greatest Commandment

**Object:** "Classroom Rules"

**Scripture:** “ ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?’ And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. **38** This is the great and first commandment. **39** And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:36-39)

Rules are very important, aren't they? Whether you are at school, at work, at church or play there are rules that you are expected to follow. In just about every classroom that I have ever been in, there is a poster on the wall like this one with a list of rules that the teacher expects the students to follow. ([Read the rules to the children.](#))

1. Don't talk when the teacher is talking.
2. Don't chew gum.
3. Stay in your seat.
4. Do your own work.
5. Keep your hands to yourself.
6. Follow directions.
7. Don't talk without permission.
8. Listen when someone is speaking.
9. Keep your desk neat and clean.
10. Be kind and respect one another.

I think that is a pretty good list of rules, don't you? Which one of these rules do you think is the most important? (Allow some feedback.) Which rule do you think your teacher would think is most important? Well, if you were to ask me, I would say that the most important rule is "be kind and respect one another."

The people in Jesus' day had to follow rules too. One day a lawyer asked Jesus, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment?" How many commandments there are? There are ten, aren't there? Well, there were ten that Moses wrote on the tablets of stone and we call them the Ten Commandments, but the Jews actually had 613 laws or rules. There were 248 dos and 365 don'ts. Wow! That is a lot of dos and don'ts isn't it? Can you imagine trying to remember all of them? Six hundred thirteen laws! Which one do you think Jesus said was the most important? Listen to what Jesus said to the lawyer.

Jesus answered him, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind,' this is the greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" In other words, Jesus was saying that if we could keep these two commandments, we would not have any trouble keeping the others.

It isn't easy to keep the commandments, is it? We need God's help each and every day. Let's pray and ask Him to help us to love as He has commanded us.

Dear Father, help us to love you with all of our heart and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Amen.

**Title – The Lord's Prayer – Part IV**

**Opening**

Please open your bibles to John chapter 17. This morning we will conclude chapter 17 with Jesus' prayer for all believers. Jesus has been preparing the disciples for His departure since chapter 13 and here it ends. Next week we will begin studying the events of Jesus' arrest, trial, crucifixion and resurrection. This morning we explore the conclusion of Jesus' prayer before He and the disciples left the upper room. This last night Jesus and the disciples had shared a meal, an act of love. Jesus had washed the disciples feet, an act of love. He exposed Judas as a traitor and by doing so gave Judas one last chance to repent, so this too, was an act of love. Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper as an act of love and a symbol of His love for all believers until He returns. Now He ends His prayer with love – The Father's love for Him and His love for those the Father is giving Him. We have studied Jesus' prayer in three parts; Jesus' prayer for His glory to be completely restored, His prayer for His disciples and now His prayer for all believers.

**Mark of Jesus**

In verse 9 Jesus said to the Father, **"I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours."** Jesus is not praying for those **not** called by the Father, but those whom the Father has called. Then in verse 20 Jesus continues, **"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word."** One of the main reasons Jesus lifted up the disciples and

now all believers - is for those called by the Father to salvation in the future. Jesus will secure eternity of those given to Him by His supreme act of love – the cross. The future for the disciples would come soon with Jesus’ resurrection and then the future throughout redemptive history people will come to believe in Him as the Christ because the Father has called them and because the Father has chosen believers to share the Gospel of Christ as the primary way for people to begin their journey back to God. Verse 20 makes clear Jesus is praying not only for the 11 disciples with Him on this last night, “but also for those who will believe in me through their word.” It is not just the written Word of God, but the Word of God lived out in people’s lives. The living out of the Word of God is built upon the written Bible and our faith in the Bible as the inerrant and inspired Word of God. Paul said in Romans, “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); **9** because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. **10** For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.” (Romans 10:8-10) Living in faith has always been made possible by having a relationship with the living God, Christ Jesus, who by His love saved the chosen of God. It is not about religion – it is about a holy and spiritual relationship.

### **Mark of Believers**

Let me ask you, “What is it that has the biggest impact on people in our communities with respect to the good news of the Gospel of Jesus?” Is it the most inspiring praise times in Sunday services? Is it the most uplifting and relevant preaching? Is it the most exciting children’s message? Is it the most

warm and inclusive welcome to visitors to our church on a Sunday morning? Is it the quality of fellowship after the service? Is it the range of ministries and activities we are involved in? These examples and many more valuable things we can list are all of great importance in the life of a healthy local church. However, none of them would be listed highly by the greater majority of the community because they are rarely ever in church on a Sunday to experience these blessings when they occur. Why are they not in church? To answer this question, let me first ask another question, “How did you begin to come to Christ?” For most people it was through observing a Christian’s life lived and by that Christian being involved in that person’s life and the sharing the gospel. It is about relationship. As Jesus prepared the disciples and His followers for His departure beginning in chapter 13 of John, He gave a simple test for the broader community to know the genuineness of those who claim to be followers of Jesus. Jesus said in John 13 verses 34 and 35, “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. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” Jesus was consistent and true for He is God and He certainly loves those called by the Father with an agape love that is not consistently possible for mere humans. However He does call us to love each other, as believers to be in relationship first with Him and then with each other. This is the first and greatest sign that we are truly His followers. Our love will be a witness to the world. My beloved do you see the conditional clause in verse 35 of John 13? Let me read it again, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” People will know we are disciples of Christ “if”, if we have love for one another. Why should anyone believe our words **if** our life is not lived following the precepts found in

the Bible; love of Christ, to be honest, hard working, serving others, loving others and I could continue. For these biblical precepts to be believed they must be part of all that we do and more importantly, all that we are. If everything in us is not founded on a love of Christ and a love for others, as Isaiah said, “We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.” (Isaiah 64:6) Jesus did not stop with His prayer of intercession to the Father on behalf of all believers with just verse 20. As man organized the Bible, it was scribes who broke Jesus’ train of thought into verses. Jesus, however, spoke in complete sentences, saying, “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” For people to hear the gospel from us and believe what we say we must be one with Jesus as Jesus is one with the Father. Granted Jesus is one with the Father on a level we cannot achieve, but a Christian’s life is marked by the process of sanctification or growing in oneness with Christ. It is this faith and the living out of faith by loving everything that is Christ and loving others that makes the world believe that God the Father sent Jesus.

It is important to understand predestination and the role of personal faith. John MacArthur said, *We understand “the fact that they (believers) were predetermined from before the foundation of the world. Jesus knew who they were. God knew who they were. They were the chosen, their names are written in the Book. But all of that does not come to fruition apart from personal faith.”* Or, as my grandfather use to tell me about things that were important, “Son, walk the walk don’t do like most people who just talk the talk.” If we walk the path

shown to us by the Bible and Jesus we cannot help but grow in faith and make some want to know more about Jesus.

## **Mark of Unity**

Jesus continues to beseech the Father and at the same time drive home his message to the listening disciples. It is these men who will waiver, but regain their faith. It is these men who will set the world on fire for Jesus and see the church planted and explode in the years they have before all but one is martyred for their faith. Verses 22 and 23 are one sentence and thought. Jesus continues His prayer saying, “The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.” The disciples had superficial disagreements, but their faith in Christ gave them unity in their relationships and in their purpose. We know from the Book of Acts, written by Luke, that the early church is not a model of organizational unity. The more corporate structure of church came about by those in power who desired control. First, with the unification of the Roman Catholic Church as men struggled for power and fought to determine who would be Pope. Then for the Protestant churches took on a more corporate structure following the industrial revolution. The corporate structure worked well for business, therefore, it should make the Church of Christ, more efficient as well. Did this organizational structure bring deep spiritual unity? No, not at all! It made the church into function rather than relationship with the living God. Observing and experiencing this church change from relationship to organization Spurgeon wrote, “The world was persuaded that God had nothing to do with that

great crushing, tyrannous, superstitious, ignorant thing which is called itself Christianity; and thinking men became infidels, and it was that hardest possible thing to find a genuine intelligent believer north, south, east, or west.” It is about having a relationship with Christ, not intellectualism and structure.

Christ is not praying for organizational unity here in John 17. Christ’s church was meant to be a living community as we have read in Acts 2:42. Another unity problem of man-made church is conformity and disunity. The “us and them” thinking of churches. To be right you and your church must be like us. This is what has created so many denominations. We saw this in missions overseas, as Americans, we know best, so you need to be like us. Missionaries were working to plant their brand of church wherever they went. This is why we worked not to plant American churches, but equip the men God gave to lead indigenous churches that were fully biblical. Jesus was praying for unity through diversity of personalities and cultures. This is why the early church was relevant and exploded. This is what makes the church interesting and not dull. Uniformity is dull, but unity in the scriptures and Christ transcend time and culture. Islam wants everyone locked into the 7<sup>th</sup> century and it does not work. This is the reason they enforce conformity by force. Christianity does not seek conformity to man-made rules, but rather, Christianity seeks unity with the teachings of Christ - with a diversity of expression. This is what Jesus is saying in verses 22 and 23, **“The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.”** The world transcendent of time and culture will know Christ through



Christian unity found in the love of God's scriptures, love of Jesus and love for each other.

It was amazing to me when Joyce and I first began to travel to many countries to create partnerships to equip indigenous men to plant churches among their own people. We would arrive – different culture, language, foods and customs – some of which defy explanation, one must experience them to understand. Even with all these differences we quickly found common ground in our love for Jesus and deep friendships were formed quickly and lastingly. You see, when you are in a country where there is a high price to pay for being a Christian, including death, all you have is Jesus and each other. The hardest thing was to say goodbye knowing that some people you have grown to deeply love - you will not see again until heaven.

### **Mark of the Body**

Paul wrote to help believers understand how this unity was to work no matter where you lived. “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; **5** and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; **6** and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. **7** To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

No person, other than Jesus, possesses all gifts needed by the church. The spiritual gifts given are for the common good of the church. They are not about how special the person is. **Spiritual gifts have two primary purposes; first to bring glory and honor to God.** The second purpose is found a few verses later beginning in verse 12, “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all

the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. **13** For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. **14** For the body does not consist of one member but of many. (1 Corinthians 12:12-14) **Second, spiritual gifts are to serve the Body.** This enables the church to have unity through the diversity of spiritual gifts – which then makes Jesus’ Church a light to the dark world.

### **Mark of the True Church**

Canyon Bible belongs to several groups of churches who help to support each other. We are part of Family Integrated Churches, The Gospel Coalition and 9Marks. 9Marks lists nine core values of spiritually healthy churches. 1)

**Expositional Preaching** - which is how I preach through the books and verses of the Bible. Now you know why we have been in the Gospel According to John for almost two years and have a little way to go. 2) **Biblical Theology** is sound doctrine; it is right thoughts about God; it is belief that accords with Scripture.

The entire Bible teaches sound doctrine. 3) **Good News** – we preach and share the “good news” or the gospel message of Christ. Simplified it can be found in the verses of the Roman Road and then expanded on throughout the Bible. 4)

**Conversion** – It is only by the grace of God through Christ that people are brought to spiritual life. Yet, God gives us an active role in helping with His process of conversion from unsaved to saved. 5) **Evangelism** – God has commanded believers to share the “good news” with the lost. We can easily start by sharing our testimony of what Jesus has done in our lives. 6) **Membership** - According to the Bible, church membership is a commitment every Christian should make to attend, love, serve and submit to a local church. We, as a church, will be

exploring this in September. 7) **Discipline** - church discipline is everything the church does to help its members pursue holiness and fight sin. 8) **Discipleship** - churches should exhort their members to both grow in holiness and help others do the same. 9) **Leadership** - The Bible teaches that each local church should be led by a plurality of godly, qualified men called elders. This is the desire of Canyon Bible and one, as a church, we need to work towards. All of these traits are founded in a love for God the Father and God the Son and the Holy Word of God, the Bible and that we are able to understand the Bible by the power of God the Holy Spirit.

Here in the last two verses of Jesus' prayer we find unity founded in love. Reading from verse 25, "O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. 26 I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them." What is the greatest mark of the Church? I do not mean the 9 marks I just explained for they flow out of the greatest mark – and that mark is love. Love is the greatest mark of Christians and of the Church.

Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians writes what is referred to as the love chapter. He begins in chapter 13 with a negative by listing activities and saying without love they are nothing. As he comes to the end of the chapter Paul writes of Christian virtue, "faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love." (1 Corinthians 13:13) In Jesus' prayer He spoken of **joy, holiness, truth, mission and unity** as essential marks of Christians and His Church. These encompass much of the 9 Marks I just presented. But, just like Paul's

admonishment in Corinthians Jesus ends His prayer saying everything must be built on the foundation of love, saying to the Father, “that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.” We are to live with the love of God the Father has for the Son and the Son has for those given to Him by God. It is then we are able to love the unlovable and love our enemies.

Jesus mentioned five virtues that I believe must be built upon love. What would Christian life and the church be without love? Jesus spoke in His prayer about **joy**. What is the result of removing love from the Christian’s joy? You have hedonism - with its desire to live life for its pleasures but without the joy of Christ. What is the result of removing love from **holiness**? You end up with **self-righteous people** just like the Pharisees of Jesus’ day. Do you know any Pharisees in today’s world, people who are self-righteous at the expense of others? Self-righteous Christians are hypocrites.

Jesus speaks of the importance of **truth**, but what is the result of removing love from truth? You have bitter canon, **empty ritual** and empty liturgy or teaching that can be right, but has no heart and wins no one to Christ. Likewise, what is the result of removing love from the **mission** of Christ? You have **colonialism** and empire building for ones self not for Christ. I have seen too much of this type of ministry in my lifetime. It rips the heart out of Jesus’ Church.

Jesus desired for the Father to establish **unity** in believers and His church, but what is the result of removing love from unity? You end up with **tyranny**. This is the corporate model of church, the church with the strata of class both of those in leadership and those not. For them leadership is served, in truth, by the people and they have no say where the church is going. This stands on-its-head what

Jesus said in Mark, “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45)

With love as our foundation the church is completely different. When we express love for God in our dealings with mankind what do we find? A church living the heart beat of God. **What does love for God the Father result in? Joy!** We have joy because we rejoice in God and in what He has done for us and we then have overwhelming joy in all of life’s circumstances. **What does a love for the Lord Jesus Christ result in? Holiness!** We know that we are not of this world and we will see Jesus one day and that day will never end. Because of our love for Jesus we desire to purify ourselves, as He is pure. We desire to live holy before men to reflect Jesus’ holiness. Apostle John understood this well for he wrote, “Everyone who thus hopes in ~~him~~ (Jesus) purifies himself as he is pure.” (1 John 3:3) No wonder the world does not know or recognize a true Christian or a true Church of our Lord Jesus for they do not know purity. **What does love for the Word of God result in? Truth!** Not the propositional truth of the world, but eternal truth of God that never changes. Because we love the Word of God we study it, meditate on it and it becomes who we are – the truth bearers of God. **What does love for the people of this world result in? Mission!** We have the saving, life changing gospel of Jesus to take to the world! And finally, **what does love for our brothers and sisters in Christ result in? Unity!** It is by the love of God the Father and God the Son and their love for us that they indwell a believer with God the Holy Spirit binding us together and we understand that God’s church is more important than any one person.

We now have a better understanding of why Jesus ended His prayer and

discourse the way He did. Speaking for His disciples to hear, for them to record these very words for our benefit. As Jesus began His final preparation of His disciples for His departure the Apostle John recorded this, “Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, **he loved them to the end.**” (John 13:1) My beloved, Jesus has committed to love each of His own, you and me, **to the end**. The question is are we committed to love Him until our end here on earth? Will we commit to the Christian virtues Jesus set before us in His prayer of John 17: Joy, Holiness, Truth, Mission and Unity? I know we struggle as individuals, but as a church, as a body of believers, with many gifts from God, we can together love as Jesus modeled.

I end with the words of Apostle Paul, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Corinthians 13:14) Let us live by the power of Jesus’ love. Amen!