

Church of God Sunday School

A NEW COMMANDMENT

John 13:34-35; 15:12-17

Jesus and His disciples were gathered together for the Passover meal. Jesus knew "his hour was come" (John 13:1). In several hours He would die on the Cross for the sins of the whole world. Soon after His Resurrection, He would leave this world and return to Heaven. This was the last chance Jesus would have to talk with His disciples before His death. What important lesson did Jesus give His disciples?

First Jesus washed the feet of all His disciples, and He taught them the importance of following His example and washing "one another's feet" (John 13:14). After this, Jesus had a final message for His disciples. He called it "A new commandment."

What is a commandment? Another word for commandment is "rule." God has a set of rules that we are to live by if we want to please Him. Do you remember the story of the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament? These were rules God wrote on stone for the Israelites to follow. God gave many other rules to Moses for Israel, and these are called "the law of Moses" (Joshua 8:31-32).

The scribes and Pharisees in Jesus' day studied and taught these laws to the people. Tradition tells us that the rabbis (spiritual teachers) made sure that the words of the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament) were read to the people (some say as often as two or three times per week). One of the places people would hear the Scriptures read was in a synagogue (*SIN-uh-gog*). This word means "a place of meeting."

When Jesus told His disciples that He had a "new" commandment to give them, no doubt their minds went to the many commandments God's people were to obey. What was the importance of this new commandment Jesus was about to tell them?

Jesus began to describe this new commandment by saying, "That ye love one another." Now, this was not

new. God's people were told to "love thy neighbor as thyself" (Leviticus 19:18) in the Old Testament. Jesus spoke of this when He said, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12). Many people call this "The Golden Rule."

When a lawyer asked Jesus what was the greatest commandment of the Law, Jesus spoke of two commandments. The first one is to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37). The second commandment is like the first: "love thy neighbor as thyself" (verse 39).

It takes loving God first to be able to love others as our self.

But who was their neighbor? Leviticus 19:18 says that it was "the children of thy people" (people of their own nation and religion). The Jews believed this meant they should "love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy" (Matthew 5:43).

Now Jesus was speaking of a "new commandment." How was this different? Jesus said they were to "love one another, as I have loved you." How did Jesus love us? He died for us! He took the punishment for the sins of the whole world and died on the Cross. Jesus said that there is no

greater love than to lay down your life for others.

What does it mean to lay down our life for others? Jesus is our perfect example. He put the needs of others first; He loved people who were unlovable; He loved without conditions; He loved people who did not love Him. In the end, He made the ultimate sacrifice: He died for all. We are to be a "living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1), giving of ourselves daily, putting other people first, loving as Jesus loved.

In themselves no one can have this kind of love for others (friends, family, and enemies). This love only comes from Jesus. When you repent of your sins and



invite Him to live in your heart, His love will shine out to others. Why is it important to have this type of love for others in our hearts? Jesus told us why: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples." This love is so rare, so unexpected that it will get people's

attention.

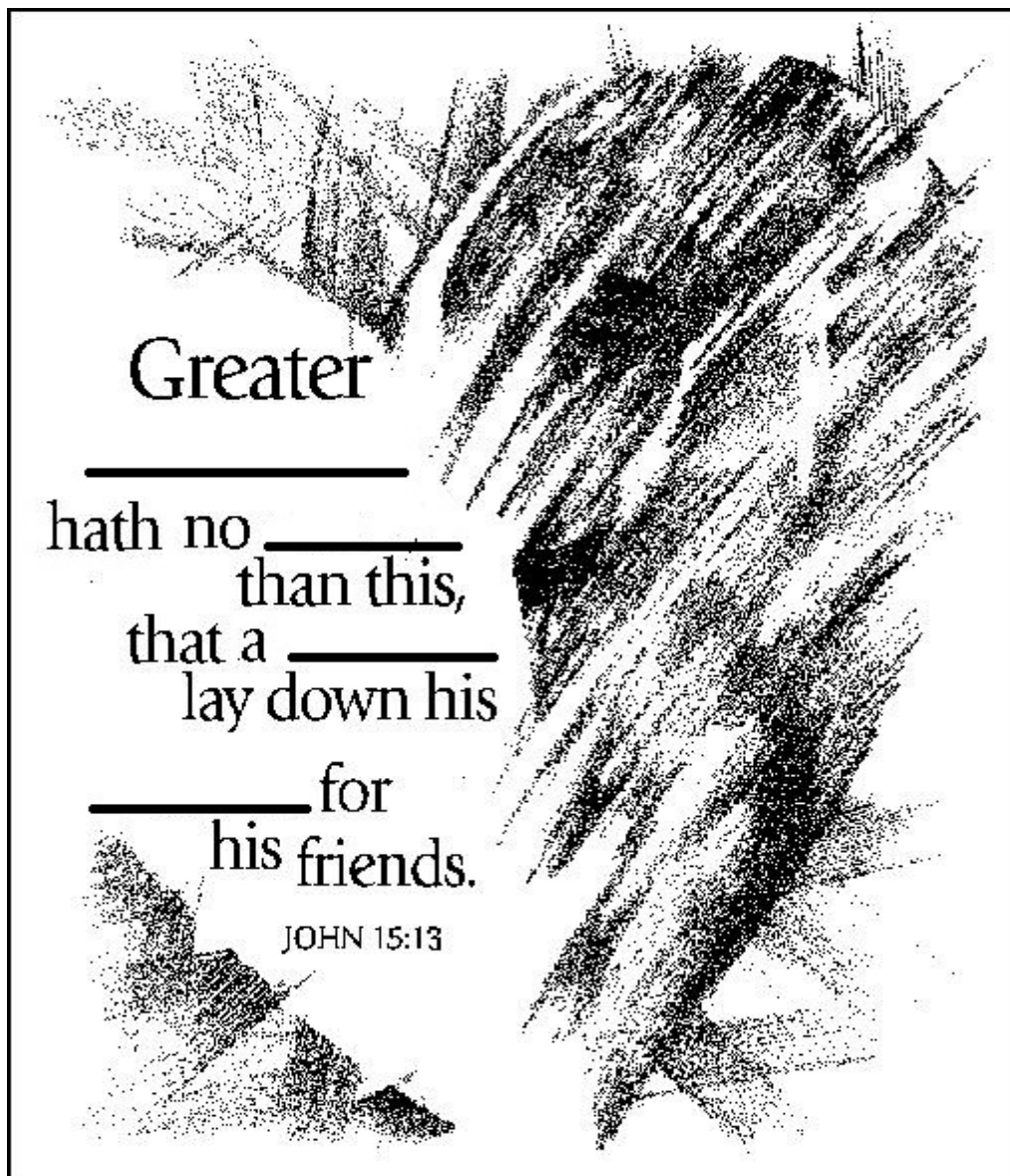
By loving others (not as ourselves but as Christ loved us), we can be a witness to a lost world; we can show others that the best way to live is to have Jesus in our hearts.

MEMORY VERSE:

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

—John 13:34

Fill in the Missing Words



Commandments



“Love
the LORD
your God
with all your
heart...soul
...mind and...
strength.”

Mark 12:30



**Draw a Line From the
Commandments to the
Matching Picture**

*Ten Commandments
A New Commandment
The Greatest Commandment
The Second Greatest
Commandment*

