

A Shared Standard: The Law of Love

Leviticus 19, Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Unity, Diversity and Our Identity in Christ



Part 4 of 14

Unity, Diversity, and Our Identity in Christ

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The American Church:

Unity, Diversity, and Our Identity in Christ

The American Church:

- Churches tend to be deeply segregated along generational, racial, socioeconomic, educational and other lines.
- For example, at the start of the 21st Century **only 5.5%** of Christian congregations were racially mixed.¹
- This is not the model the Bible presents to us.

Unity, Diversity, and Our Identity in Christ

About This Series:

Unity, Diversity, and Our Identity in Christ

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- **Our identity in Christ** provides the inner motivation that compels us to unite rather than divide.
- In so doing, we still validate our individuality.
- Rather than negating differences, our identity in Christ transcends them, giving us a focal point that all of us share.

Unity, Diversity, and Our Identity in Christ

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3. To accept that *our identity in Christ* is something shared, and is a basis for unity with diverse others in the church.

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3. To accept that **our identity in Christ** is something shared, and is a basis for unity with diverse others in the church.
4. To appreciate **biblical diversity as a spiritual strength** that expresses itself in the people and ministries of our church.

Previously in this series

- As we look back on our previous messages, consider how each segment contributes to **our identity in Christ**.

Previously in this series

A Shared Origin: The Story of Creation

Genesis 1 – 2

Unity, Diversity and Our Identity in Christ

Part 1 of 14



Previously in this series

A Shared Tragedy: Sin and Its Effects

Genesis 3 – 11

Unity, Diversity and Our Identity in Christ

Part 2 of 14



Previously in this series

A Shared Promise: The Covenant with Abraham

Genesis 12:1-3

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A Shared Standard: *The Law of Love*

A Shared Standard: *The Law of Love*

- When the nation that descended from Abraham occupied their land, they needed laws.
- God gave these laws to them, and he gave more than a civil code to guide their day-to-day social life.

A Shared Standard: *The Law of Love*

- Much of their law governed their religious duties – things such as sacrifice, celebration and worship of God.
- Much of this ultimately pointed to Christ.

A Shared Standard: *The Law of Love*

- Both their day-to-day civil code and religious duties were blended with in-depth moral instruction.
- God wanted Israel to be a certain kind of people because he was a certain kind of God.

A Shared Standard: *The Law of Love*

- Their law was backed up by theology.
- Obedience to this law was obedience to God and was meant to be obedience from the heart.
- Precisely because there was so much resting upon Israel's obedience, Jesus fielded all kinds of questions.

A Shared Standard: The Law of Love

- **Matthew 22:35-40** (ESV)

³⁵ And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” ³⁷ 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. ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

A Shared Standard: The Law of Love

- **Luke 10:25-28** (ESV)

²⁵ And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶ He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” ²⁷ And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” ²⁸ And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”

A Shared Standard: The Law of Love

- The first lawyer asked for the great commandment.
 - Jesus gave him not one but two, which the second lawyer repeated.
1. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.
 2. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

A Shared Standard: *The Law of Love*

- These commandments were important to Jesus, so they ought to be important to us.
- Today we are going to examine them in their original Old Testament context.

A Shared Standard: **The Law of Love**

- Outside of the Ten Commandments, **Deuteronomy 6:4-9** is probably the best known passage in the Bible's fifth book.
- It was Israel's daily reminder that they were in a covenant relationship with God.
- Judaism does not have any creeds as Christianity does, but this is possibly the closest thing to that in the Jewish faith.

A Shared Standard: The Law of Love

- **Deuteronomy 6:4-9** (ESV)

⁴ “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

A Shared Standard: **The Law of Love**

- This passage has three distinct parts.
- First, there is only one God and this God is Israel's God.
- **Deuteronomy 6:4** (ESV)

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

A Shared Standard: The Law of Love

A Very Brief Tangent:

- Deuteronomy 6:4 (ESV)

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

- At first glance this verse could appear to rule out the idea of the Trinity – or Tri-unity of God.
- But compare Genesis 2:24 (ESV)

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

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- Second, Israel's relationship with God is supposed to be based upon love.
- This is the commandment Jesus refers to.
- **Deuteronomy 6:5** (ESV)

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

A Shared Standard: The Law of Love

- Third, this love is clearly expressed in Israel's complete devotion to the words that Moses would give them.
- **Deuteronomy 6:6-9** (ESV)

⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

A Shared Standard: *The Law of Love*

- This importance of the divinely inspired word is echoed throughout the Scriptures.
- Consider Psalm **19:7-11**.

A Shared Standard: The Law of Love

- The Bible's longest chapter is a lengthy Psalm in praise of God's word – with comments like these:

- **Psalm 119:48** (ESV)

I will lift up my hands toward your commandments, which I love,

and I will meditate on your statutes.

- **Psalm 119:97** (ESV)

Oh how I love your law!

It is my meditation all the day.

A Shared Standard: The Law of Love

- Jesus ties his own words to the weight of Holy Scripture.
- **John 8:30-31** (ESV)

³⁰ As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

A Shared Standard: **The Law of Love**

- Let's turn to another passage.
- Here Jesus promises the Spirit's help in remembering and obeying his words.
- **John 14:15-24**

A Shared Standard: **The Law of Love**

- Now let's look at the second great commandment.
- **Leviticus 19** is the chapter in which the commandment to **love your neighbor** first appears.
- We'll read especially **Leviticus 19:9-17, 32-35**.

A Shared Standard: **The Law of Love**

- **Leviticus 19:15** teaches us that the rich and the poor are equal before God.
- **Leviticus 19:18** is the verse Jesus quoted.
- **Leviticus 19:34** about the stranger and the native is important in context – as we will see.

A Shared Standard: [The Law of Love](#)

- Jesus explains love of neighbor in the [Parable of the Good Samaritan](#), the follow up to one of our initial texts.
- We find it in [Luke 10:29-37](#).

A Shared Standard

Conclusions

A Shared Standard Conclusions

- According to Jesus, the whole law and the prophets can be condensed into two commandments.
 1. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.
 2. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

A Shared Standard Conclusions

- **Love of God** is not something hazy and otherworldly; it is seen in our devotion and obedience to the Scriptures.
- **Love of neighbor** is built into love of God.
- As John says in **1 John 4:20** (ESV)

If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

A Shared Standard Conclusions

- When he was pushed to define love of neighbor, Jesus gave an example using a Samaritan.
- This was meant to pierce the heart of his Jewish questioner.
- The Samaritans were nearby religious and ethnic “others” to the Jews.
- Our ability to love those who differ most from us and yet live closest to us demonstrates our love of God and neighbor.

A Shared Standard Conclusions

- How can we apply this to the church?
- Mainly, we can see why a church segregated along socioeconomic, racial or other lines is less than biblical.
- We need to reinforce **the biblical model** of a multi-racial, multi-class, multi-cultural, multi-generational church.

A Shared Standard Conclusions

- Let's pray for God to supernaturally empower us to:
 1. Love him first of all, with all of our heart, soul, strength and mind.
 2. Let that be expressed in love for and obedience to God's word – the Holy Scriptures.
 3. Love our neighbor as ourselves, consistently, unreservedly and sacrificially.
 4. Love as the Good Samaritan loved, seeing those who differ from us as those who need to see the love of God in us.

A Shared Standard Conclusions

- Finally, may the Lord make us as a church
 1. Even more unified
 2. Even more diverse
 3. So fully identified with Christ that God's nature, love and wisdom will be evident to us and to the outside world.

Next Week

A Shared King: The Covenant with David

2 Samuel 7

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Part 5 of 14



Reference List

1. DeYoung, Curtiss, Michael O. Emerson, George Yancey, and Karen Chai Kim. 2003. *United by faith: The multiracial congregation as and answer to the problem of race*. Kindle edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2.