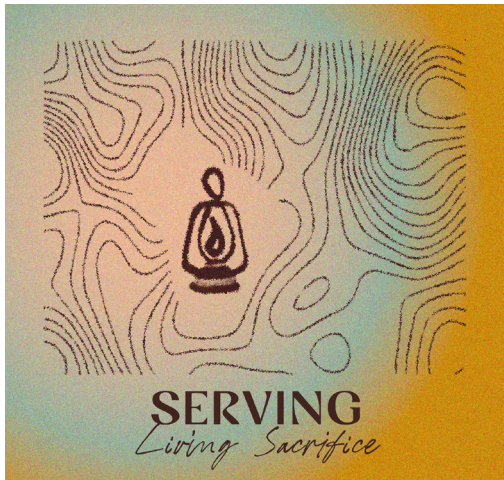




Sermon Growth Guide

Author: Jeff Sperry

AWARE | Romans 12:9-13

August 9, 2026

Key Verse: Romans 12:10 - “Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.”

Big Idea: As a result of God’s mercies (Rom. 12:1-2) and in the execution of our spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:3-8), the church is to develop a moral culture of agape love (Rom. 12:9-13) with a specific view toward building up the church as a whole.

Foundations

Last week, we heard from Nate Stratman on spiritual gifts and serving in the church as members of the body of Christ. Now, we learn more about the characteristics that we are to embody as we carry out our service of love. Verse 9 begins a rapid-fire list of behaviors that we, as believers, should prioritize and seek to develop—things such as love and fervor, sincerity and integrity, devotion and honor. We serve; we share; we show hospitality. It is akin to a Christian list of virtues that responds to the list of vices from Romans 1:29-32.

The first ethical exhortation, “Love must be sincere,” sets the stage for all of Paul’s subsequent commands. If love defines the Christian life, then, as Tertullian said, “See how they love one another” is what pagans should be saying when they observe an authentic Christian family. We should pursue honor not for ourselves, but for others, and neither should we be complacent in our service to God.

Interestingly, the trio of rejoicing in hope, enduring affliction, and faithfully praying (Rom. 12:12) mirrors the exhortations of Romans 5:2-5 and 8:24-27. We see hope fostering endurance, and endurance in turn requiring constant prayer. And finally, out of the abundant overflow of our hearts, we are to share with others in hospitality.

Understanding God’s Word

The Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard once said, “The best defense against hypocrisy is love; indeed, it is not only a defense but a chasmic abyss; in all eternity it has nothing to do with hypocrisy. This is also a fruit by which love is known—it secures the loving one against falling into the snare of the hypocrite.” Is Kierkegaard right? Does sincere love protect against hypocrisy? What does sincere love entail, how do we identify it, and how can we cultivate it?

Applying God’s Word

How are the trio of hope, endurance through suffering, and constant prayer all interconnected with each other? Is there a way for you to better put one or more of these elements into practice in your life?

Witnessing God’s Word

When the world looks at our church, what do you think they see? Do they see a religious social club? A community service organization? A collection of hypocrites? (Hopefully not!) Or do they see a family united in love? How can we better demonstrate a culture of agape love to the rest of the world?