

## Romans 12:9-19 - Real Love, Pass It On 9 December 2012

This morning I have a very simple message to share with you, it is a message on love. Love is what everybody looks for isn't it? Everybody craves for love, everybody wants to be loved. In fact, the song goes, what the world needs now is love sweet love, isn't it? What the world needs now is love sweet love, at the very same time, the world struggles with the concept of love, with what love really is. We have songs that say "What is the love?" In fact, the Chinese are very poetic. The Chinese asked this question, "What is love really?" If you are wondering what love is or you are searching for love, you are trying to find a definition or description of love and an experience of love.

I'm so glad you came because you have come to the right place because God is love. Jesus is love and the church of Jesus Christ is to be a community of love, because we as Christians, we as followers of Jesus, we follow our Savior in the way of love. This morning, I pray that not only will you be able to have an explanation of love from the stage but you will also see a demonstration of love from amongst the people of God. You see, this world is not looking for more definitions or explanations, they want to see a demonstration of love.

There is a story told of a man who went to a used bookstore and then he saw volumes of books and he saw one that caught his attention. It was a book that says "How to hug?" How to hug? I need love, I need to show more love, I need to be a person of love. He bought the book and brought it home. And when he opened it at home, he realized his horror, it was not really a book about how to hug. Rather it was a volume of an encyclopedia series that contains the subject of how to hug.

Maybe today you want to know how to love. But I hope in this church we will not just catch a theoretical explanation of what love is or how we go about loving one another, but you see a demonstration in the church of Jesus Christ. If you are here with us for the 1st time, we want to share with you, this is a community of love and will show you the love of God that is in all our hearts.

Let me 1st explain to you and hopefully at the end of the service, you will get to know people and you see the demonstration of love. What is love? What does love look like, what is the look of love? What is the portrait of love? Well the Bible gives us a very good description and a picture of love. It's found in the book of Romans and chapter 12. Here, the writer of Romans says, let love be without this dissimulation. Wow, it's a big word. The word dissimulation means hypocrisy. So, very simply, let love be

without hypocrisy. Abhor, that is to hate, to loathe, to be disgusted with that which is evil, but cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affection one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another.

What should the church be like, what should the people of God be like? Well, this is a description of love that is to be seen in you and I who have believed in Jesus Christ. There are 3 things that describe the qualities of authentic, real love. What is love like? Three things. Number 1. I think in these verses we see that love must be authentic. It has to be real, because Paul says, let love be without dissimulation, be without hypocrisy. Real love is genuine, is real, is tangible. It is not a pretense. The word hypocrisy in the Greek, refers to people who wears masks for acting purposes. You know the Chinese, the Chinese opera. How do you know a bad guy from a good guy? They all dance the same way, move the same way. How do you tell a bad guy from a good guy? From the mask. They paint on their faces a picture. Red symbolizes evil or aggressive people, blue colour symbolizes something. Red or yellow symbolizes something, but you know something about the person from the masks they wear. The Bible says, don't let your love be lived out with hypocrisy. Don't wear a mask. Don't be insincere about it. Be real and not a hypocrite.

This week I was with some of our staff, we were having lunch, brunch at a HDB estate and I caught a sight of a haircut service, a hair cut shop. And when I say this is a very interesting name for a barbershop and they said this one is very cheap. When you go and cut your hair at this shop, this franchise, it cost you only, you guess how much? Sorry? You all very cheapo. \$2. \$3.80. The hair cut there is actually very cheap, it's \$3.80. You are pretty close, you are cheapo people. \$3.80 for a hair cut, that's a very good deal. I also want to try until someone said you better don't try. Because \$3.80 sounds like there is a catch. And they warned me about the catch. What is the catch? Well, it is that when you sit down on the barber's chair, they are really not interested to cut your hair. All they want to do is to, by the way if you own this franchise, please don't come after me. I didn't reveal your name. But all they are interested in is to sell you the hair care products. Shampoos, lotions, hair growth, whatever. But all they are interested in is to sell you more stuff. The \$3.80 is too good to be true. In fact another brother chipped in and said, Ya, they are not interested in cutting your hair, because after they cut your hair, you realize one high one low. It is not balanced. They are not really interested.

The Bible says don't be a people that love with an ulterior motive. Let love be without hypocrisy, let your love be genuine. Let your love be true. Don't love in order to get something out of people. See, the world's idea of love is, I do you a favour so that you

will return me the favour. If you really peel away the surface, deep in our hearts when we do something good to others, there is that secret desire that maybe we can get something out of that person one day, you owe me one. But the Bible says when we love, it's not in order to get, it's got to be genuine. It's got to be real. It is with the full intention to give.

In fact if you really think about this verse it means other things as well, it means that we don't just love with our words. I learned this from my son. Yesterday, I was with my son. You know guys like to fool around, monkey around with play around, and so I was pulling Shawn's hair and I said, "Shawn I love you." And my son turned around and said 'Daddy, you say you love me and you do this to me?' My son taught me some theology that day, yesterday. He taught me that real love is not just in words, but it's in your deeds. I mean, this is biblical. 1 John 3:18, that we would not love just in words, but in deed and in truth. It's got to be seen in your actions.

Let me tell you something, if you are a young girl today. I have an advice for you. Guys are very good at sweet talk, they say they love you but how do you know they really love you? They say they love you, how do you know they really love you. Through actions. How do you know if your son really loves you. My sons says, Daddy I love you. He likes to say that, just to make us feel good. Mummy I love you. But how does Shawn really show his love to us? We tell him very clearly. Shawn, if you really love us, then you obey us. Daddy I love you, with a very proud way, Daddy, I love you. How do you know you love me? When I obey you. He is not quite willing to do right? A child shows his love by obedience, action. How do you know if your husband loves you? Your husband says I love you, dear, I love you, I'm willing to fly to the moon for you. I am willing to swim the deepest ocean. I am willing to cross the hottest desert. I love you but when you ask him to wash dishes, he says not today, I am very tired. Now you know if a person loves you by his actions and by his deeds. And that's the way it is. How do you show love to one another? Just a simple I love you with Your Words? Let love be without hypocrisy. It's got to be real, it's got to be seen, it's got to be seen in your actions.

There are some brethren in this church, she shared how she knew the love of God through the people of God when there are some couples when she was down, just went to her house and painted the whole house. Took 5 days, they took leave to just brighten up her house, painted her house. You know what? She saw love. She didn't just hear people say I love you. She saw love. Real love is in our deeds. The church of Jesus Christ is to be a community of authentic love. When people give without the

intention to get, when people serve and meet you according to your needs with their hands, their feet with their actions and not just with their words.

Also real love is seen in discernment. You see, the Bible also tells us in the same phrase, when you love someone without hypocrisy, you will abhor that which is evil and you cleave to that which is good. Real love is not just doing what is nice, or what is pleasant, or what is easy. Paul says love rejoices not in iniquity, but love rejoices in truth, 1 Corinthians 13:6. Real love does not do that which is easy or pleasant. Real love does that which is good and right.

Let me tell you something, young girls again. As if I am very old, but young ladies here. The world tells you of a love that doesn't lead you to that which is good. Young man tell you I love you. Maybe you as a young lady here, you have met or heard of this many times from people. I love you and I want to have sex with you. It is okay, we are not married but it's okay. It's pleasant. It's nice, it's easy, everybody is doing it. I love you. But you know what? That's not love. That's lust. Because love abhors that which is evil and it cleaves to that which is good. What is good? God is good. Scripture is good. You know, sin destroys your life and when a man says, let's sleep together because it is easy, and because I love you, even though we're not married. That's not love.

The Bible has this tragic story about. The Bible tells us of a family, a kingly family. David's family. David had a son, Amnon. And Amnon wanted Tamar, his half sister. He wanted to sleep with her. And so Amnon went to Tamar. Tamar, I love you. I want to sleep with you. Tamar refused. What did Amnon do? Amnon cruelly raped her. And after Amnon raped her, Amnon says I hate you. I loathe you. I'm disgusted with you. You know what, Amnon didn't love Tamar. Never. Because real love abhors that which is evil and cleaves to that which is good. The world knows of a love that is a counterfeit love, it is not the love of God. It is not the love of the Bible, it is a selfish lust, not a godly love. Real love is authentic. It's not self-centred, it is not to give in order to get. Real love is seen in our actions, we serve and not just talk. Real love discerns, real love abhors that which is evil, cleaves to that which is good. You see, Jesus loved us like that isn't it?

The Bible tells us Jesus loved his church and the bride of Jesus, the church of Jesus Christ, how does he love us? He loves us by washing us with the water of the word, Ephesians 5:26. Real love purifies, doesn't defile, it abhors that which is evil, cleaves to that which is good. Real love purifies. So we see in this passage, number 1, the people of God are to be a community of love, a kind of love, authentic love, let love be

without dissimulation, without hypocrisy. But, secondly the love that is to be seen in the church is to be an affectionate love. An affectionate love. Why? Because the Bible says, be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love. The word kindly affectioned is actually one word in the Greek, it is a very sweet word. It is a word that is about warmth, about tenderness, about cherishing. In fact this word is used for family relationships, it is a family word about family love. It is a love between a father and a son, a daughter and a mother, between siblings, between one another in a home, in a family.

This word in the Greek, for those who are interested, is Philostorgos. What does that word mean? Philo is friendship love, brotherly love. That's why you have the city called Philadelphia, city of brotherly love. Philadelphia, Philo. The other word storgos is about family love. Put these words together. Philostorgos refers to a love in a family that is tender and warm. It's the kind of love that you enjoy at home. Chinese we called it tian lun zhi le. It's the kind of warm, affectionate, sensation, feeling, emotion in a family. This is the balance of the Bible. Real love is not just about feelings. It's got to be seen in your deeds, right? At the very same time, love is not just about deeds, there is an affection that goes along with it. It is not a mechanical, cold and aloof thing, love is a living power that gives us that warmth and tenderness, and at the very same time, an expressed and practical deeds. This is the love that the Bible calls us to have. A love for one another like as in a family.

Now if you really understand this, it will change the way you think. Huh? How? How did you come to church this morning? I suppose, I'm not saying all, but I suppose, I venture to say 90% of us, come to church this morning with this thinking. Well it's Sunday morning, let's get to church and to attend the service, because the service is the official meeting of my faith. So it's a ritual already in my life, every Sunday morning at 10 AM, I'll be there and there we will sing some songs, hear a message from a pastor and right after the message, I think we're done, we can leave. In fact I expect to come to this service, sitting with strangers around me, you can look around you. Who is this? But never mind, anyway I'm here for a seminar, I'm here for a talk, I am here for a message and when I'm done, I can leave. But when you look at this verse, it should change the way you approach the church. It should change the way you think. Because right now you're not coming to a seminar or a classroom, you are coming to the family. Can you say that loudly? With affirmation because this is what the bible says. You are to have philostorgos. Tender love in the family and for one another. So when you come to church, you are coming to a family. The family, where the people around you, though they look different. Some have more hair some have less hair. Some are darker some are fairer. Some are ladies, some are guys. Some are

working in the office, some are working outdoors. But regardless of who we are, we are coming to the family if we are all in the Lord Jesus Christ. It's family. So look at the people around you, they are family. We don't always see that.

I'm reminded of a story about 2 men, 2 pilots, one pilot and one co-pilot, of course, and one is a Chinese pilot and one is a Jewish pilot. Imagine that, they are flying and you know pilots only have to work when they take off and when they land. In the middle they can do whatever they want. So they decided to chitchat and the Jewish guy says to the Chinese guy, hey I really hate Chinese. Ya, the Jewish guy said to the Chinese guy, I really hate Chinese. He said why? Because the Chinese bombed Pearl Harbour. The Chinese said huh? No the Chinese didn't bomb Pearl Harbour, it was the Japanese. It doesn't matter. Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, I just hate all of you, you are the same. So the Chinese man was very offended and he didn't speak for 30 minutes and after 30 minutes, he returned to the Jewish guys and said I hate Jews. Why, why do you hate Jews? Because Jews sank the Titanic. Huh? The Jews didn't sink the Titanic, it was an ice berg that sank Titanic. They see more similarities than we do. Let me tell you something, there's something that unites all of us, whether Jews or Gentile, black or white. The Bible says if we are all believers of Jesus Christ, we are one, say that word with me, family in Christ. The people, O.K. I want you to turn and look at the people around you. Show me that you turn your heads and see each other. They all look different from you, some are more handsome than you, you cannot take it. Although they are all different from us, we are all family. We are all family. And you know we shouldn't, if the love of God is in our lives. We should have a change of mindset when we come to church. We are not coming to cold, dry Institute listening to a lecturer. We are coming as a family hearing from our heavenly Father. We are family and we express in the way we address each other. It will be expressed in the way we smile at each other, it will be expressed in the way we serve each other. There is a new mindset, a Gospel transformed mind is a new mind. That we don't see each other as strangers or irritants, but we see each other as gor gor, jie jie, brothers, sisters. That's what it calls for.

You see, Jesus said something very revolutionary. I think I have a hard time believing it myself. Maybe you do. But that's what he says. In Mark chapter 12. He says he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples and said, behold, my mother and my brethren. What, what, what? He says those who have followed him, they are my brothers and sisters. Wow! He goes on to say, whosoever shall do the will of my father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother. He says this is my real family. This is my supreme family, the body of Christ. My followers, my brethren. This is very hard for an Asian, for Chinese. Why? Because our Chinese

ethos and values is very strong in filial piety. The home. We are strong in that. I am in no way, the Scripture is in no way eroding any of that. The family values that the Asians hold are precious, valuable. The Bible actually does not call us to neglect our family in any way. We are to honour our parents, love our brethren. Yes that's true, no erosion. Jesus is saying that there is a greater love than that, there is a greater bond than that. There is a deep spiritual reality that transcends natural affection, spiritual affections in the body of Christ. You like it or not, I think in heaven we will see each other. Maybe some of you will be way in front of the queue in receiving rewards, but you know what? We will see each other if we are in Christ. This is the depth that Jesus is talking about. If you could love your son, if you could love your father, your mother, your brothers and sisters with a deep love today, Jesus is calling you to a greater love for one another because you have a deeper bond than you even realize today. So he says, real love got to be affectionate. Be philóstorgos one to another with Philadelphia, that friendship tender loving love, care.

Let me move on. The third quality of this love is not only that it should be authentic and affectionate, but it's got to be appreciative. In other words, you've got to appreciate each other. Real love respects and esteems, honours one another. Why? He says that in verse 10, the 2nd half, in honour preferring one another. In other words, we regard each other. We don't despise one another. We esteem, we respect. In other words, we want to lift others up. The word honor is to put someone above you. That's what honoring is. What does it mean to honor your parents? It means you put them above you, you regard them, you respect them. And the church in love is to regard and honour one another. We're happy when someone else succeeds. We help others succeed, that's what honor is. This phrase may seem strange to you, preferring one another. It is better translated to be leading one another in honour, leading one another. The English standard version may be simpler. It says outdo one another in showing honor. This is what love is, you don't wait for others to show love to you. Real love is that you take the initiative, it is proactive. You see, it is very hard for us to love others. We probably would do good to people when people have done good to us 1st. But the love that God is looking for is not a passive, reactionary love. It's a proactive love whereby you outdo one another in showing honour.

I'm not sure about you, but when I read verses 9 and 10 in this week preparing for this message, these 3 qualities stand out and these 3 qualities screamed out to me, Jason, this is really difficult. In fact, the more I think about it, it screams out to me, Jason, this is impossible. There's no way you can do it. Why, because naturally, in our hearts, we are very insecure and we like to compare and when we compare we like to lift ourselves up. Do you realize that? Especially guys. You agree? Ladies

maybe less of it. But guys are highly competitive and we like to show ourselves stronger than others and therefore it is very hard for us to outdo one another in lifting up people. We tend to lift up ourselves. I give you an example. Again yesterday, my son usually go and poo poo in the morning, after he poo poos, he says, daddy, I am done. Of course this is a signal for me to wipe his backside. Daddy, I am done. So I go and wipe his backside. Wah Shawn, your poo poo very smelly, and he said, daddy, mine more smelly or yours more smelly? I asked him, what do you want the answer to be? He said mine more smelly. You know what? My son wants to win, even in how smelly his poo poo is. I don't know about you but I am sure this is, we love to compare. Whose grades are better in school? Whose job is more high class? Who earns more money? Whose house is bigger? Whose car is faster? We love to compare. Why? Because man, because of sin, is terribly insecure. This is what we are always thinking about. What do people think of me? How do I look? What do they think? And all that we do, let me say this, all that we do, most of what we do, is not out of love, is always to gather more security for ourselves. To look good, to gain favour and recognition before others. That's why when somebody close to you does well, it rocks your world, it spoils the curve you see. Wah, how come someone be so good, I like that? It really upsets you. That's why we don't like to lift up others, we like to lift up ourselves. If you saw in the newspaper, this scholar, primary six scholar got 290 for PSLE. Wah this boy very smart, very good, very good, but if that 290 scholar is your neighbour's son and especially he goes for the same tuition class as your son, not very good, not very good. You will say, he cheated one, he cheated one, not real one. Why? Because he is close to you. He rocks your world, you are insecure. It's worse if he is your relative's son, the closer to home it is, the harder it hits you. It doesn't matter if Bill Gates is rich, but it matters if your brother is rich. Cannot take it. Every time Chinese New Year I see him, cannot take it. Why? Because you are terribly insecure.

Therefore, to fulfill the Scriptures, to be a genuine community of love. It is impossible, consistent, you can't. So let me say this, we are stuck. God demands the kind of love that the world cannot offer. A love that is authentic, a love that is affectionate in its core. A love that is appreciative. How can we do it? It is impossible to do it. So what can you do? It is almost a lights out and it's lights out now in all the rooms, and brethren I've a surprise for you.

I like you to now reach below your chairs, beneath your chairs you should pick up two things. One is a candle and two it is an aluminum foil. And what we're going to do, one candle in each room, and what I'm going to do, is with this candle, pass the flames to all of you. Now with this in your hand, I hope this is an illustration for you,



what is the lesson here today, we began this morning with just one flame. There is only one source of real divine love, the source is God. I began saying God is love. Jesus is love. And the only way we can have love is when it is the love of God in us and if you today have believed in Jesus, then the love, the flame of God's love will be lighted in your life. The love of God has come to your candle, the love of God has come into your life and as your life lights up, the cold dark world we live in lights up and you experience, have tasted this love. Now you can spread this love to those around you. You see, as we look at verses 9 and 10, it is calling for an impossible love. A love we could never, ever produce, not in a 1,000,000 years. But it is the love of God and those who have been graced, those who have believed, those who have received the love of God, your life comes alive. There is a flame, a fire, a passion in you and when you have this same love, you can spread and pass this love all around.

My friends, this is the message of Romans. Romans 9 and 10 is only possible if you realize Romans 12, verse 1, I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God. It is only when you experience how much Jesus loves me, it is only as I experienced how much God loves me, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, that we begin to share this love. My friends, the demands of love that we have spoken of today demands Jesus Himself, do you realize that? Jesus loves us with an authentic love, he didn't just sit in heaven, I love you. Jesus came down to earth, be born as man, in order to die. His love was an authentic love, that leads you away from sin to God, and to that which is good. Jesus loves you affectionately, he doesn't just save you mechanically, he calls you friends, he calls you brother, calls you sister, heavens rejoice over one sinner that repents. And the love of Jesus lifts you up, he honours you. You were stuck in a dirty world of sin, he lifts you up, he sets you on the heavenly places, he calls you heirs and coheirs, he says you are destined for glory. This is the love of Jesus. My friends, if you have believed in Jesus, that's the love of the Gospel that is in your life. And when you have experienced this love, as you have received this love, you can now release this love. Our love to others is a reflection and a response of God's love for me.

So, this day, this is real love, real love is not what you have. Real love is from God. And when you have this real love, let's pass it on. So this morning as we close, I like us to sing this song pass it on.

As the music continues to play, let us bow and contemplate on the love of God in Jesus Christ. This amazing love that is so beyond human abilities is shone on the cross of Jesus 2000 years ago, Jesus loves you with an unconditional love, with a genuine love that wants the best for your life. Jesus loves you, tenderly, lovingly and

Jesus loves you and he wants to lift you up. And friends, this is the love of God in Jesus Christ. I want to encourage you this morning, maybe today, there are some people in your life that you cannot forgive, they are in this family, they are your brothers and sisters. But something somehow has come into your life, in your way, may this flame that is right before you remind you of the love of God that has forgiven you of all your sins. With this same love, ask God to give you grace, to forgive, to reunite, to reconcile, to practice philostorgos. That we may be a people united as one that the world may know we are his disciples. Maybe today you have come to church and have always been thinking, I'm not part of this church. It's them, it's not we. But friends, this is the love of God, it's not them, it's we. Because we've all been placed in the same body of Jesus.

Come with the mindset, we are one together. No more you, no more versus me. Maybe today, you are struggling in your life. Like me, you struggle because you look at these verses, and say there's no way I can do this. I see in my life plenty of impatience, plenty of anger. I wish I could love like Jesus loved. And you have tried but you have failed. My friends, that's because this candle can never light up on its own. It's got to be lighted by the love and flame of Jesus. This morning, go back to the Gospel. Love doesn't begin with us, love begins with Jesus. As we soak in the Gospel, the good news of Jesus, realize, contemplate and ask God to bring us deeply into the Gospel of Jesus. A flame of his love will light up in your life and friends, this real love will enable you to pass it on. There are people around you who needs love. Share with them the love of Jesus. Friends, this morning, I want to share God's love with you. You maybe 1st time in GLCC, 1st time in a church, you have not known Jesus as yet. My friends, let me say this to you, God loves you. And therefore he sent His Son to die on the cross for you. But you say I am a sinner, I'm not worthy. My friends, that's exactly why his love is so amazing. While we were unworthy, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for you. Believe in Jesus and you will be saved. You will be lifted up, your sins will be forgiven and he will change your life. Jesus died and rose again for you, accept this real love today, may your candle of life be lighted and may you pass it on.

And so father this morning, we thank you, thank you we can worship you because you 1st loved us and gave yourself for us. Bless this word, this message of real love pass it on, to all your people that are gathered here. That this world may be filled with your love. That your church will be filled with your love, our homes will be filled with your love. Our schools, our offices will be filled with your love. May this world know Jesus' love through us today, we pray in Jesus Name. Amen.

