

John 13:34, 35

*“Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another. This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other.”*

Our slide has a quote I’d like to share with you:

“Live in such a way that those who know you, but don’t know God, will come to know God because they know you!”

As I look around today at all that we have celebrate – our Sunday School and Youth, new members, (*our music ministry*), the fellowship at our picnic, praising God...my heart is filled. There is such a spirit of joy, of love, of fellowship. This is holy Ground. For it is God that has brought us together. It is God and God’s work that gives us purpose and meaning here together. And the only thing that in any way taints it for me, is knowing that are many people in this community who do not yet know God. Who do not know the love and grace and compassion of Jesus Christ. Who do not have the power of the Holy Spirit at work in their lives. Who do not know this Body of Christ called John Wesley. And I want them to know, to be able to share in what we have here.

And I hope that you too have a heart for the unchurched. I think often of Ghandi’s comment, “I like your Christ. I do not like your Christians. They are so unlike your Christ.” But that does not have to be true for us here at John Wesley. Not if we live and love, like Christ lived and loved.

Repeat after me, if you would:

“Live in such a way that those who know you, but don’t know God, will come to know God because they know you!”

I want to share another story by Tony Campolo. One which talks to this issue.

“Since my late teenage years, I have been a member of the Mount Carmel Baptist Church, an African-American congregation in West Philadelphia. (Tony is white, by the way.) Once a year at

my church, we have student recognition day. I remember one of those Sundays when more than twenty college and university students sat in the first two pews. The pastor looked at them and, with pride and great affection, called them one by one to come forward and tell the congregation what they were studying and what they hoped to become.

One young man said, "I'm studying at Harvard University and I am going to be a lawyer." Elderly grandmothers and grandfathers responded with delight, "My, my. Oh yes. Thank you, Jesus."

Another student said, "I'm studying engineering at MIT." Again, there were cries of approval and the clapping of hands.

A young woman announced, "I am studying music at Juilliard," and I heard grandmothers and grandfathers all over that congregation saying, "Wonderful, wonderful. Good, good. Thank you, Jesus."

You may think you've heard great music, but you haven't heard the greatest music until you hear about forty or fifty grandmothers and grandfathers moaning and groaning the moans and groans of joy because their grandchildren are becoming what slavery never let them be.

Every year, after all the students have finished their brief presentations and are sitting there "bright-eyed and bushy-tailed," the pastor gets up, look right at them, and in a stern, loud voice, declares, "Children! You're gonna die someday! That right. You're gonna die! You can't even imagine dyin' right now, but one of these days they're gonna take you out to the cemetery, drop you in a hole, throw dirt over your casket, then go back to the church and eat potato salad!

So I want you to think about something. When you were born, you were the only one who cried. Everybody else was happy. But that's not what's important. Here's what's important. When you die, will you be the only one who's happy, and will everybody else cry? That depends on what you're living for. Are you tryin' to get titles: bachelors' degrees, masters' degrees, doctors' degrees? Is that what your life is all about? Collecting titles? Or, is it about collecting testimonies?"

That's black preaching at its best. It's got rhythm. It's got music. It's got poetry. I can still hear the pastor saying it over and over again, "Titles or testimonies? Titles or testimonies?" And then, he swept through the Bible in five minutes. This man swept from Genesis to Revelation in one majestic run of words. I can still hear him saying, "Pharaoh had the title: "Ruler of Egypt." Now that a good title, but when it was over that's all Pharaoh had – a title. He had the title, but Moses had the testimonies!"

With greater power in his voice, the pastor went on, "There was Queen Jezebel. Good title – Queen. She was going to destroy Elijah, the prophet of God, but when it was over, all Jezebel had was a title. She had the title – but Elijah had the testimonies!"

Then there was King Darius. Good title – King. He threw Daniel into the lion's den, but when it was over, all he had was the title. Darius had the title, but Daniel had..." And the congregation yelled back, "The testimonies!"

The pastor went on, rhythmically preaching, and the people responded with joy and clapped their hands. And I can still hear the pastor as he looked down at those two rows of young people saying, "When it's all over for you, and they lay you in your grave, what will you have? Do you want a tombstone with all your titles or do you want people standing around your grave giving *testimonies* about how you loved them, how you cared for them in the name of Jesus Christ, and how you made a difference in their lives?"

I wish for you both titles *and* testimonies, but if you have to make a choice – you go for the *testimonies!*"

Let us challenge ourselves and each other to go for the testimonies, as we say together:  
"Live in such a way that those who know you, but don't know God, will come to know God because they know you!"