

Unshakeable Faith Week Eight

If you made a list of your family members who would you include? Parents, grandparents, and children? Aunts, uncles, and cousins? Would you include anyone from your church?

Every Christian belongs to God's family. When God saves us, He saves us into His family. We can never experience all God has for us apart from a local body of believers. Jesus made it clear to His disciples that God designed the Christian life to be lived in the context of community.

Unshakeable Faith trait eight: Connected to a local church body with love and service

Peter spent roughly three years learning from Jesus how to live in a community of believers. This group traveled together, ate together, and did life together. But Jesus didn't merely teach about love and service. He set the example.

Read John 13:1-17. Why did Jesus wash the disciples' feet? (Look back at verse 1 to help you with your answer.)

Thirteen pairs of feet needed washing after walking the dusty roads, but none of the disciples offered to do this job usually reserved for the lowest servant. Although Jesus deserved their honor and worship, He humbled Himself to meet a need and to set an example of service. Jesus established a standard for all His disciples – then and now – through this humble act.

Later that same night – while their feet were still clean - Jesus emphasized His act of service with a command. “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:12-13, NIV). Jesus did not mean that we all need to run around washing each other's feet (though sometimes it's a good idea!). He wants us to love each by putting each other first and meeting each other's needs. Peter got the point.

Read 1 Peter 3:8-9. List all the characteristics and behaviors that describe how we should conduct our relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ.

My life does not perfectly reflect Peter's description for brotherly behavior. How about yours? Praise God, He is faithful to continue to work on us! Let's look at one more passage from Peter's first letter and then make some personal application.

Read 1 Peter 4:8-10. How did Peter say we should love each other? What is this kind of love capable of illustrating and being?

Peter used the Greek word *agape* to describe the kind of love Christians should have for each other. Therefore, Peter commanded his readers to love each other in a way that is benevolent and unselfish, always acting in the best interest of the other person. According to the *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, "agape love is capable of being commanded because it is not primarily an emotion but a decision of the will leading to action."

Jesus commanded us to love each other like He loves us. Deeply, unselfishly, with the other's best interests at heart. In this way, Jesus loves His children through the local church. He cares for us, comforts us, provides for us, and encourages us through our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Do you know of a need right now in your church family that needs your love in action? List some concrete ways you can show your love.

God's purpose for your life includes a vital connection to a local church body. He has designed this interdependent relationship to benefit each of us. When times are shaky and difficulties storm your life, God will use His body to hold you up. In turn, He will use you to encourage someone else. If you are not fully connected to a local church, don't wait any longer!

Let's talk! Let's share today some of the ways God has loved you through the local church.