

## Time for God – Take 2

Purpose: To assist the congregation with further reflection on the theme of the Sunday service/passage.

### Week beginning Sunday 31 March 2019 Love worked out

Pray that we would appreciate the privileges of being loved in family and in church family – that we would be ready to play our part in fostering and developing it – and that we would be open to gifts that allow us to demonstrate it in meaningful and tangible ways.

Read Read the passage (preferably in an easy to understand version). Romans 12:9-21.

Background Paul is concerned to equip the early believers with the ability to withstand the pressures that faced them from outwith the community of faith. He knew that they would need considerable resilience and that caring for one another in the deepest way possible was part of God's plan. These verses could read like a list of demands, but they are to be taken in the context of the preceding verses (and indeed chapters) that found our service on God's grace in Jesus. Yes, he expects and longs for our love being worked out in practice, but that rests principally on his grace, which ought to make Paul's list less burdensome.

#### Possible questions/points to consider

1. Not everyone has the benefit of a loving family though we are all loved by God and, in Jesus, we belong to his family. What is your experience of being loved and appreciated when you were growing up? Or indeed in family or with close friends now? What are the positives? What are the points of strain? How do we cope with them?
  2. We often talk about the church as a family – what are the similarities with our human family? What are the differences? What does the passage say about how we can improve relationships?
  3. It is important not to take these verses as a list of demands or burdens. Which of these would you see as being your particular gift(s)? Can you see any of them as being more evident in others you know? If so, which? How can we develop the gifts – in ourselves? In others? What could we do to “gel things together” better?
  4. “See how these Christians love one another”. To what extent might people in our community be able to say that of our fellowship? How might we go about things differently so as to make that observation more of a reality? We are not going to get on with everyone equally – how do we cope with the differences? How can we value the really close friendships while still being open and positive to everyone?
  5. To return to the list – is there any of the items that you believe God is calling you to develop? What are you going to do about it? If there anything on the list that stands out as being something that is spot on for one of your friends or family – how might you broach the subject with them?
  6. Although we are talking about individuals and their gifts, much of this applies to how we relate to one another (either in families/among close friends or in congregations/fellowships). The different aspects matter – but so too does how they all “hang together”. What can we do to foster more joined up thinking and practice that demonstrates the love of Jesus through our love for one another? (Be as practical as you can).
  7. What are the best things about our congregation? How can we build on them? And the worst? What steps can we take to improve matters?
  8. There are other issues that could have been discussed - feel free to explore any topics from the passage or theme even if they weren't raised on Sunday.
- Prayer Lord thank you that so many of us have benefited from loving relationships in family and in church. Bless and foster the positives. Console and comfort those who have been hurt and help us to make things better, deepening our love for one another (with the gifts you provide) so as to demonstrate our love for Jesus and to encourage others to share in it. Amen.