

## **Love Like Family: Brotherly Affection**

2 Peter 1

Series “Stronger”

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Thanks so much to Pastor Jarrett for allowing me to be over here at the Champions Campus this morning, always so excited to see how God is at work in our church family.

Open your Bibles with me to 2 Peter 1 and remember the words of Pastor Jarrett from the beginning of the series – our goal this summer is to get BUFF spiritually by growing the Godly Characteristics we see here...this morning, we’re going to zero in on Brotherly Affection from verse 7, but before we do, let me share a couple of stories from life right here in the midst of our church family...I think you’ll be encouraged and inspired by each one.

First, right now, we have a family in our church whose child was born very early, and with that comes so many health complications. It’s been a real challenge for their entire family. Right now, there are constant prayers for the health of the child and for provision for their family. Imagine the situation, many of you may have been there yourselves at some point...there’s a natural level of desperation, of wonder, of not knowing what’s going to happen and this feeling of hopelessness because everything is out of your control...oh, and on top of that, nothing about those long hospital stays is cheap...just driving and parking every day adds up! Thankfully, this family is connected to a Life Group that’s jumped in to provide meals, prayers, notes, encouragement, and in addition to all that, the group gathered together and sacrificially gave to this family to help ease the financial burden. This family is still right in the middle of the storm, but they know they’ve got a church family in it with them.

There’s another family where dad was deployed just a few months ago. Young kids at home...if you’ve got kids at home, you know how busy life is these days...everything going on...some days at our house it’s tough to keep our heads above water with me and Chelsea working together – this family was nervous about the deployment and how they were going to do it...thankfully for them, they have a church family that knows and loves them as well. Their life group class gave the family this document that basically said...call us for any and everything...for mowing the lawn, call this guy. If your car has trouble, call this guy. If you need a break, call this family to take the kids for a while...and all throughout, meals were delivered and prayers were offered up. Listen, this family didn’t love being a part, but through the deployment, they saw that their family was much bigger than they imagined...they had a church that loved them like their own.

One more...a few years ago, a man in our church ran into an old friend from the town they grew up in at a HS football game in Tomball. Both of these guys are believers and as they caught up, the man in our church learned that his buddy had kidney disease and needed a kidney to save his life.... the conversation ended with, hey, if you know anyone with the blood type o negative, let me know! And

the CF member walked away thinking...I'm a negative...and as he prayed about it with his wife, he told me earlier this week, that the entire time, up until this week even, the Lord gave him a perfect peace that he should get tested to see if he's a match...he was, and he loved his friend to the point of giving him a kidney and changing/saving his life!

It's amazing, he showed a remarkable willingness to sacrifice...the epitome of putting others before yourself!

I LOVE stories like this...they're so encouraging, heartwarming, to me they're inspirational. And as we dig into 2 Peter 1 this morning, we're going to see that these stories in a church family should be COMMON! They shouldn't be the exception, they should be the rule...this is how God has called us to love one another here in the family! If you're taking notes this morning, our title is: Love like family! Because that's what we're called to do.

Look with me at 2 Peter 1, starting in verse 5.

<sup>5</sup>For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, <sup>6</sup>and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, <sup>7</sup>and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

Now, verse 5 gives us our summer focus – Make every effort!

Remember the context here – we can't dig all the way back into it every week, but just a little refresher – in his letter here, Peter's point is that God loves us! He tells us that it's through knowing Jesus that we have everything we need to live godly lives...we've got it all, we're lacking in nothing, if we know Jesus and trust in his promises!

And because of that relationship, because we know Jesus, the command given here is simple...may not always be easy...but it's simple: Put effort into life a Godly life!

Understand that your life matters, your godly character matters...make every effort!

This is a big deal! Remember why...as we continue this chapter, we know that as we grow stronger in these godly characteristics our lives stay fruitful and focused...and our lives confirm that our hearts have in fact been changed by the grace of Jesus!

Our actions reveal who we truly are...This morning our focus is right there in verse 7 on Brotherly Affection. Our goal is to understand it, so we can make every effort to grow stronger in it...and we're going to do that by answering three questions:

What exactly is Brotherly Affection?

What does it matter that we grow in Brotherly Affection?

Practically, how do we show one another Brotherly Affection?

What is Brotherly Affection?

Here's my definition: **Brotherly affection** (phileo love or Philadelphia) is the kind of love Christians show one another as members of God's family. It's a warm, sincere care that treats fellow believers like close brothers and sisters—marked by kindness, loyalty, and practical help. This kind of love comes from our shared relationship with Jesus and shows up in how we serve, encourage, and stick with each other.

It'll help you to know that the Greek here is Phileo Love or Philadelphia love, not AGAPE love. Like I said, Philadelphia love, the call here, is warm love between spiritual siblings...love in the spiritual family...Agape Love is the sacrificial love that God has shown us that we're called to show everyone. You see the difference? BY the way, as we learn to love one another, our agape love for the world around us can't help but grow...

Brotherly Affection – This is not surface level friendliness – this is heartfelt care for one another, as if we were in the same family! It means we show up for one another, we do life together, we're committed to one another's well-being with more than our words...we come through for each other!

Now, at the time that Peter was writing, in the Greco-Roman world, this kind of love was becoming more and more common...but only within biological families. Loyalty to your family was everything. But showing this kind of love to non-relatives was revolutionary! As the early church lived this out, it shocked the culture...and to those on the outside looking in, it was powerfully attractive!

When it comes to other believers, our church family – we should 100% see each other as and treat each other as family!

Now, sure, we all have limited relational capacity – we can't have 100 best friends. But we can show brotherly affection to each other here in the church family.

And yes, just like your family has issues from time to time, the church family is going to have issues...because we all mess up – no church is perfect! And you've heard the phrase, right? If you find a perfect church, don't join it...because then it wouldn't be perfect anymore. We're going to have disagreements, but at the end of the day, our love for Jesus and for one another keeps pulling us back together! We'll have this deep loyalty to one another; we'll stick up for one another and protect each other like brothers do!

My grandma told me a great story years ago about my dad showing brotherly love to his little brother...like any siblings, they had their moments, but there was this one bully in the neighborhood who continued to pick on my dad's little brother, and one time, when my dad was around 12 years old, he saw it happening, he knew he had to step in, so he ran up to the bully, ready to fight...and the

bully, like they often do, ran away, into his house! What he didn't expect was for my dad to follow him into his own home to give him a whoopin in front of him mom...

What would drive him to do that? Brotherly love! A real and genuine care and concern for the well-being of his brother. Brotherly love, a family bond, it's powerful and it drives us to extreme measures to take care of each other. There's nothing I wouldn't do for my family – that's what we're called to here in the church family. That same love we have for our families should be shown to those in our spiritual family.

I gave some examples from our church family earlier – another great example is from the first century church in Acts 2-4. Believers took care of one another; they sold property to ensure nobody lacked food and shelter.

In 1732, in Herrnhut, Germany, a group of believers heard about Christians in the Danish West Indies who were enslaved and had no one to continue teaching them and encouraging them in the Gospel...so two men, Johann Dober and David Nitschmann made the decision to love these believers like they were family. If my wife or kids was in that situation I'd do whatever it took to be with them, to love and encourage them to continue chasing Jesus...these two German Christians sold themselves into slavery to be with those believers, knowing they'd never come home...there's NOTHING you wouldn't do for family...that should be us...how we treat one another here – a willingness to do whatever it takes to LOVE!

Now, before you look around the room and say, no way, there's too many odd balls in here – remember – this happens, all of it, through God at work in us! In fact, in Matthew 19 Jesus tells us with man so much is impossible, but with God, all things are possible!

And just so we're on the same page – for believers this is consistent teaching for us across the New Testament:

- Rom 12:10 – be devoted to one another in brotherly love
- Acts 2:42-47 – they lived it out brotherly love
- John 13:34-35 – Jesus and the disciples modeled brotherly love
- Heb 13:1 – Let brotherly love continue...

Which again is warm and affectionate love where believers treat one another like family – because through Jesus we are family. Now that we've got our definition, we need to answer another question:

## 2. Why does growing in brotherly affection matter?

The quick and easy answer is simple – Because God told us to love like this, and we know as his children that his commands for us are always for his glory and our good. We can trust God and

follow him in faith. And on top of that, let me give you a few reasons why it's a big deal for each one of us to grow in brotherly affection:

A. Showing brotherly affection reveals who are we.

John 1:12 is one of my favorite verses... **12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,**

When we trust in Christ – we're children of God. We're in his family! In Hebrews 2, believers are called brothers and sisters. In Romans 8 we're called sons and daughters of God. The Bible is clear that as we trust in Jesus, we become one family, united because of our common faith in Him.

Second:

B. Showing Brotherly affection draws the world to love Jesus.

Earlier, in our definition, I mentioned that in the Greco-Roman world, this kind of love was growing in popularity among biological family units...but it was a foreign concept to show this kind of love to those not actually in your family. Right? It was common to help your family, to support them, to lend money to them, to show up for them in times of crisis – but you just didn't do that for anyone else...no one really did...until believers started doing it.

In his book, History of Christian Missions, by Stephen Neill, you see this remarkable growth of the church in the Roman empire because of the community they became as God drew them closer to one another. Their affectionate, loving, and caring relationships drew people in! When you see people loving and treating one another like that, it's natural, you want to be part of that group!

Tertullian was a Christian writer who lived from AD155 to AD240...listen to how he described the Christian community – it's Brotherly Affection. "We are one in mind and soul, we do not hesitate to share our earthly goods with one another. All things are common among us but our wives." This was the natural, the logical result of becoming a child of God for the early church...they knew they were family...and when they started treating one another like family, a watching world was drawn to Jesus!

That's no accident – it wasn't unexpected – you know who told us that would happen? Jesus told us that would happen in **John 13:35: By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."**

So... the way we treat our church family, the way we treat other believers...it clearly communicates to a watching world...YES – they belong to JESUS...or NO – they don't belong to Jesus. You see why this is a big deal, right? Our interactions with one another – if they are full of brotherly affection...warmth, care, sacrifice, and a genuine joy...our interactions help people trust in Jesus as Lord.

This is so basic...so simple. There's an opportunity for massive spiritual wins in our community by getting this small command right. Baseball is a big deal in our family...one of my younger sons plays on a team with several families who follow Jesus, and the way these families treat one another is attractive to other families. I can't tell you how many times we've had moms and dads stop us at a tournament or on the ball field and ask to join the team because of how we treat one another...we're nice, we help each other out with our kids, we're encouraging and supportive...we love like family, and people notice!

That's what this is – look around. Love these people like your family, because they are, and our community will be pointed to Christ. Third:

C. Showing brotherly affection strengthens the church.

So, this command isn't only good for the community, it's good for our church family here too. Think about it – when you're on the receiving end of brotherly affection, how's it make your heart feel? When someone cares enough to love you like family... Think on it...if you're like me it helps confirm that you belong! That you're in the family!

I'll never forget...one of the first times I ever preached a sermon here at CF, getting coffee in between services Raye Anne Edmonds caught me and was so encouraging – her words, “You belong here!” She probably doesn't even remember, but I'll never forget – brotherly affection strengthens the body!

When we treat one another with this kind of love, we grow in unity, we grow in trust, we grow in accountability – which just makes us stronger and more focused to do what Jesus has called us to do! The church has a mission – to make disciples of Jesus – when we love one another well, we strengthen the family for the mission!

Listen, with so many Godly characteristics mentioned in these verses...it could be easy to skip over brotherly affection – I hope we don't. I pray that we've seen from God's word the massive difference it makes in us personally, in our church family, and in our community. Let's MAKE EVERY EFFORT to grow in brotherly affection...Now we know what it is, we know why it matters...and if you're in, you want to live it out – maybe you're wondering how...let's take a look:

3. How do we show brotherly affection?

Well, there are some who answer this question by pointing to **2 Corinthians 13:12** – “Greet one another with a holy kiss!” I'm sure that sounds great to some of you...in fact, for the longest time in student ministry I had to remind guys at camp that quoting this verse today missed some context...

Here it is – families back then would greet like that. That warm and affectionate greeting was very common for families. It was also very uncommon for anyone to show that kind of affection to someone not in their family. So, in 2 Cor 13, greet one another with a holy kiss...that's great application from our 2 Peter chapter today...but in a way that fits our culture today. Please don't start kissing people when you get up to leave today...instead, if you want to grow in this and really show the affection God has called you to, here are some great ways to do it:

A. Remind yourself – Same family, Same team!

Preach that to yourself over and over...no matter how imperfect we may be, other believers are children of God...just like you! John 1:12 – all who believe in Jesus become God's children. Same family/same team! When you're reminded that you're in the family and on the team, you're going to show affection for the church family.

1 John 4:19-20 says, “we love because he first loved us. If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother is a liar...”

Same team. Showing love to the team, the family grows the family and strengthens the body. Be a good teammate...grow in brotherly affection.

Pray for those on your team...consistently...by name and by group. Just pray. Let it be your pattern.

When conflict arises, choose to love...work it out like you work stuff out in your family. When someone irritates you and they will and they do! Don't point to them now, but you know who they are...don't think like that – remind yourself – this is my brother/sister in Christ – we have the same heavenly father...same family, same team!

When you hear of conflict, just like you make peace between members of your family, JUMP IN and be a peacemaker like Jesus calls us to be. When you have a teammate running the wrong direction, help them turn it around...brotherly love involves graceful and loving accountability – we shouldn't let one another run unchecked into sin. Make sure you love enough to speak up!

Look around: Same family, same team.

B. Spend time with other believers.

2 Peter is clear that we should be deeply connected with other believers, and the church family is a primary function of that. In Hebrews we see that we should be meeting together often, to worship and to encourage one another as we follow Jesus together.

It's really challenging to grow in this kind of love like God calls us to if we're not ever spending time with other believers. There are so many ways that can happen – but for us, the main strategy we use to help our church family with this is Life Groups. Our groups happen every Sunday...if you're not in a group – use the summer to find one! I'm happy to help, come ask me...because we both know that

relationships grow in PERSON...it's hard to connect and it's hard to love if we're never together. And as we gather – we have to get past surface level conversations...let's be real with one another...remembering we're in the same family...

And work hard to let those relationships you form get past the surface...that's where this love really grows. A few weeks ago, around 6am on a Friday I walked into a coffee shop and saw a group of young married guys from our church praying over one another...they were about to start a Bible study, but one of them came in hurting...and the group immediately began to pray – that's the kind of relationships that can form in a LG...plug in. You can't grow in brotherly love if you don't get close enough to others in here to show them love, right?? Plug in...be known.

Let me add a little tag onto that – if you have kid, I promise you they need these friendships too. Get them into a life group...help them connect with other kids here in the church family who love Jesus...it doesn't matter how old they are, help them to learn and understand that the church family, the body, is functioning BEST when we're all involved.

c. Pray for other Believers – You want God to grow your heart for a person...pray for them.

Are you struggling with another believer here in the body...pray for them...and not like this...don't pray, "God, can you help so and so be less annoying?" Don't do that – pray for their heart, their walk with Jesus, their family...and pray for your relationship with them as well. That's a very practical way to grow in brotherly affection...and so is this last one:

D. Serve other Believers:

Galatians 5:13 tells us to "Serve one another through love."

You serve your family at home...you see needs and meet needs, you're there for them, you help them with the big and small issues of life. To grow in brotherly affection, serve the brothers...look around the room, serve one another!

Back to the beginning...maybe it's a meal when someone is in the hospital, maybe it's acts of love, maybe it's giving financially to help someone out, maybe it's even a kidney...SERVE those in your family!

Serving one another is a catalyst for brotherly affection in our lives...and again, I'll go back to this, the most intentional and efficient way for these acts of service to happen is through our life groups. This is the small group that knows you, your heart, and your needs...get in a group and serve others – and I'm telling you, as you serve there's going to be a point where you're in need of them to serve you as well.

Service is a catalyst for that brotherly affection to grow. Get close to other believers and treat them like family, because according to God's word, we are!

In a world marked by division, indifference, and self-focus...when we love like this, we're shining a light! Growing in our love for one another is not optional, it's essential! My prayer is that we would be knit together in brotherly affection as brothers and sisters growing STRONGER together.

Let's "Make every effort to grow in brotherly affection."

Prayer:

1. Are you friendly and affectionate? Or do you put out the don't talk to me vibes?
2. Are you connected enough relationally to show this kind of affection?
3. Our ability to show this comes from KNOWING Jesus...

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