

By This, They Will Know: Love, Unity, and Responsibility

Introduction

Greetings everyone. Today, we gather to reflect on a powerful call to action that Jesus left with His disciples, a call that resonates as deeply now as it did over two millennia ago. In John 13:34-35, Jesus said, *"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

This commandment is not simply an invitation but a responsibility—a responsibility to embody Christ's love in such a way that it becomes a testimony to the world. We are called to work together, to pull together, and to embody love that is visible, transformative, and communal. Today, I want to explore this theme of responsibility through the lens of love and unity, with a special focus on the Miyo-Wāhkōhtowin (pronounced: mee-yo wah-KOH'-toh-win. Click [HERE](#) to listen) Journey initiative of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada.

Love as Evidence of Discipleship

Jesus' directive in John 13 is more than a suggestion; it is a defining mark of what it means to follow Him. In a world that often prioritizes individualism, competition, and division, Jesus calls us to a radically different standard.

The love Jesus speaks of is not passive or sentimental. It is active, sacrificial, and restorative. It mirrors His own love—a love that washed the feet of His disciples, even Judas, the one who would betray Him. It is a love that chooses humility, service, and unity over pride, self-interest, and division.

When Jesus says, *"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples,"* He is pointing to the evidence of a transformed community. The way we treat each other, care for one another, and work together is meant to be a living testimony of God's love. It is not our eloquence, our wealth, or even our doctrinal precision that will convince the world of our discipleship—it is our love.

The Responsibility of Unity

This love is not lived out in isolation. It requires collective effort, intentionality, and humility. Paul echoes this in Ephesians 4:3, where he urges believers to "*make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.*" Unity does not mean uniformity, but it does mean a shared commitment to the mission of Christ and to one another.

Working and pulling together as Christians means that love must transcend our differences. Think of the early church described in Acts 2, where believers shared everything in common, broke bread together, and prayed together. Their unity was not merely a strategy—it was their identity. And because of this, the Lord added to their number daily.

Yet, we know that unity is hard work – especially when crossing cultures. It requires forgiveness, patience, and a willingness to see each other through the eyes of Christ. It requires us to lay down our egos, our preferences, and sometimes even our rights for the sake of the greater good. This is the responsibility we carry—not just for ourselves but for the witness of the Church to the world.

But such a statement, "...the witness of the Church to the world" can remain so detached. We must not simply limit ourselves to such a macro perspective, that can lead to impersonal and only theoretical thought. For instance, in principle, we may know that our witness can impact the world, but *how* is our witness impacting our Indigenous neighbour/communities? Knowing we should do something is not good enough. As the old saying goes, "Many roads are paved with good intentions." But what Christ demands are good actions motivated out of love.

What ministry occasions are lying just beyond our typical gaze, that could be ripe with opportunities to learn as well as serve and demonstrate the love of Christ? And I'm not just talking about reaching out to the unbeliever. In John 13, Jesus was talking to His disciples about showing love for *one another* (other believers) and that through that tangible demonstration, the world would see Him. It could be as simple as having a coffee and sharing a conversation with an Indigenous neighbour, to, after having learned of a felt need, rolling up our sleeves and stepping into the trenches to come along side our Indigenous brothers and sisters.

Some of our Fellowship's Indigenous churches can experience a certain degree of felt separation from the rest of the Fellowship and crave having simple communion and relationship with others. Within other Indigenous contexts, there is the need for ministry training and assistance in community outreach expressions. The possibilities are boundless.

We are to answer the call to unity – Because we must!

Miyo-Wāhkōhtowin: A Journey Toward Reconciliation and Relationship

Now, one current expression to assist our PAOC Fellowship in this biblical call to unity is through the Miyo-Wāhkōhtowin Journey initiative. This “journey” presents a tangible mechanism to help live out the calling of God that is upon every believer – to be ministers of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18).

The Plains Cree word *Miyo-Wāhkōhtowin* means "good relationships" or "walking together in harmony." This initiative is a commitment to fostering reconciliation, healing, and right relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. We can consider it an official invitation to make the effort to journey together in a good way. Seeking out concrete expressions of authentic concern and love for one another.

The meaning of *Miyo-Wāhkōhtowin* aligns beautifully with Jesus' command to love one another. It challenges us to move beyond words and into meaningful action. It reminds us that love is not abstract but deeply relational. It calls us to walk together, to listen, to learn, and to honour one another as image-bearers of God.

The journey of *Miyo-Wāhkōhtowin* reflects the heart of the gospel—a gospel that reconciles, restores, and unites. Just as Christ reconciled us to God, we are called to be agents of reconciliation in the world. This may not always be an easy path, but it is a necessary one. It requires humility, repentance, and a willingness to confront the brokenness in our systems, our histories, and even in our own hearts. When the Church embraces unity, especially across cultures, it becomes a living testimony of the gospel's power to heal and restore.

Practical Application: Love in Action

So, as we reflect on the call to love and the example of *Miyo-Wāhkōhtowin*, we must ask ourselves: How are we embodying this love in our daily lives? How are we working and pulling together in ways that reflect the unity of Christ?

Here are four practical ways we can live out this responsibility:

1. Commit to Reconciliation

Whether it is through initiatives like *Miyo-Wāhkōhtowin* or personal relationships, we must be committed to the work of reconciliation. This means seeking to understand, acknowledging past wrongs, and being intentional about building bridges where there have been walls.

2. Serve One Another

Jesus demonstrated love through service. How can we serve one another in our families, our church, and our communities? Service is a tangible expression of love and a powerful testimony to the world.

3. Foster Unity

Unity requires effort and sacrifice. It means prioritizing the mission of Christ over personal preferences. It means being quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger (James 1:19). It means choosing to love even when it is difficult.

4. Honour National Indigenous Peoples Day

National Indigenous Peoples Day provides an opportunity to celebrate the diverse cultures, histories, and contributions of Indigenous peoples across the country. It is also a time for reflection and action. As followers of Christ, we can use this day (and its season) to deepen our understanding of Indigenous traditions and perspectives, to engage in meaningful dialogue, and to recommit ourselves to the work of reconciliation. Let this day be a reminder that the call to love is also a call to honour the dignity and stories of Indigenous communities.

Conclusion

As I close, let us remember that the love we are called to embody is not just for our sake but for the sake of the gospel. Jesus said that the world would know we are His disciples by our love for one another. This is both a promise and a challenge.

The journey of *Miyo-Wāhkōhtowin* reminds us that love is not static; it is active, transformative, and communal. It calls us to walk together in harmony, to work together for reconciliation, and to pull together in unity. What might it look like for us to embody *Miyo-Wāhkōhtowin* in our own and neighboring communities?

May we, as followers of Christ, take this responsibility seriously. May our love be a beacon that draws others to the light of Christ. And may we, in all we do, reflect the heart of the gospel—a gospel of love, unity, and reconciliation.

Amen.