

Loving in Deed and Truth

1 John 3:16 ESV (Pg. 592) By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. **17** But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? **18** Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

- I. The apostle John states in this passage that the central emphasis of the Christian life is love. Everything else about following Christ should flow out of this fountain.
 - A. For the past several weeks we have been talking about the miraculous working of the love of God **towards** us and **in** us to bring us to salvation.
 1. It was God, who because of love, planned to rescue his elect from judgement and wrath.
 2. It was God, who because of love, made us alive together with Christ so that we could receive the free gift of his salvation.
 3. It was God, who because of love, did not treat us as our sins deserved, nor did he simply measure us by our potential, but rather he poured out abundant mercy on us regardless of how deserving or undeserving we were.
 4. It was God, who, because of love, overcame our resistance to him; enticing us with his kindness so that we would repent.
 5. And it is God who, because of love, will preserve us to the very end, and who daily enables us to endure faithfully in faith for his glory.
 - B. All of these different dimensions of God's love are expressed in the simple word, "grace". Often we are guilty of making grace a theological or philosophical category, but in truth, grace belongs in the dictionary of passion, emotion, and relationship. Grace is always extended as an indicator of a love that exists.
 1. Pardon from sin and rescue from the grave are ours, not because God viewed us through a cold theological concept called "grace", but because he deeply, sacrificially, eternally loved us, and lavished his grace upon us.
 2. **Jeremiah 31:3b ESV I have loved you with an *everlasting love*; therefore I have *continued* my faithfulness to you.**
 - C. But John says something here of which we should take careful note.
 1. First, he celebrates the magnitude of God's love towards us by saying that the way we experience love ("by this we **know** love") in all its reality and its purity is by examining the fact that Christ willingly took our place, and laid down his life as the punishment for our sins on the cross.
 2. There is no clearer picture painted anywhere of what love truly is than the vision of an innocent man, stripped naked, mocked, beaten, and crucified willingly for the same rebels who put him on the cross.
 - a) All other images of love - from a mother with her child, the love between a husband and his wife, a soldier dying for a cause for the

benefit of another, or a person who spends their wealth for the benefit of those who are destitute - all of these are only imperfect types and shadows of the kind of love that God demonstrated perfectly on the cross.

b) **Ephesians 5:2b ESV Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.**

II. But that is not all that John says. He says that **knowing** love by looking at the cross, and seeing the kind of love that God has given, should have a definite and inescapable effect on us. What is that effect? “we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers (adelphoi = “brothers and sisters”).”

A. The highest characterizing mark of believers should be the love that exists between them. Jesus had told his disciples in John 13:35 that people would be able to readily identify them as his followers by the love they have for one another.

1. But is this the first thing that outsiders notice? Pastor Dan Kimball has conducted an informal survey over the years and has found 6 perceptions that outsiders commonly have about church¹:

- a) The Church is an organized religion with a political agenda.
- b) The Church is judgmental and negative.
- c) The Church is dominated by males and oppresses females.
- d) The Church is homophobic.
- e) The Church arrogantly claims all other religions are wrong.
- f) The Church is full of fundamentalists who take the whole Bible literally.

2. And this is a big problem! Though Christ said that the two greatest commandments are to love God and love others (Matthew 22:36-40), outsiders seem to be perceiving no outflow of love from us vertically or horizontally. Instead, they are only keenly aware of what we're against.

B. This should not be the case! It is not our stand for or against some political issue that will help the world. It is not the constant condescending reminder of the sinfulness of the world's sin that is going to lead them out of it! It is not hammering our theological viewpoints that will win this neighborhood or this world for Christ's glory.

C. What the watching world needs is a representation (re-presentation) of the living, breathing, loving, forgiving Christ. But John doesn't just tell us to love, he tells us how to love...

III. **1 John 3:17 ESV But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?**

A. The Bible is very clear from this that for God, true love is always made evident by sacrifice. Here he says that if one person has material goods, and refuses to share them with his brother or sister in need, that is a problem that cannot be ignored!

¹ <https://churchleaders.com/outreach-missions/outreach-missions-articles/138865-i-like-jesus-not-the-church.html>

1. John says when this happens, the one with the material goods doesn't close his heart "to" the other person; meaning to ignore them or innocently overlook them, he says they close their heart **against** them.
 2. This means that those who are unwilling to share what they have been abundantly given are actually demonstrating **hostility** by their withholding.
- B. This is an offense of the highest order to God because we are called in scripture to imitate him and reflect his glory. According to John 3:16, when God loved, he gave. "For God so loved the world that he gave..."
1. And never forget, that he did not give us a mere sampling of his wealth, but when he gave Christ, he emptied the vaults for our benefit, because heavens wealth is not measured in gates of pearl, streets of gold or mansions, like we've imagined.
 2. On the contrary, Heaven's wealth is measured by the glory of the Son. And God spared none of that glory to demonstrate his love.
- C. **Isaiah 53:3 ESV "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not."**
- D. There is nothing that God has not done for us; nothing he hasn't lavished on us to demonstrate his love, so is he not right to expect the same from us? John's conclusion in the passage we read is that if we close our heart against our brothers and sisters, that there is no way that the love of God truly abides in us.
- IV. This morning you have two opportunities to demonstrate the love of God to those who need such a demonstration the most. First, as many of you know, this Thursday night, June 7th at 6:30 we will be having our first (hopefully of many) outreaches with North Ridge Elementary. I cannot express enough how amazing it is that the staff of that school wants to partner with us to share the gospel!
- A. They have given us "carte blanche" to preach the gospel to the families connected with the school; and we believe that a sovereign God has divinely placed us across the street from them.
1. They were praying for us to show up (though they didn't know us!), and we were praying for such an opportunity. Let's not squander what the Lord has done!
 2. Our outreach will take place at High Plains apartments at 16th and Iola. This is government subsidized housing, with a lot of desperate families. These are people that simply need to be shown the love of Jesus.
- B. You may say, "I'm not a preacher! I don't know how to talk to people about God." I'm not going to ask you to do anything you can't do, or I wouldn't do.
1. But can you grill some hot dogs? Can you hand out water and chips? Can you throw a foot ball around with a kid? Can you run a carnival game and pass out candy? Can you have a conversation with a teacher and let them know you're praying for them? Can you spare a smile and

kind word to an overworked mom? Can you pass out some church info cards or gospel story books to some kids? You can! Don't miss what God is doing! Be a part of it!

2. Please let us know you're coming! Sign up today at the tables in the foyer. We can put the enemy on the run in this neighborhood, but not if we're unwilling to sacrifice some time, money, convenience, a night of TV, or whatever.
- V. Secondly; in a moment, we are going to receive our second quarter missions offering. We do this every quarter and we have a commitment of \$6,000 each and every quarter in order to keep our missionaries fully funded.
- A. We support missionaries in Austria, Guatemala, a International Sports Outreach ministry called SportQuest, Ragtown Gospel Theater, and Sin City Ministries. We have never once missed our commitment and that is a good thing.
 - B. Today we need to raise approximately \$3,500.00 to meet our goal. I know we can do it! But if we are to do it, it will require some real sacrifice on everyone's part. Some of you may need to decide to eat at salad or a bologna sandwich at home today instead of going out to eat. Others may need to skip Starbucks or a movie this week. Still others may want to put off a luxury item that you've been planning to purchase.
 - C. Our missionaries are depending upon God to work through you. We do not have money lying around to make up the lack; meaning if we don't give, they don't get paid. Could you work under similar conditions?
 1. For all of us, loving and prioritizing the gospel will take sacrifice. Remember, love is never truly love until it involves sacrifice. Remember also that God has already made the ultimate sacrifice in the ultimate display of love.
 2. And don't forget that the Bible teaches over and over again that giving (whether giving your time to the kids at the apartment complex on Thursday night, or digging deep into your purses and wallets to support our missionaries) always carries with it an unbreakable promise that you are laying up treasures in heaven. Do you believe that?
 - D. John says, "Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth." Let's not be another talking church. Talk is cheap. Love is not. Let's demonstrate our love with our cash today, and our time on Thursday night.
- VI. Francis Chan video
- VII. Missions Offering
- VIII. Announcements
- A. Sign up for Apartment Outreach
 - B. Potluck tonight at 5:30
 - C. Life Group Sign Ups in the Foyer
 - D. Men's Breakfast
- IX.