

Love One Another 1 John 3:16-18

There is a tremendous division that faces our country, and there is great anger over differences. In the last four years, hate, spite, and paranoia have gripped the nation. These feelings have hurt and hindered the unity and ability to communicate. And I fear some of this has spilled over into the church. **What can and should we do about these feelings?**

A religious lawyer once asked Jesus, *“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets” (Mt. 22:36-40).* According to Jesus, the greatest priority in life is to love God fully in every way; and the second priority of life is to love our neighbor as ourselves. Once again according to Jesus these two commandments must take priority over everything else. All other commandments bow to and depend upon these two – the greatest of commandments.

Jesus wants us to understand this point – you cannot claim to love God, while at the same time hating your brother or neighbor. The apostle John puts it this way in **1 John 4:20-21** - *If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.* We all need to be regularly reminded to love even those who are hard to love.

Love is at the core of all Christianity. We are called to love God and to love each other. *If we fail to love, we have failed at the most important task of life.* **1 Cor. 13:1-3** teaches us this thought: *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. A loveless Christianity is no Christianity at all.*

God distinguishes those who love others from those who don't. **1 Jn. 3:11** says, *“By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.* When we fail to love others, we will also fail to keep other of the Lord's commandments. Being a child of God means loving others the way that God has loved us.

Love is the motivator for all that we do as Christians. **2 Cor. 5:14-15** says, *“For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.”* The cross of Christ moves us not only to love Jesus but also to commit totally our hearts and our lives to Him. That means we must die to ourselves and live for Him.

Jesus wants us to love others the way He loved us. The Lord Jesus said in **John 13:34:35**, “*A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*” As children of God, *we are to love as Jesus loved.* If we loved as the world loves, we would hardly love anyone. *We have to outgrow our self-centered ways and put others first, just as our Lord and Savior did.* **Phil. 2:3-4** puts it this way, “*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*”

Since we are to imitate Jesus’ love for people, **let’s look at Jesus now and see how loved people!**

First, Jesus cared for those who are in need physically. **1 Jn. 3:16-18** says, “*By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. 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? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.*” Jesus led by example, he healed the sick, fed the poor, and he showed compassion to all who were in need. Jesus still speaks to us through His word, he still wants us to feed and cloth the poor, visit the sick and those in prison - here is how he words it in **Mt. 25:36-40**, *Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’* This is an important point to understand: when we give help to others in our world (especially the saints) we are not only giving aid and love to the poor and those in need – we are giving it to Jesus Himself! The opposite is also true, when we refuse to aid others in need, we are refusing to help Jesus.

Second, Jesus cared for their souls as well as their bodies. **Luke 5:31-32** says, “*And Jesus answered them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”* Jesus, by leading a sinless life, leads us to live more righteously. He forgives our past, which allows us to change and become people who have a good conscience. Jesus helped people change by the life that he lived and by His preaching and teaching. In **Mark 1:38** Jesus told His disciples, “*And he said to them, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.”* While His compassion and love for His created beings led him to heal, feed, and cloth his created children, but He really came to heal their souls, and God in His wisdom, decided He would use the “*foolishness of preaching*” to do it (**1 Cor. 1:21**). He wanted everyone to be spiritually healthy.

Third, He sacrificed His body and His life for them. **1 Peter 2:24** says, “*When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*” Jesus

personally sacrificed Himself so that we could live with Him forever. *He died so that we might live; He suffered so that we could be forgiven and enjoy everlasting life. He bore whips and nails, and beatings and spit, and mockery and humiliation.* **He didn't fight back**, but He bore it all for your sake and mine. It makes me wonder sometimes about how much you and I will bear for others; yet He clearly showed with His life this point: ***He loved us.***

Fourth, Jesus suffered for our sins to bring us back to God. **1 Peter 3:18** says, ***“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit...”*** *You see, He was not content to leave us where He found us.* He wanted something grander for us. He wanted to give us an opportunity to know our Creator, the One who made and sustains us and the One to whom we pray. To Jesus God was not merely “***my Father***”; He’s “***our Father.***” And because of Jesus, we can be His children. He wants to be in our lives now and forever. And there is no greater blessing in life than to have God as our Father.

Fifth, Jesus forgives and wants us to forgive. **1 Peter 4:8** says, ***“The end of all things is at hand; therefore, be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.”*** Jesus loves us and is ready and willing to cover a multitude of our sins. He taught us how to forgive. And we forgive because of what God has done for us and because we are God’s children. Jesus in **Mt. 6:14-15** said, ***“For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”***

You know, people will always offend us. If we don’t learn how to react to offenses, we will spend our lives in misery. Revenge doesn’t end heartaches; it keeps anger alive. Anger will not achieve the righteousness of God but spreads violence! Anger breeds anger, and hatred breeds more hatred. If we let anger grow in our hearts, it will destroy our soul and it will ruin our life. **Eph. 4:26-27** says, ***“Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.”*** We live in a cruel and violent world, because people have never learned to forgive as Jesus did.

Eph. 4:31-32 follows the above verse - ***Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*** Too many people wish to quote **verse 26** as an excuse to be angry. But **verses 31 to 32** clearly show this was not Paul’s intention. For Paul anger was not the answer to anything, for Paul the answer was forgiveness and love – This was how Jesus Christ lived, even forgiving those who were putting Him to death on the cross. As James tells us in **James 1:20**, ***“for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”***

Jesus further speaks of how we are to love in **Mt. 5:43-48**, ***“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the***

unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Jesus practiced what He preached. His words at the cross should burn their way into each of our souls and conscience, ***“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:33-34)***. And before you say it is not possible for a mere human to follow this pattern, remember ***Acts 7:60***, where Stephen showed this same love while they were stoning him to death, The Bible says he cried out with a loud voice, ***“Lord, do not hold this sin against them.”***

Sixth, Jesus confronted those who were thinking wrongly and those who sinned. Mt. 16:21-24 says, ***“From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”***

You might wonder how such a rebuke is to be considered loving. We are so easily offended these days, we have come to the conclusion that anyone who criticizes another person is somehow hateful, or mean-spirited or judgmental. And if the criticism is unwarranted or slanderous it is certainly wrong; but rebuke that leads to righteousness can be the most loving thing we can do. ***Proverbs 27:6*** says, ***“Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.”*** Agreeing with and approving sin doesn’t help anybody to repent. Jesus Himself in ***Rev. 3:19*** said, ***“Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.”*** Leaving a soul in sin is the cruelest thing that we can do.

Love is a verb; and it reveals itself by what it does. God demonstrated His love in giving Jesus to us, and God wants us to demonstrate our love by loving Him and loving others. Paul describes this love in ***1 Cor. 13:4-7***, ***“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.”*** ***Jesus never stopped loving us:*** remember He even washed the feet of Judas Iscariot. Brethren, when we love God: we love one another – no matter what! And this love is not temporary – it last until the very end of this age and beyond!

Only Jesus makes this type of love possible! Are you ***“in Christ?”*** Let us help you to find out how to get ***“in Christ.”*** Let’s pray!