

We begin our time together with one of the most basic and foundational, yet deeply misunderstood elements of the Christian faith: LOVE. “Love” is one of the most misused and over-used words in our culture. Most uses of the word “love” in everyday language are inappropriate, ill-defined, or just plain absurd. Let’s read the statement of faith first, and then we will discover what it means to love one another as God loves us. The statement of faith says this:

*“We believe that love one for another as Jesus loves the believer manifests our discipleship, proves our love for God and symbolizes our authority as New Testament churches. Love is therefore the great commandment of the LORD Jesus Christ upon which all others are dependent.”*

WHAT IS LOVE? We should begin by understanding the definition of the major word in this statement: “LOVE.” It quickly becomes obvious how confused our culture is when it comes to love by simply looking in the dictionary and finding no less than 9 different definitions for one simple word. The word “love” is used to describe anything from physical attraction to mild affection; from enthusiasm to objects of devotion; from general concern for someone to the physical act of loving devotion (I love ice cream, I love my phone, I love my car, I love my wife, etc.).

The kind of love we refer to in this first doctrine is qualified biblically as the same kind of love that Jesus has for the believer. That sharpens our understanding of love, and I think the definition from the *Holman Bible Dictionary* sums it up best: Love is the “unselfish, loyal, and benevolent concern for the well-being of another.”

## WHAT IS THE BASIS FOR LOVE?

1 John 4:19-21; Matthew 22:35-40

Unless we receive the love of God \_\_\_\_\_, we will never know what true love is, much less be able to \_\_\_\_\_ to others.

## WHY SHOULD WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER?

John 13:36; Matthew 25:35-40; Revelation 2:4-5

Why is it so \_\_\_\_\_ that I show an “unselfish, loyal, and benevolent concern for the well-being” of others?

1. Loving each other “manifests our \_\_\_\_\_.”  
Sanctification is the progressive work of God on us whereby God conforms us – \_\_\_\_\_ us – into the image of Christ.
2. Loving each other “\_\_\_\_\_ our love for God.”  
When we express “unselfish, loyal, and benevolent concern for the well-being” of others, in a very real sense, we are expressing our loving devotion \_\_\_\_\_.

Everyone will be judged by how his/her love for God defined and motivated his/her love \_\_\_\_\_.

3. Loving each other “symbolizes our \_\_\_\_\_ as New Testament churches.”

A church is a group of baptized believers who have \_\_\_\_\_ in covenant relationship to fulfill God’s command to make disciples of all nations.

The people who make up the church can do many things in order to reach people with the Good News of Jesus, but if they do not \_\_\_\_\_ around them, the church is in danger of losing the blessing and even the powerful presence and authority of God.

# The Doctrine of Love

Taught by Mark Clements

This means that God's people can and WILL get it wrong in many ways, but we are NOT allowed to withhold genuine compassion from others without SEVERE consequences, namely, that God would remove the presence and blessing of His Spirit from our congregations and we would lose the power and authority with which the congregation seeks to obey the Great Commission.

From food to vehicles, music to magazines, businesses to even some churches, the most important thing is to cater to the consumer's needs. SO, it is vitally important for us as believers to understand how to resist the urge to make the world revolve around US and to sustain a healthy concern for the well-being of others.

What does loving God and loving others accomplish? Does it help make the world a better place? Well, yes, sometimes it does. Does it give me a sense of accomplishment? Yes, sometimes it does and sometimes it doesn't. Does it show others what God is like? Yes, sometimes it does. But there is a greater accomplishment we must consider when we obey God's command to love: Love fulfills EVERYTHING God wants to do in us and through us in the world. The very last sentence of today's doctrine says "Love is therefore the great commandment of the LORD Jesus Christ upon which all others are dependent."

## HOW DO WE LOVE EACH OTHER?

Unselfish benevolent concern for the well-being of others \_\_\_\_\_ come naturally to us and is COUNTER-CULTURAL in our world.

MAINTAINING a spirit of sacrificial compassion for others is ALL ABOUT our \_\_\_\_\_ and mind set. We must not just VALUE showing love toward others, but we must VALUE OTHERS.

We must actually LOVE OTHERS, not just love \_\_\_\_\_ others. How do we do that? What are the keys to ensuring that we obey the new commandment of Christ to love one another as He loves us?

1. The first key is \_\_\_\_\_.  
We must live by faith and not by sight. We must see every person as an \_\_\_\_\_ and trust that God has the power to use us to bring about life transformation in his/her life.

2. The second key is \_\_\_\_\_.  
We must see everyone, including ourselves, as \_\_\_\_\_ of the grace and mercy of God. At the foot of the cross of Christ we are \_\_\_\_\_.

That means EVERY PERSON we see is a person for whom Christ died.  
*Philippians 2:3-8*

THAT is sacrificial love and the key is humility:  
Counting \_\_\_\_\_ as more significant than yourself.

3. The third key is \_\_\_\_\_.  
Remember we are ALL \_\_\_\_\_.  
We ALL bring our own issues and weaknesses to the table, we are ALL recovering from sin, and when we rub elbows with one another and seek restoration, there WILL be \_\_\_\_\_ and, after a matter of time, \_\_\_\_\_.  
*Romans 15:1-3; Galatians 6:1*

If there is one thing we ALL have in common, it's our ability to let each other down from time to time. Be patient with each other.

## WHAT IS ACCOMPLISHED BY LOVE?

We \_\_\_\_\_ satisfy God's will for us in ANYTHING we do unless it is motivated by genuine sacrificial \_\_\_\_\_ for Him and others. *1 Corinthians 13:1-3*

In everything we do, we begin with \_\_\_\_\_, because WHY we do WHAT we do \_\_\_\_\_ more than simply what we do. He knows our hearts. He knows our motives. May our hearts break for what breaks His.

## LIFE APPLICATION

*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another. John 13:35*

Many people call themselves Christians, but it becomes evident when we genuinely have love for people. “Love for others is the display of God in us”. We look for opportunities to serve. We look for opportunities to give. We look for opportunities to build relationships.

Who is outside of your circle of friends that you could genuinely pray for?

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Pray that God will reveal someone to you.

Pray and anticipate that God will allow you to have an encounter with someone soon.

Would you be willing to stash away a few dollars, to purchase them a latte, a cup of coffee, or a cappuccino? How about a simple lunch, a card, or an encouraging text? What would it hurt to just let them know you have had them on your mind or heart?

Are you prepared?

If God allows you to connect with someone, what would be your next step?

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We serve people, not because we love serving, but because we love people . . . period.

Love for others is the evidence that we are truly disciples of Christ.