



Sent by God: His People on His Mission

LESSON 12: Values—Loving Like Jesus

Our Values

Six values guide this church and give us identity. These reflect our mission and shape us as a church. Here is a summary for your reference.

Truth. We value truth, we value biblical teaching. This commitment calls us to be *approved workers*.

Unity. We value unity, we seek peaceful harmony. We seek unity in God's Spirit as *spiritual brothers*.

Touch. Because God wants to touch, love and care for his world, we value caring evangelism. God touches our world through us, his *ambassadors*.

Christian Living. To live like Jesus acknowledges that he calls us to be like him, his *disciples*.

Love. Our desire to love like Jesus shows in all our relationships, but especially in our commitment to be the *family of God*.

Ministry. We want to equip and empower one another, recognizing that all are called to be *servants*.

The Priority of Love

With so much emphasis on love in today's Christian world, one can hardly omit love from the list of values. In fact, many would include love as part of the mission of the church. Without doubt, love is one of the compelling characteristics of Jesus' ministry. The love of Christ compels his followers (2 Cor. 5:11). Love motivates obedience (John 14:15). Love binds Christians together and is an antidote to division (1 Corinthians). The context of the 'love chapter' (1 Corinthians 13) suggests its power in the face of various kinds of church problems.

Love Misunderstood

Given the importance of love in the Christian life, it is amazing that love is so often misunderstood. You may already know that there are four Greek words which are translated love.

Familial love (*storge*) and erotic love (*eros*) are less familiar to us than brotherly or friendship love (*philia*) and agape, often called the "highest kind of love". Agape love has been described in many different ways. My favorite way of describing this love is that it centers in the one loving, not the one loved. Agape can love the unlovable and the undeserving. Agape love does not depend on positive characteristics in the life of the one loved. Thus, agape love is extended unconditionally. This is seen in that God loved us while we were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8).

Love as a Characteristic of Christians

When we begin to study love, the text of John 13:35 is often cited. "This is how men will know that you are my disciples, that you have love one for another." Certainly love is a primary characteristic of the Christian life, but this verse says more than that. This verse suggests that the kind of love that really distinguishes Christians is a sacrificial love that imitates Jesus' love for us. [This concept is expanded in the discussion section below.]

Love and God's Family

Loving like Jesus reflects our commitment to be the family of God. Two things are in view.

First, we love, accept, and encourage one another in the church because we value love. Our relationships within the body of Christ are guided and strengthened because of our commitment to love.

Second, as members of the family of God, we seek to look like our Father. We seek to imitate him and reflect his characteristics and nature wherever we go. Thus, the fact that we value love also influences the way we relate to those around us.

Our desire to be the family of God has an impact on our relationships within the body; it also dictates how we deal with people outside the body of Christ.

Discussion Questions

Note: Discussing shared values, or understandings of those values, is never an easy thing. Seek God's guidance in prayer, seek his wisdom and seek his unifying Spirit as the class works through these discussion questions.

What does it mean to you to say that we value loving like Jesus?

What comes to your mind when you hear the word love?

How do people in our world define the word love?

How do you define the word love?

What false definitions can you think of that tend to lead people toward misunderstandings?

What does love look like?

Discuss the statement: "God is so loving that he cannot send anyone to hell."

Read John 13:34-35 (and the larger context).

Discuss the alternative punctuation below:

"A new command I give you: love one another as I have loved you. This is the way you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

How could love be a new command, given that Jesus (and the Old Testament) both commanded love?

How does sacrificial self-giving love as the new command make sense?

What kind of love should we share and demonstrate if we want people to recognize that we are disciples of Jesus?

Make a list of some of the things you believe should be a part of the life a person who "loves like Jesus".

Which items are most important?

Share and discuss the ideas of the group.

Read Rom. 5:1-11; John 15:13.

What are some of the evidences that a person loves someone else?

What does it mean that we would give our lives for one another?

Compare John 3:16 and 1 John 3:16.

On a scale of 1 to 10, how well do we "know" love?

Notes

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