TOPIC: LOVE ON DISPLAY II

It is of the highest importance that we build our lives upon the foundation of God's love and display love in all of our interactions.

KEY POINTS

- Most of us have no problem whatsoever in saying we love God. When we think about all the wonderful ways in which He blesses us every day, His boundless love and His everlasting mercy, it's easy to say, "Lord, I love You!"
- Then comes the hard part—the big test. Just as quickly as Jesus was ready to identify loving God as the first and greatest commandment in Mark 12, He followed up with the second commandment, which is a much sterner test of our mettle and resolve: Love <u>*everyone*</u> you interact with in the very same way as you love yourself (Mark 12:31).
- And before we begin to justify and excuse ourselves from the implications of this commandment, let us remember that this is precisely the way Jesus loved, lived, and died.
- We <u>*all*</u> need to consciously and proactively live out this command in our lives every single day. And though the task before us is both challenging and daunting, it is also conceivable and doable.
- Jesus then gave us another one-liner to help us fully activate His love initiative: "…whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12). To put it simply:
  - I will act toward you as I want you to act toward me;
  - I will speak about you the way I want you to speak about me;
  - I will stand up for you as I want you to stand up for me;
  - I will forgive you as I want you to forgive me;
  - I will assume the best about you when I hear a negative rumour. I will not accept hearsay as fact.
- There are things we would do for complete strangers to help them in their times of need. Yet, isn't it strange how we find it hard to lift a finger to help those we know, some of whom we interact with on a daily basis. Why is that?
- It could be our own child that we could bless in a particular way, but we get into the mode of "performance parenting" and withhold a loving, compassionate blessing from them. After all, they are not behaving as they should toward us, so why should we do anything for them? Isn't that just the way the Lord made us suffer when we were dead in trespasses and sins? No! A thousand times no!
- "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Now *that's* a life-changing blessing we have received strictly through the love, grace and mercy of God!
- We keep forgetting where the Lord brought us from and the grace He has extended to us. Therefore, selfishness and "judgmentalism" rise up within us and we begin to act out of our carnal, sinful nature. We get off the "love-seat" the Lord wants us to sit on and try to occupy *His* "judgment seat", which is reserved for Him alone!
- Test question: Have you ever seen someone close to you with a genuine need you could have met but you said: "I'm not doing it; she doesn't deserve it"? Let's get back on the love seat.
- When we have conflicts, and get angry about something, we separate ourselves from God and from each other. But that's not how healing takes place.

KEY SCRIPTURES

Mark 12:28-31; Matthew 7:12, 18:15-17; John 13:34-35

- If we cut ourselves accidentally or sustain an injury from someone else, we immediately seek help to get the wound or tear fixed. We clean it, disinfect it, stitch it together and bandage it. Healing for the body becomes our top priority.
- Why then would we allow our spirits to remain cut, wounded and broken for weeks, months or even years because we steadfastly refuse help and refuse to exhibit love, compassion, understanding and forgiveness to each other?
- Jesus told His disciples, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. [35]By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35).
- Previously, in Matthew 18:15-17, He had explained to them how to show this kind of love to each other in a very practical and easily understood process.
- The way we often act toward each other, ostracizing each other as our first response, is totally opposite to Jesus' teaching. Ostracism is the *last* resort (involving the leadership of the church), *not* our first response when we get upset.
- If this level of love is not on display in our interactions with each other, we are Christians in name only, without substance and without strength. We may look strong on the outside, and yet be totally rotted or hollowed out on the inside.
- Let us put love on display in <u>*all*</u> of our interactions.

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION TOOLS

1. Take a moment to think about and discuss the question that was asked in the lesson: Have you ever seen someone close to you with a genuine need you could have met but you said: "I'm not doing it; he/she doesn't deserve it"?
   a) In your opinion, what could have sparked such a reaction in you?
   b) If the situation continued to persist, did you eventually offer help, or did you continue to turn blind eye?
   c) What are the steps you could take to ensure that love will be on display?

Prayer Time

Lord, help me to love as You loved and to forgive as You forgave. Let love be on display in my life.

L.G. ice-Breaker: What are the things you do in advance to prepare yourself for a test? (Whether a school test, doctor test, etc.)

WEEK OF SUNDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2017

NOTES

Meditate as you read through/listen to this week's message. If it helps, use symbols for your notes.

(Reminds me/Confirms) (New idea) (Think about)

 (Do this) (Speaks to my heart) (Must share)

PRAYER NEEDS/THANKSGIVINGS