

## INTRODUCTION

We're continuing our verse by verse study of the Gospel According to John. Today's message is How to Love like Jesus Loves. At first, I had written, "How to love like Jesus loved"—past tense. But I changed it because Jesus' love for us is a present reality, not just a fact from history.

There's a lot of confusion about what true love is. A group of children were asked to define love, and here are some of their answers:

Karie, age 5: "Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving cologne and they go out and smell each other."

Emily, age 8: Love is when you kiss all the time. Then when you get tired of kissing, you still want to be together and you talk more.

Karen, age 7: "When you love somebody, your eyelashes go up and down and little stars come out of you."

Mary Ann, age 6: "Love is when your puppy licks your face even after you left him alone all day."

Lauren, age 5: "I know my older sister loves me because she gives me all her old clothes and has to go out and buy new ones."

Jessica, age 8: "You really shouldn't say 'I love you' unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget."

The Gospel According to John has been called God's Love Letter because the word "love" appears 39 times in John; that's more times than in Matthew, Mark, and Luke combined.

The setting of this passage is in the upper room at the Last Supper. John doesn't relate anything about the meal, the bread and the cup. Instead, John informs us that Jesus got up and laid aside his garments and wrapped a towel around Himself. Then He went around to all twelve disciples and washed their feet. He even washed Judas' feet. And I don't think Jesus did the express wash for Judas. I believe Jesus was demonstrating what He was about to say. In verse 30 we read that Judas has just left the room, and gone out into darkness.

John 13:31-35. When he had left (speaking of Judas), Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. Children, I am with you a little while longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so now I tell you: 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' "I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Have you ever been driving and had a business vehicle in front of you with a sign or bumper sticker that reads, "How's my driving?" And then there's an 800 number for you to call if the driver is driving recklessly or irresponsibly? That company is giving the public the right to evaluate the performance of one of their employees. And that driver knows that sign is there. So does this work? According to insurance adjusters, you betcha'. In a study of 30,000 vehicles with that sign, 80% received no complaints, 10% received one complaint and the other 10% who received one or more complaints were identified as dangerous drivers and were fired.

I used that illustration because I think it would be helpful if every follower of Jesus put a yellow post it note on their forehead—or better yet—a tattoo, that says, "How's my love for one another? call JN13:35." That's John 13:35 where Jesus said, "By this, everyone will know you are my disciple, if you love one another."

So what is the true sign of a believer? It's not a fish symbol. It's not a cross around your neck. It's not making the sign of the cross. The way you can spot a Christian is because that person is loving others.

I want to share with you two reasons by Jesus called this a NEW commandment, then I'll give you three practical applications for loving the way Jesus loves.

### **I. Jesus gave us a new DEFINITION of love.**

The idea of loving your neighbor wasn't new. But Jesus gave us a new definition of love. In Leviticus 19:18 God said to the Israelites: "Do not take revenge or bear a grudge against members of your community, but love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord."

The Old Testament was a book of laws. It was great to love the members of your community, and your actual next-door neighbors especially if they loved you. But the Old Testament also taught the law of equal retribution. It's called an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Actually compared to other cultures, this was an ethical advancement. Because as a fallen human being, if someone gouges out my eye, my sinful reaction is to kill him. But the Old Testament introduced a form of boundaries which said, "If someone knocks out my tooth, I can't kill them. But what I can do is knock out his tooth." But loving your neighbor meant loving those in the Jewish community.

But Jesus came along and gave an entirely new definition to loving your neighbor. In Luke 10 Jesus talked about loving your neighbor as yourself. One of the Jews asked Him, "Who is my neighbor?" He gave a new definition for neighbor. He told the story we call the Good Samaritan. A man got robbed and beaten on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho. Two holy men, a priest and a Levite walk by the man and make a wide circle to avoid him. But then Jesus said that a Samaritan stranger approached the wounded man. Samaritans were the hated half-breeds who lived to the north of Jerusalem. Just think about how Palestinians and Israelis relate to one another today; it was the same in Jesus' day, but worse. To the displeasure of the Jewish audience listening to this story, Jesus made the Samaritan the hero. He said that he

bandaged his wounds, and put him on his donkey and took him to an Inn asked them to take care of the man. He left some money and said, "If it costs more, I'll be back to pay it later."

Then Jesus asked the question of his audience. "Which of those men proved to BE a neighbor to the man in need?" And the listeners gave the right answer. They said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said, "Good answer, you go and do the same."

So, according to the new definition of Jesus, loving your neighbor means showing mercy and kindness to anyone who is in need, whether they live in your neighborhood or not. Jesus even taught us to love our enemies.

In Galatians 5 Paul wrote that the entire law is summed up in the commandment where Jesus said, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Before you can love others you have to love yourself. There's a huge difference between loving yourself and self-love. Self-love is when you stand in front of the mirror and sing, "How Great Thou Art." Loving yourself means accepting yourself as God accepts you. Gloria Gaither wrote a song decades ago that I find myself often singing. It says, "I am loved; I am loved; I can risk loving you. For the One who knows me best loves me most."

## **II. Jesus gave us a new DEMONSTRATION of love.**

Within 12 hours of giving this new commandment, Jesus would be nailed to a Roman cross. Later that evening Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this; that a man lay down his life for his friends." He was saying, "I'm going to demonstrate to you what love really is. Watch what happens to me tomorrow. I'm going to lay down my life for you." If there is one verse you have memorized, it's probably John 3:16 where we read that "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son." But there's another John 3:16 about love that you should know. It's FIRST John 3:16: "This is how we have come to know love: He laid down his life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters."

In the Bible, love is laying down your life for others. I have observed that people make two big mistakes about what they think love is. First, some think love is a feeling. We think it's an ocean of emotion and a quiver in our liver. We think love is meeting someone that we consider to be beautiful or handsome and suddenly we hear violins going off in our brain. Although love produces feelings, Jesus taught us that love isn't a feeling, it's a choice. He chose to lay down His life.

The second mistake people make is thinking that love is some uncontrollable force. They say, "Well, I just fell out of love with that person." You don't fall out of love; you fall out of trees. Or they say, "I couldn't help it, I fell in love with that person." You don't fall in love; you fall in holes.

Part of our confusion is because we are limited by our English language. We only have one word for love. We are forced to use L-O-V-E for totally different experiences. I may say, "I love my

wife" or "I love chocolate ice cream" or "I love America" or "I love to play golf." Those are totally different experiences, but I have to use the same word: love.

God chose to write down His Word in the New Testament in one of the most expressive languages in history, Koine Greek. If you remember the dad in My Big Fat Greek Wedding, he was right: Almost all of our English words come from Greek root words!

There are four different words for love in the Greek language. If you want to know more about this, C.S. Lewis wrote a book in 1960 entitled *The Four Loves*. He described *storge* as affection. It appears once in the New Testament when Paul writes that we should be devoted to each other.

*Phileo* is friendship, and Philadelphia appears in the Bible translated as brotherly love. *Phileo* appears 21 times in the New Testament. When Jesus wept at the tomb of Lazarus the people said, "see how He loved him"—the word used was *phileo*.

*Eros* is romance, and doesn't appear in the New Testament, but of course, we get our word erotic from it.

C.S. Lewis calls *agape* charity. That is the divine unselfish love that appears hundreds of times in the New Testament. Jesus used *agape* in John 13 when He said, "Love one another as I have loved you."

So if you and I are going to love like Jesus loves, we need to understand what *agape* is. The greatest description of *agape* in all of literature is found in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. I've always loved the way the Living Bible paraphrases it.

"Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong. It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever truth wins out. If you love someone, you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. You will always believe in him, always expect the best of him, and always stand your ground in defending him." *1 Corinthians 13:4-7 TLB*

So if we want to love the way Jesus loves, we will practice *agape*. And remember *agape* is not a feeling; it's a choice. Here are three ways to practice *agape*.

### **A. Agape is my choice to be patient with irritating people.**

The Bible says "love is patient." Years ago I came across a funny poem about love. It says, "To dwell above with saints we love; oh, that will be glory. But to live below with folks we know; now that's another story."

We all know there are sweet people in the world, and there are people who can be irritating. A few years ago, my wife put a little cartoon on our refrigerator that said, "I have one nerve left and you're getting on it." It's been gone for a while. But she may start looking for it again!

Sometimes those closest to us can be the most irritating. People have been sending me funny videos about the strain of families being forced to be together during this stay-at-home season. One woman was filming herself while hiding in a closet because her husband had suggested they watch all five Planet of the Apes movies together.

Another wife reminded me that she took her husband for better or for worse, but not for lunch.

We need to keep our sense of humor, but being stuck at home can be stressful. Sometimes it's the people we love the most who get on our nerves. So we need to display *agape* to our family members.

Dr. James Dobson with Focus on the Family says 75% of marriage problems would disappear if husbands and wives would just show more patience and courtesy to each other. So here's your assignment: Ask God to give you patience during these days. My definition of patience is: Calm endurance trusting that God is in control. One important lesson God is teaching us now is patience.

### **B. Agape is my choice to show kindness even if it isn't deserved.**

The Bible says, "Love is kind." If we only show kindness to those who are kind to us, this doesn't require *agape*. That's just reciprocity.

We have to be creative during these days of isolation in order to perform acts of kindness.

I googled "Acts of Kindness during the corona virus" and I found lots of lists of things you can do and still maintain a healthy distance. For instance: (1) Call a friend you haven't spoken to for a while and catch up; (2) Send a motivational text or Bible verse to someone who is struggling; (3) Tell a family member how much you love and appreciate them; (4) Help with chores around the house; (5) Send someone a picture of a cute animal or a funny pet meme; (6) Call a friend or relative who is experiencing the loneliness of self-isolation.

So your assignment for this week is to think creatively about how you can show kindness to someone who needs it.

### **C. Agape is my choice to forgive others—even if they don't ask me.**

The Bible says, "Love keeps no record of wrongs." In Matthew 18, Simon Peter came up to Jesus, and said, "Jesus, how many times do I have to forgive somebody who has hurt me? Seven times?" Jesus said, "Hardly. Try seventy times seven." Then Jesus told this story. Listen carefully, because you and I are one of the characters in the story.

A king had a servant who owed him \$10 million. He called in the servant and said, "Pay up. If you don't I'm going to throw you and your family in jail." The servant got on his knees and begged the king to have mercy and give him time to get the money.

The king was so moved by his plea that he showed him mercy. He said, "Okay, I'm writing off your debt. You don't owe me a penny."

The servant walked out of the king's room feeling wonderful. It wasn't long until he saw a fellow servant who owed him \$10. He said, "You'd better pay me that \$10 or I'm going to toss you and your family in jail. Servant #2 got on his knees as begged, "Please have mercy. Give me some time to get the money."

And then there's a twist in the plot. The man who had just been forgiven a \$10 million debt said to the man who owed him \$10, "No way. Pay me now or you and your family are going to jail."

But that wasn't the end of the story. The king heard about his unforgiving attitude so he called the first servant back in. He said, "Let me get this straight. I forgave you a \$10 million debt and yet you wouldn't forgive a \$10 debt?" The servant was silent because he had been caught.

The king said, "Your \$10 million debt is back on my books. Pay up or you're going to jail."

Then Jesus gave the lesson. "Just as your Heavenly Father has forgiven your sins, you ought to forgive those who sin against you."

In the story the King represents God. Each of us are the servant owing the \$10 million. We owed God a sin debt larger than \$100 trillion; and yet when Jesus died on the cross, God stamped "Paid in full." So because we have been forgiven such a huge debt, we should be quick to forgive those nickel and dime sin debts that people owe us.

Think of someone who has hurt you deeply. They failed you in the past. They might have used you or abused you. Perhaps they betrayed you. It might even be a family member. It may be a current or former boss or coworker. If you say, "I can't think of anyone." Then, my friend, you are a rare individual.

Now I want you to love them the way Jesus loves. Will you forgive them, even if they don't come begging you to forgive them?

That's what Jesus has done for us. The word forgive literally means to release. Unforgiveness is when your fist is clenched. Right now, will you say, "Because God has forgiven me, I forgive that person ..." and relax your fist.

## **CONCLUSION**

Jesus has called us to love one another in the same way He loves us. During WWII a man died in combat in France and his two friends desperately wanted to give him a decent burial. They found a cemetery in a nearby village. When the two friends found the priest in charge of the burial grounds, they asked if they could bury their friend in the cemetery. But when the priest learned the dead soldier wasn't a confirmed Catholic, he said he couldn't be buried in the

cemetery. But he told them they could bury their comrade just outside the fence. That's what they did.

The next day, they returned to visit the grave, but couldn't find it. Their search led them back to the priest and, of course, they asked him what had happened to the grave. The priest told them that during the night he was unable to sleep. He got up and moved the fence to include the dead soldier. That's what love does. Love doesn't shut people out—it circles them in.

Edwin Markham was an American poet who wrote eighty poems, he was even writing them when he was 80. One of my favorite lines from his poetry says: "He drew a circle that shut me out; Heretic, rebel—a thing to flout; But love and I had a wit to win; We drew a circle that took him in." (The Shoes of Happiness, 1913) Even when someone may have shut you out, you can circle them in with your love.

There is a lot of uncertainty in the world today. But let me tell you some things that are CERTAIN. God loves you. He loves you as if you were the only person who needed love. He loves you so much that wants to have a personal relationship with you. The only thing that prevents that relationship is sin in your life. But God loves you so much that He sent Jesus to the world to remove that sin barrier. When Jesus died on the cross, He was taking the punishment that we deserve. So if you'll place your trust in Jesus, your sins can be forgiven and you can become a child of God.

If you'd like to place your faith in Jesus, pray this simple prayer after me:

Dear God, I am a sinner. I'm sorry for my sin; please forgive me. I believe Jesus Christ is Your Son and that He died for my sins and You raised Him to life. I want to invite you Jesus into my heart, to take control of my life. In Jesus' Name I pray, Amen.

## OUTLINE

### I. Jesus gave us a new DEFINITION of love.

"Do not take revenge or bear a grudge against members of your community, but love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord." *Leviticus 19:18 CSB*

### II. Jesus gave us a new DEMONSTRATION of love.

"This is how we have come to know love: He laid down his life for us. We should also lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters." *1 John 3:16 CSB*

- A. Agape is my choice to be patient with irritating people
- B. Agape is my choice to show kindness even if it isn't deserved.
- C. Agape is my choice to forgive others—even if they don't ask me.



— MESSAGE DISCLAIMER —

These messages are offered for your personal edification and enrichment. I have used many sources, and I have always attempted to cite any exact quotations and/or use material that is not under copyright. Any failure to cite a quote is simply an oversight on my part.

If you are a preacher or teacher, I encourage you to use this material stimulate your own Spirit-driven preparation—*it is never intended as a substitute for your own study of Scripture.*

If you borrow the majority of a message or outline, it is good scholarship (not to mention the right thing to do) to cite the source. If you are teaching, you may simply preface your remarks by saying something like: **“Some (or “much” as the case may be) of the ideas I’m sharing in this message came from a message by Pastor David Dykes in Texas.”** This simple citation also applies to any work you may publish, too, as I routinely publish my material in books that are protected by copyright.

This careful effort on your part may prevent any criticism that may be directed toward you. I trust you will find that additional study beyond this material will benefit both you and your listeners.

For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes



---

*David O. Dykes, Pastor  
Green Acres Baptist Church  
Tyler, Texas*