

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR
OVERFLOWING LOVE

September 30th, 2018

1 - VIDEO: LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

2 – TITLE SLIDE

WELCOME

Good Morning! Welcome to Fox Valley Christian Church!

COMMUNITY WORSHIP SERVICE

Next Sunday we will have a 7:45am service. This is going to be a shorter service, we will provide light breakfast items, we will worship God, have a short message, and join together in our communion and offering ... then we will go downtown for a 9:30am community worship service. We will join River City Church and Logan Street Baptist Church before the family day of the Batavia Oktoberfest.

THE REAL GOD SERIES

Then the following Sunday we will start The Real God sermon series. In this series we will spend 8-weeks looking at God, who He is, and how knowing Him affects us.

Our children and students will be engaging in the same lessons, there is family videos and discussions you can have at home. If you look at our YouVersion app, we will have links to that material in there. We will also put a link on our website and add it to our Bulletin during those weeks.

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR – HOSPITALITY CHALLENGE

This week we are doing continuing in our Love Your Neighbor series. The focus of this series is practical ways that we can be loving our neighbors.

Last week we talked about hospitality. We talked about being vulnerable and inviting people into our homes and sharing a meal. I challenged you, as a Church body, to share 100 meals “in your homes” over by the end of October.

CLARIFICATIONS

- In your homes – we specifically want to be vulnerable and invite people into our homes. Or be vulnerable and step into peoples homes. For the purpose of the challenge, don't count meals at restaurants, etc.
- Meals not People – the challenge is for 100 meals, not 100 people. I am asking that you count the people and add them to the plates, but if we share a hundred meals we could potentially impact hundreds of people.
- This is not a Biblical Works mandate. This is simply a challenge to be vulnerable in your homes and try to develop a deeper relationship with the people that in your life.

LOVE

This week we are going to be looking at the freedom that we have in Christ. Specifically, we are going to be looking at the freedom that we have in Christ ... so that we can love.

And really ... to understand this we need to fully understand where love comes in when loving our neighbor. I know that sounds like a silly sentence, but many times we attempt to love our neighbor and we fall drastically short.

Listen to these verses in scripture:

Jesus says ...

JOHN 15:12-13

3 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

¹²"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

4 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

¹³Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

LUKE 6:27-31

5 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

²⁷"But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,

6 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.

7 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

²⁹To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either.

8 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

³⁰Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back.

9 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

³¹And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

Alright ... according to what Jesus says in these two conversations ... love is:

- Laying down your life
- It is doing good to those who hate you
- Praying for those who are against you
- It is giving freely

If we DO these things, then we are acting in love. Right?

We'll listen to what Paul says:

1 CORINTHIANS 13:3

10 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

³If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Well ... wait a minute. Those don't seem to go together. It appears that Jesus is saying that giving and sacrificing is love and Paul is saying that you can give and sacrifice and not love.

Is Paul contradicting Jesus? If so, is Paul wrong ... because ... well Jesus?

Don't get caught up in that game. ALL scripture is God-breathed. ALL scripture. What Jesus said, what Paul said ... God breathed.

- This means that you can give all you have away ... and not love.
- You can make the ultimate sacrifice ... and not love.
- This means that you can pick whatever social agenda or movement that you want to pick, you can be all in, pouring your time, energy, and money into it ... and not be loving.
- You can be the most hospitable Christian ... and not be loving.
- You can find yourself in hell after spending a life fighting for poverty programs, fighting for prayer in school, fighting for unborn babies ...

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If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

PAUSE – I am not saying to be indifferent. I am not saying that these things are bad. I am not saying that we are not to be called to action, because I believe that Jesus makes it perfectly clear that we are called to action. That we are not supposed to be indifferent.

What I am saying is that action without love, is just action.

John Piper said, “Love can never be equated with anyone’s agenda because no agenda is love unless it comes from a certain kind of heart.”

Love ... this might surprise you ... is a heart issue.

CHRISTIANITY IS NOT PRIMARILY AN AGENDA FOR SOCIAL ACTIVITY; IT IS PRIMARILY A POWER THAT RADICALLY CHANGES THE HUMAN HEART.

THE COMMAND TO LOVE

Today, as we look at love, we are going to be looking at Galatians 5.

GALATIANS 5:1

12 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

¹For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

Christ set us free, do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

I have given my life to Christ ... now I have a checklist of things I must do.

- I must be hospitable
- I must hold the door for people
- I must be honest
- I must be friendly
- I must not let my anger burst out when I am driving in rush hour traffic

- I must show up to Church every single Sunday or shame on me

13 – TITLE SLIDE

Christ didn't set us free from our sin and free from the bondage of irresistible temptation just so that we can be a different kind of slave.

GALATIANS 5:2-6

14 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

²Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you.

15 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

³I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law.

16 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

⁴You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.

17 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

⁵For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.

18 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

⁶For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

The Galatians were being told a false gospel. They were being told that they had to be circumcised like the Jews or they were not recipients of God's grace. As if that act of circumcision, as if the work of circumcision was part of what saved them. See the dangerous road here is a list begins to form.

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You must be circumcised, you must stand for this social cause, you must be against this and for that, you must ... the list goes on. If you do not fulfil everything on that list than you are not saved.

But in verse 6 ... one of my favorites ... Paul says ... whether you do or not, it doesn't matter. The only thing that matters is faith working through love.

SAVING FAITH PRODUCES LOVE AND LOVE GIVES EVIDENCE OF GENUINE FAITH.

Then we get to verse 13

GALATIANS 5:13-15

20 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

¹³For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

21 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

¹⁴For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

22 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

¹⁵But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

Paul gives a two fold command here.

Negative - Do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh

Positive – Through love serve one another

Then he gives a two fold incentive to love

Positive – For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love our neighbor as yourself.”

Negative – If you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

So let’s look at these.

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MOTIVATED TO LOVE

The command ... through love serve one another.

Really, what Paul says here is ... you were called to freedom, so through love serve one another. You were called to freedom from slavery, now in love submit to servitude.

This is a radical statement, but how does it work? Why is a love that serves the only way that a Christian expresses their freedom? Why is the call to love and the call to freedom synonymous?

The works of the flesh and the fruit of love are not two different optional ways to live in freedom. When you live according to the flesh you are in slavery. When you serve each other in love, you are in freedom. Why?

Here's why ... **LOVE IS MOTIVATED BY THE JOY OF SHARING OUR FULLNESS, BUT THE WORKS OF THE FLESH ARE MOTIVATED BY THE DESIRE TO FILL OUR EMPTINESS.**

The word flesh in Galatians is not referring to the physical flesh on a person, it is referring to selfish desires that we have. It is referring to the emptiness that we experience that we attempt to fill with our own power.

So we might use the law or works to fill that emptiness, we might use acts of service as a way of filling that emptiness. We might use booze, or stuff, or relationships to fill that emptiness. One thing is for sure ... the flesh is not free. It is enslaved to one desire after another in an attempt to fill that emptiness.

Don't use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh ... don't surrender the freedom that you have in the all-satisfying Christ to return to the unsatisfying desires for mere physical pleasures or self-exaltation.

Works of the flesh are motivated by a desire to fill our emptiness, but love is very different. Love is motivated by the joy of sharing out of our fullness.

When we love, we are not enslaved to use things or people to fill our emptiness. Since love comes out of our fullness, it is the

only behavior we can do in freedom. When God fills the emptiness of our heart with forgiveness and help and guidance and hope ... He frees us from the bondage to accumulate things and manipulate people.

If God has filled my heart, if God is all satisfying, then I am not going to devote large chunks of my life surrounding myself with comforts. I will not spend time trying to fill the void. Christ has already filled it.

When we are running on full, completely filled by God, then we are truly free to love.

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF

So how do we truly, freely love? What does that look like?

Both Jesus and Paul recognize that all of the law can be summed up in "Love your neighbor as yourself."

What does that mean, love your neighbor as yourself?

Is this a self-esteem thing? Is this a command to love myself? You are good enough, you are strong enough, you are pretty enough. You need to have this positive self-image and then you can love people in that same way. Is that what God means by "Love your neighbor as yourself?"

When you look at this statement throughout scripture ... you see it originally in Leviticus 19:18, Jesus states it in Luke 10:27, and Paul again here is Galatians 5:14 ... the focus of the love is not self-esteem love, rather it is a self-interest love.

All people want to be happy, even if they don't know what will make them happy. People genuinely look toward self interest.

EPHESIANS 5:28-29

24 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

²⁸In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

25 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

²⁹For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church,

We know that if we are talking about self-esteem that just isn't true. I look at my flesh sometimes and think ... ugh. But self-interest ... I have a strong self-interest in my own health and safety and happiness.

Love your neighbor as yourself is not a command to love yourself. It is a command to take your natural, already existing love of self and make it the measuring rod of your love for others. This is so much harder than we actually treat it, it is so much more radical than many of us understand.

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Here is what it means:

- You want to feed the hungry as much as you want to feed yourself when you are hungry

- You want to find your neighbor a job as much as you are happy to have one
- You want to help your fellow student get good grades, as happy as you are to get good grades
- You want to help the person stalled on the interstate as much as you are glad you are not stalled on the interstate.
- You want to give that other kid a chance to play in the game, as much as you want to play the whole game.
- You want to share Christ with your neighbor as much as you are glad you know Christ

Sometimes I am out shoveling snow. I am tired, I am cold, I am overwhelmed by the amount of snow and I see my neighbor walk outside. Immediately I will find myself thinking, hopefully they recognize I would be happy if they came in helped.

Have you ever been doing something like that ... mowing, shoveling snow, pulled over on the side of the road, building something in your backyard, the list goes on ... and you think ... hopefully someone notices and helps. Because we have self-interest ... and it is to our best interest if someone would step in and help.

Do you look at others the same way? Do you care about what happens to others as much as you care about what happens to yourself?

Can you imagine what the Church would look like if we put the same creativity and energy and perseverance into loving others

in the same way that we do that for ourselves? If you could feel the same longing for others happiness and success that you feel for yourself, then this place world would be remarkably different.

PRACTICAL WAY TO LOVE YOUR NEIGHBORS

So how do we practically do this? If we are going to love out of our fullness. The fullness of God's love overflowing through us, how do we do that?

RECOGNIZE OUR NEED FOR GOD'S SPIRIT

First, we must recognize that this kind of love is only possible with God. You must start here.

ROMANS 7:18

27 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

¹⁸For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.

JOHN 15:5

28 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

We cannot do anything pleasing to God without the constant enabling of His Spirit. This is a pride thing. When we admit this,

we are no longer trying to fill ourselves and puff our pride through good works. Instead, we recognize that any good we do overflows from God.

We need to recognize that God fills us and not all of these other things that we have been chasing out of our emptiness.

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PRAY FOR GOD'S LEADING AND DIRECTING

God has the ability and desire to take our hearts and transform them. He wants to take us from being people that have a desire for sin and transform us to people that have a desire for Him. He wants to take us from people that have a desire only for ourselves and transform us to people that love our neighbors in the same way we love ourselves. Let's pray for this.

HAVE FAITH IN GOD

We are so good at doubting ourselves.

- I can't overcome this addiction
- I will always be angry
- This is just who I am
- I could never do that
- I try, but I always fail

We recognize our need for God, we pray for his intercession in our lives, and we have faith in Him. We know that He can and will give us victory over our desires. He will give us victory over the flesh. We know that what was impossible without Him is

guaranteed with Him. We need to have full faith in His faithfulness and His power.

WE NEED TO ACT IN LOVE

Notice, this is not step #1. Without recognizing God in all of this and living in His power, we cannot act in love. It is only from God's overflowing love and presence in our lives that we are able to love out of that abundance.

I don't need to tell you what to do or how to act in love, in the same way that I do not need to tell you how to eat when you are hungry. You know how to take care of yourself, when you are filled with God's love, you will know how to take care of and love the people around you. As I said earlier ... "Saving faith produces love and love gives evidence of genuine faith."

PRAISE GOD

Finally, we praise God. We recognize that it is Him living in us and transforming us and filling us and serving and loving through us and we praise Him for that.

If we truly want to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. If we want to love as Christ first loved us, then we need to begin by knowing God and recognizing our need for Him. Everything else flows from there.