

LOVE IS VITAL TO CHURCH GROWTH (1 Corinthians 13:13)

I. Love is a seen ingredient.

A. Someone once said, "Love is like the plague; if you have it, it will show."

B. How many times have we heard a story about someone looking for a place to worship, visiting a congregation, and then saying that where they visited, it was unfriendly?

1. I've heard some of you, upon returning from a trip, say something similar about congregations you've visited.

2. The doctrine may be sound but the love and warmth of Christians is missing in some congregations.

C. I'm thankful that this congregation is much more on the loving side than not.

1. If someone goes away from this congregation saying they weren't spoken to, it is likely they came in late and left quickly.

2. We speak to people and I've heard you tell people how glad you are they came and invite them back.

D. This is not to say we can't do better, because we can always do better, but we do a pretty good job.

E. There is an old expression, "What you are speaking so loudly, I can't hear what you are saying."

1. This is a very true statement.

2. A failure to love or potential converts to see love in a congregation has kept many from obeying the gospel.

3. It is like putting a keep out sign on the front door.

4. Love must be at the forefront when looking for things to draw people to a congregation.

F. Jesus said it this way... (John 13:34-35).

G. Love is an attractant.

1. Love draws people into a congregation and gets them to stay.

2. It shows people they are cared for and that is something most people want to know and feel.

H. On the other hand, a lack of love is a repellent.

1. No one wants to feel unwanted or not cared for.

2. This goes for prospective members as well as members who have been part of a congregation for some time.

3. We do know this cuts both ways, but let us never be guilty of being unloving or uncaring.

I. What are people seeing in us as a congregation and in me and you as individuals?

J. Love is a decision that each of us has the power to make and live out in our lives towards ourselves and others.

II. Definition of love.

A. In our cultural way of thinking, love is more of an emotional feeling or something to do with sex.

B. In the days of the writing of the New Testament, the Greeks had several words for love because they understood the difference in degrees and aims of love and had four main words used for love.

1. Eros was the word for sexual love between two people.
 - a. It is the word from we get the English word erotic.
 - b. They considered this lowest form of love because in many ways it is a selfish love.
 - c. It was never used in the Bible.
2. Storge described affections among family members, especially extended family members.
 - a. This word is found in Romans 12:10 translated “kindly affectioned”.
 - b. This refers to the church as a family.
3. Phileo is the most common Greek word for love and it carries the idea of looking on someone as a brother or friend.
 - a. Jesus used this word towards John (John 20:2).
 - b. It is also the love Jesus had for Lazarus (John 11:3).
4. Agape is the one found most often in the New Testament and it is a sacrificial love in which the best for the object of the love is sought.
 - a. This word doesn't deal with emotions as the other words do.
 - b. It deals with actions on behalf of the object of our love.
 - c. It is not an emotional roller coaster with ups and downs in it.
 - d. It is a deliberate decision of the mind to do the absolute best for the object of our love.
 - e. This type love is the central power of our Christian lives.

III. New Testament emphasis on love.

- A. There is no greater truth found in the New Testament than God's love for us.
 1. Love is an attribute of God (1 John 4:7-8).
 2. God's love for us should motivate us to love.
 3. God's love is universal in scope (John 3:16).
 4. Man doesn't deserve God's love (Romans 5:8).
 5. God's love is sacrificial (Revelation 1:5; Ephesians 5:2).
 6. God's love is merciful towards us (Ephesians 2:4).
 7. Christians are strengthened by God's love (Romans 8:37).
 8. God's love never ends (Romans 8:39).
 9. God's love rewards (James 1:12; 2:5).
 10. God's love chastens its objects (Hebrews 12:6).
- B. The New Testament also sets forth our responsibility to love God.
 1. Luke 10:27.
 2. John 14:15.
 3. 1 John 4:21.
- C. Love is a recognized and appreciated ingredient in the life of a Christian.
 1. Ephesians 1:15-16.
 2. Colossians 1:3-6.
 3. 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3.
 4. 2 Thessalonians 1:3-4.

IV. Expressions of love

- A. Sometimes we may wonder how to express our love for others.
- B. The New Testament gives us a number of ways to do so.
 1. You and I are to love our enemies (Matthew 5:44).

2. Love is the glue that holds us together (Ephesians 4:16).
 3. The expression "love your neighbor as yourself" appears 8 times in the New Testament.
 4. Paul told the carnal minded Corinthians "follow the way of love" (1 Corinthians 14:1) in order to handle their many problems.
 5. The command to love one another appears at least 15 times in some form in the New Testament: such is needed because the world is watching.
 6. We are to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).
 7. We are to be patient and bearing with one another in love (Ephesians 4:2).
 8. Love is the greatest of virtues (Colossians 3:14).
 9. Love is involved in one of the major reasons we assemble together (Hebrews 10:24).
 10. Husbands are to love their wives like Christ does the church (Ephesians 5:25).
 11. We are to pursue love (2 Timothy 2:22).
 12. We are to love every member the same (Philippians 2:2).
 13. We are to love the brotherhood (1 Peter 2:15).
 14. We are to love in action (1 John 3:18).
 15. Love holds a congregation together (Colossians 2:2).
 16. Love demands that we forgive brethren and allow them to be restored to us as a body (2 Corinthians 2:8).
 17. Our sacrificial love helps us to govern our own freedom in Christ (Galatians 5:13).
 18. We must direct our love towards God and not the world (1 John 2:15).
 19. Love allows us to ask for help (Philemon 9).
 20. Biblical love is generous (2 Corinthians 8:24).
 21. Love never seeks to harm someone (Romans 13:10).
 22. Real love is sincere (Romans 12:9).
 23. We must love as Christ loves us (John 15:12-13).
 24. Genuine faith is moved by love (Galatians 5:6).
 25. We are to love the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10).
- C. As you can tell, love is involved in every action we undertake.
- D. It is the motivating force behind everything we do.

From a book entitled "How To Have Biblical Church Growth" by J.J. Turner.