

The 21st Century Disciple: Love One Another

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[0:00] For the last few weeks, we've been looking at God's Word to understand what it means to be a follower of Jesus in the 21st century. To live for Jesus, 2018, here in Kenosha, southeastern Wisconsin.

And we began by looking at Luke 9, the words of Jesus himself. He said, if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. And those two words, follow me, that came from the lips of Jesus himself almost 2,000 years ago.

When those two words are received by repentance and faith, it changes everything. One goes from being sinfully self-centered to graciously God-centered in all that they do and think.

And so those two words, follow me, are game changers because they come from the lips of Jesus. And so here's what this means for us. To follow Jesus today is to live intentionally for Jesus in every area of our life.

So those two words were as true then as they are now. Jesus is alive. And he calls all of us to follow him. Then we looked at 2 Timothy 3.

[1:20] We looked at God's word, this book. It is vital for us to live for Christ. It is God's word. So they are powerful. It's profitable and purposeful.

And so we as followers of Jesus, we don't stand over the book. We come under the book. This book is life to us. And then last week, we looked at how essential prayer is to following Jesus.

We pray big. We pray bold. And we pray believing because we've got an awesome God. And so now we turn this morning to God's word once again to look to God's word and teach us about loving one another.

And what we're going to see is Jesus commands us to love one another. It's not optional. It is essential to following after him.

So in order to just kind of raise this a little bit, I thought we could take a straw poll by show of hands. How many Christians in this room find it difficult to love another Christian?

[2:25] Raise your hand. Now I'm particularly interested in Christian husbands and wives. And if there's this going on right now. But now just for another step of honesty.

How many of you Christians in this room have come to the realization that you too can be difficult to love? How many realize that?

Yes, me too. So here's what that means for all of us. We need help loving one another. And we need that help from God.

We have hard times loving other Christians. And other Christians have a hard time loving us. We need help.

And thanks be to God. He speaks right to it. If you'd open up your Bibles to 1 John chapter 4. 1 John is towards the end of your Bible.

[3:25] Back of your Bible if you don't know. If you're new to the Bible, just find Revelation which is at the backside and do what I do. You start moving left until you find 1 John. So Revelation. I just skipped over a few books.

And now I'm in 1 John. Now hear God's word. This is God speaking to us about loving one another. 1 John 4 chapter 4 verses 7 through 12. Beloved.

Let us love one another. For love is from God. And whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. And anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love.

In this, the love of God was made manifest among us. That God sent his only son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love.

Not that we have loved God. But that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. Verse 11. Beloved. If God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

[4:30] And verse 12. No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God abides in us. And his love is perfected in us.

Let me just tell you up front what I believe God is telling us here. His word is saying God's love for us compels us to love one another.

It's a simple cause and effect relationship. God's love for us compels us to love one another. How are we going to love one another? It starts with understanding God's great love for us.

So there is a kind of a progression of thought that the apostle John has here. 1 John 4, 7 through 12.

And we're just going to follow through his progression of thought about loving one another. It starts with the love requirement in verse 7. And then we're going to move to the love assessment.

[5:32] The love test in verses 7 and 8. And then we're going to see love demonstrated in verses 9 and 10. And then we're going to see the love cause and effect, verse 11.

And then we're going to land this plane as John lands this plane in verse 12. The love result. This is about loving one another. God's love for us compels us to love one another.

So let's look at verse 7. The first few words, we read the love requirement. Beloved, this is the apostle John speaking with the authority of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Let us love one another. It is an exhortation. He is calling us to love.

It's not optional. It's essential. Now, as I have been pastoring for years now, one of the things that I have noticed is an interesting mindset among some Christians.

[6:40] Typically, these are Christians who have been burned by other Christians. And so what happens is they have this kind of me and Jesus mentality. All's I need is Jesus. I don't need everybody.

I don't need all the other Christians. I just need Jesus and I just need me and maybe some select few other Christians that I can trust who aren't going to be risky, who aren't going to hurt me. And I'm just going to hold up and I'm going to follow Jesus, he and me, me and Jesus, all the days of the rest of my life.

Here's the deal. Being in meaningful relationship with other Christians gets messy. It's not easy. Being in a show of hands in the room, how many of us in this room have been hurt by another Christian, I think all of our hands would go up. And so when Jesus says, I'm going to read in a second, love one another.

He's not giving us a pass. Let us love one another. Even when things get tough. Even when you get hurt.

[8:19] Even when you're wrong. Our Lord Jesus gives us no passes to say, okay, I can selectively love the easy people and I'll just kind of pass by the tough folks.

We are to love one another. This here is a command to love. And I just want to make sure you understand where this command is coming from.

So it's the apostle John here in 4-7. Beloved, let us love one another. And if you look down at verse 11, you read something similar. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

And then in verse 21, in this commandment we have from Jesus, whoever loves God must also love his brother. And if you scroll back into 1 John, you come through 1 John 3 and 1 John 2 where John is also talking about the love of God.

And he makes a really interesting reference. He says something like, just as you've heard from the beginning, love one another. And so it starts raising the question, what was he talking about?

[9:26] What beginning? Now keep your finger in 1 John 4 and now flip back to John 13. Now the man that wrote 1 John was also an eyewitness to Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

He was with Jesus on the night that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper at Passover. And he was part of the whole deal of finding the empty tomb.

Well, he has an account in John 13, verses 34 and 35. This is right after the Passover. Jesus has just instituted the Lord's Supper.

He's been alluding to the fact that the Lord's Supper, this Passover now, is all about him. And so they're on their way out to Gethsemane. And Jesus pulls his disciples over and he says this. A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

[10:40] By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you love, if you have love for one another. Now when Jesus said to his disciples, just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

This is before he's crucified. He's just hours out. They don't fully realize the degree by which Jesus is about to show his love for them. By laying down his life for them.

But it is right there. When they would look back on these words, they would be like, oh, he loved us by laying his life down for us.

So the person that ultimately requires us to love one another is Jesus himself. And as 21st century followers of Jesus, we see this as not an optional command, but an essential command.

This is a requirement. And so what is love? What kind of love are we talking about? Well, essentially, Christians are to love one another in the sense of commitment.

[11:44] Love is a commitment. And it's a certain kind of commitment. In light of John 13, it is a sacrificial commitment to one another.

It's a sacrificial commitment to one another for each other's greatest good. So Christian love is a distinctly Christ-like love for one another.

And if there's any questions about who we are to love, we are to love one another, says John in 1 John 4, 7. And of course, he's referring to other Christians, those who've been bought by the blood of Jesus.

So here's what this means for us. In our church, we don't have the option to selectively love some and not other Christians.

Jesus calls us to all love one another. And so, regardless of neighborhood, regardless of education, ethnicity, grammar, tax bracket, Jesus calls one Christian to love another Christian.

[12:59] And that is a sacrificial commitment for one another's good. I hope you're feeling the weight. This kind of love is a distinctly Christian love.

Christ-like love. And what we're about to see is this is a supernatural love. So we've looked at the love requirement. Now let's look at the love assessment. The love test.

1 John 7, we read, Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God. And whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

Anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love. Now just a little bit background. I know we've just kind of jumped into 1 John. So let me just give you a sense of 1 John.

1 John was written by the Apostle John to a bunch of first century Christians. And he wrote them in order to assure them that they belong to God, that they were children of God.

[14:02] And the way that he does that is very interesting. John lays out three tests that he weaves through the book of 1 John. There's the truth test. What do you believe about Jesus?

Do you believe he's God in the flesh who died in the place of sinners? And then there's the obedience test. Are you obeying the commands of this Jesus?

And then there's the love test. Are you obeying the chief command to love one another? And so all these commands, all these tests are woven throughout 1 John.

And when it comes to the love test, there are three places in 1 John where the love test shows up. Can I just point you there?

Look first at 1 John chapter 2 verses 9 and 10. John's talking about love and he says, Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.

[15:05] Whoever loves his brother, verse 10, abides in the light and in him there is no cause for stumbling. And so here's the love test shown up in 1 John 2.

If you hate your brother, you're not in the light. You're in the darkness. You're not a believer. But if you're loving your brother, you are in the light. You have been brought into salvation by God's grace.

Now if you look at 1 John 3 verse 14, we read, We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brothers.

Whoever does not love abides in death. Again, here's another love test. But instead of talking about light and darkness, he is talking about life and death. And so whoever loves his brother, he's passed out of death into life.

He's been born of God. He's been given eternal life. God has made him alive in Jesus. But if he doesn't love his brother, he still abides in death. He's dead to God.

[16:07] Dead in his sin. And so you see how this love test is operating in 1 John? And so we show up in our passage, 1 John chapter 4 verses 7 and 8.

And again we read, For love is from God and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. If you're loving, you've been made alive by God and you know him. But then he says in verse 8, Anyone who does not love does not know God because God is love.

And so what this test does, it reveals whether you've been born again or not. It reveals whether you're a follower of Jesus or not. Are you loving those who've been bought by the blood of Jesus? If you are, you've been born of God. If you're not, chances are you're not a follower of Jesus. Maybe you're wondering, well, what does this kind of love look like?

How do I know if I'm loving another Christian or not? Well, if you page over to 1 John 3, 16, we have a classic example. By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

[17:23] That sounds, in principle, really good. Look how John applies it. Verse 17, But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, doesn't love him, how does God's love abide in him?

Little children, let us not love in word or talk, but in deed and truth. See how that shows up? One of the ways Christians love one another is if one Christian who has the world's good sees another Christian who is struggling and they need help, that one who's got the world's good should love that other Christian by helping them out.

That's one way. Other ways in which Christians love one another is bearing with one another. You've got a brother or a sister who's going through a hard time, and it's going to be inconvenient and uncomfortable for you to go because this person is crying a lot, and they talk a lot, and it's going to be a huge commitment of time.

You could just avoid it. But love compels us to go and to bear with that brother or sister experiencing hardship.

When a brother sins against me, love compels me to forgive them. When I sin against a brother, love compels me to go to my brother and say, I've sinned against you.

[18:46] Will you forgive me? It's love brings about peace and unity in the church. In Ephesians chapter 4, we see love exercised in speaking the truth in love to one another.

And that's just not a truth grenade that you throw in and you duck from. It's listening carefully and then speaking words of encouragement and comfort and correction if need be.

How are you holding up? How do you stack up? Let God's word have its intended effect. How are you loving the brothers and sisters in Christ?

Are you loving them? Or are you not? If for some reason you don't think you are, do you know what you need the most? You need to experience the love of God in Christ Jesus.

You need to become a Christian. That's what that reveals. This kind of love that we're talking about here, it's a supernatural love.

[20:02] We're born of God to love one another. So, for us here living in the 21st century, to intentionally live for Jesus means intentionally loving those who also belong to Christ, who God has placed in our midst.

God's love for us compels us to love one another in a Christ-like fashion. That's the love test.

Now, let's look at the ultimate demonstration of love from God that humans have ever seen. We've seen the requirement.

We've had our hearts exposed. Now, John, like a good pastor, points us to what God has done. We read this in verses 9 and 10.

In this, the love of God was made manifest among us that God sent His only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. And this is love, not that we have loved God, but that He has loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

[21:22] John just said, gave us the love test, and he closes verse 8 with three words, God is love. And in verses 9 and 10, he says, this is how that love has been made known, how it's been revealed.

And I want to draw your attention to the word this in verse 9. We read, in this, this specific, concrete event, God, the love of God was made manifest among us.

What is it? That God sent His only Son into the world. And this is the love of God. God's costly, sacrificial commitment for our greatest good was made manifest in His sending of His only Son, His unique and exclusive Son into the world.

The very people who were rebelling against Him, God demonstrates His love by sending His one and only Son to them. And this demonstration is purposed.

in this, the love of God was made manifest among us that God sent His only Son into the world.

Why? For what reason? For what purpose? So that we might live through Him.

[22:49] God lovingly sent His Son so that we who were in darkness and in death could live for God. That we could be born of God.

That we could know God. That in the words of John 10.10, that Jesus came, that we might live abundantly. And that is talking about eternal life.

An eternal life that doesn't start when you die. An eternal life that starts the moment you believe in Jesus. At the moment that God awakens you to who Jesus is and what He's done and you put your faith in it.

He moves you from a sinful, self-centered way of being and He radically, graciously moves you into a God-centered way of living and it changes the way you love.

Now over here, if you're self-centered, you're loving other people usually selfishly. But when God moves you by His grace through what Jesus has done and He gives you life, you are God-centered in all that you do and now I am loving people not for myself but I'm laying down myself to love them to Jesus.

[24:08] Does that make sense? This, this is the love of God that He sent His Son that we may live a radical change.

there's another this in verse 10. And this is love. Not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son.

John is helping us to understand what kind of love this God loves with. And he says, don't make the mistake of trying to define love by looking at your own love for God.

That's not the gold standard of love. the gold standard of love is God's love for us. And again, it's in the sending of His Son.

Did you notice that in verse 10? That He loved us and sent His Son and then we're, then we're confronted with a very big theological word.

[25:22] Sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. What does that mean? Verse 9, God's love is demonstrated in the sending of the Son for the purpose of giving us life.

Verse 10, God's love is demonstrated in the sending of His Son through the means of Jesus' death on the cross. Let me help you understand.

propitiation. The word propitiation is a big word that's capturing a very important idea, a very important truth.

A propitiation is a sacrifice that satisfies God's wrath for sin.

And what John is talking about is what takes place, took place on that first Good Friday. Jesus on the cross and God's wrath being poured out on Him for the sin of all of those who would one day believe.

[26:32] Jesus bore our wrath so that we could live for God.

Christ's loving cross work removed God's wrath that was hanging over our heads for our sins and it enables us to live for Him now.

It's because of Jesus' wrath satisfying death that we who are in Christ are now able to live for God. So, here's Captain Obvious.

Do you notice where John points us to show us the greatest example of God's love known to man? Where does He point us? He points us to God sending His Son to die on the cross for sinners so that we can live for God. You know, there's another way to describe that?

[27:47] The gospel. The good news that God sent His one and only Son to die for sinners so that we can sin.

and here's the point. John's just not showing us this so that we can have a working definition of propitiation. God, John is showing us this demonstration of love to motivate us.

To motivate us. Look at verse 11. Beloved, if God so loved us that He would send His Son to die in the place of sinners so that they could live, if God loves us that much, we also ought to love one another.

This is the love cause and effect. You could also call it the gospel cause and effect. It is a chain reaction of God's love that He initiates in us and that we can't help but love one another because we've been radically changed.

Cause and effect. Do we have any Fixer Upper fans in the house? Chip and Joanna?

[29:09] Gaines? Magnolia? Whatever? They flip houses. And what they do is at the beginning of the show there are these before pictures of these dumps and they get involved and they turn a dump into this glorious piece of real estate.

There's this cause Magnolia real estate properties, Chip and Joanna Gaines, that comes in and completely flips this house.

And the effect, is a whole new building. Here's the cause and effect of the gospel. God comes in with his love, demonstrated in Christ, that takes away our sin and gives us new life and he radically reorients us.

He radically changes. He loves us so much. love. It is a gospel causation of love and that cause impacts us to such a good degree we must love other people.

We've been radically changed. God's love for us compels us to love other Christians cause God's love effect.

[30:40] we love others. Think about it this way. God's love is a vertical love that impacts us internally and the result, the effect is our love goes horizontal and has an external effect.

here's what John is helping us see. He's showing us how to love. Okay, so raise your hand if you know a Christian that is difficult to love.

Oh, we're all there. How do you love them? John's showing us how. You don't turn to yourself first. You don't start doing all sorts of observations and lists of how difficult this person is to love.

The place that you start in order to love somebody is with God's love for you. When you realize how much God has loved you, it compels you to love other people, even when it gets messy.

Let me read you something from this book. It's a gospel primer by Milton Vincent. He says it this way, when my mind is fixed on the gospel, I have ample stimulation to show God's love to other people.

[31:58] For I am always willing to show love to others when I am freshly mindful of the love that God has shown me. You want to know how to love other people?

Dwell on God's love for you. That love demonstrated most clearly in Jesus Christ. So let me press this a little further.

When you think about God's love for you that initiated towards you, 1 John 4 19 says we love because he first loved us. The chain reaction started with God loving us.

God's love for us that initiated towards us compels us to initiate with others. I'm not going to wait for them to call me. I'm not going to wait for them to flag me down.

If I'm seeing something I'm moving there. Which brings us to the next. God's love for us showed up in the sending of his son.

[33:03] God crossed all sorts of boundaries in order to love you. Jesus came from heaven to earth. He left his glory to come here.

He was dwelling in his spectacular glory and then he took on a seven pound baby frame. Crossed all sorts of boundaries and that sending, that crossing of boundaries compels us as Christians to love over boundaries with other Christians.

To love over racial boundaries. boundaries. To love over financial boundaries, neighborhood boundaries, cultural boundaries, any kind of differences.

God's love for me compels me to move through the barriers. others. God's love initiates, so I initiate.

God's love moves towards others, so I move towards others. God's love sought my greatest good to give me life in Christ, so now I am going to love other people for their greatest good that they would live in Christ.

[34:21] Christ. And of course that comes at cost. God's love for us to live for Christ came at cost.

He laid down his own life in order for that to happen. So we lay down our lives to love other brothers and sisters for their greatest good.

could you imagine what happens in a church when a church starts loving one another like this? What's going on there? God's love?

God's love taking root? God's love making a difference? God's love compelling us to love one another? I hope you see that there is no room here for self-reliance.

There's no room here for trusting in myself and loving of other people. We look to our God and we experience his love in order to love others.

[35:27] And that brings us to the loving result. We've seen the cause and effect. Now let's look at the loving result in verse 12. No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

No one has ever seen God. He's talking about God the Father. God the Father dwells in inapproachable light. Nobody has ever seen him. But then he says something very interesting. If we love one another, God abides in us.

It evidences God's presence in us. When God is dwelling in a people, he is going to compel his people to love one another. It's evidence of the unseen God dwelling in his people.

love one another. And then look at the result. And his love is perfected in us. Don't miss the language. And his love is perfected in us.

When we love each other with a Christ-like love, not only does it evidence that God is present in our midst, his love is being perfected in us.

[36:41] And that word perfected, think about it as fulfilled or complete. It's the completing of a circuit. Here's another way to think about it. God's love for us is incomplete until we love others.

It's a potent love. It's intended to come vertically and then go horizontally.

you want to know a really cool thought? God loves us through one another.

His love is perfected in us. So, could you imagine this? God intends in our church to use the brothers and sisters in this church to communicate his love for each other.

God intends to use us that way. He wants to use me and others in your life to communicate his love for you in Christ.

[38:01] But it also means this. He wants to use you. He wants to use you to communicate his love to other brothers and sisters in the church.

His love is perfected in us. and it's a powerful witness. Back to John 13 35.

Our love for one another, it displays Jesus in a unique way. It gets around this, hey, you know what, I'll take Jesus, but you can just keep all the other Christians.

No, our love for one another is a strong apologetic against that. let's wrap this thing up. We started by asking the question, hey, do you as a Christian have difficulty loving other Christians?

You're like, yes, we do. And then I asked, okay, are there Christians that probably have difficulty loving you? And you're like, yes. And then we're like, do we all need help?

[39:16] Yes, we all need help loving one another. Lord, and here's the good news. God's love for us in Christ is the help.

It's the love with which we love one another. It's God's love for us, compelling us to love one another.

So maybe the response is you realize you don't love God's people and it just shows that you're not a Christian. You just need to become a Christian. Put your faith in Jesus.

Turn from your sin. Or maybe this means confession. You realize you are a Christian but you've been avoiding other Christians because they're a mess and you don't want to deal with them. It's not loving.

Maybe it means seeking someone's forgiveness. Maybe it means giving someone forgiveness. Maybe it means visiting someone who's going through hard times and dealing with the inconvenience and discomfort of that.

[40:16] Maybe it means simply loving people with your ears. Listening to people. Hearing them out.

Understanding one another. And that positions you to speak a timely word from God out of love for your brother or sister.

there's some of you in here that may be in the category of you know what there's someone I know I'm supposed to love but I don't want to love them.

Here's what I would encourage you to do. Go to your God. Ask him to remind you to show you of his great love for you.

And ask him to tenderize your heart towards your brother or sister that you don't want to have anything to do with. A 21st century of Jesus Christ lives out every area of their life for Christ.

[41:24] And that includes loving other Christians. Christians. It's not optional. It's part of living for Jesus. Let's pray.

God in heaven we do thank you so much for your word and we recognize that your word calls us to things that we in of ourselves sometimes don't want to do or don't feel like we can do. So God I do pray that you would by your spirit impress upon us your great love for us and that would move us towards others.

so that we can love them in a way that honors you and for their good. In Jesus name we pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.