

Clothed with Compassion

Put on Love

“And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”

– Colossians 3:14

Growing up in rural Colorado, one of the common places that I frequented every couple of weeks was the Kit Carson Barber Shop. As a young boy, 30 min in the chair getting a haircut and teased by John or Merrel was a much better experience than getting my ears lowered at home with dull clippers that my dad offered. Through the years I noticed that upon arrival of the lunch hour or 5:00 PM, John was quickly out the door and headed home. John’s wife had a disability, and he would go home and make her lunch and dinner each day and care for her. He was so faithful you could set your clock by his actions.

We also had a farm on the South side of town where I spent much of my time fixing fence or breaking colts. Along the west edge of our property was Highway 109 that ran south into the canyon country and had a great view of the Rocky Mountains about 60 miles west. Most evenings from about 6 to 6:30 PM I would see John drive by taking his wife on an evening journey. John’s faithful care for his wife day in and day out for most of my childhood really impressed on me what love looked like. Now that I am older, I respect it even more. When I was in the barber chair, John did not talk about what love looked like, but I saw him put on and wear it every day in caring for his wife.

Colossians 3:12 calls us to *“clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”* As you think about John’s story, I am sure each day John had to make a conscious decision in caring for his wife to put off many choices and put on actions that cared for his wife. He clothed himself daily with these attributes which are bound together in love. Living a life like this day in and day out is not natural without dying to our own desires and living for others. Colossians 3:14 says *“And over all these virtues (listed in vs 12) put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”* How do we put on love and is it even possible on our own?

1 John 4:7 says *“beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.”* If love is from God, how do we access it? It comes from our restored relationship with God when we die to self, are hidden in Christ, and accept Him as our savior and take steps to walk in obedience to God (Colossians 3:3-7). Love is an interesting attribute because God does not call us to work harder at it but to abide in Him and to allow His perfect love to live in and flow from us. Jesus describes this process of abiding in John 15 where we are encouraged as believers to abide in him like a branch abides in the vine. Jesus says in John 15:8-10 *“By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.”* As we go through the challenges of day-to-day life, abiding in Christ results in him pouring out His love in our hearts (Romans 5:5).

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God did say if you keep my commandments you will abide in my love. Keeping all God's commands can seem like a mammoth task, but Jesus simplified our understanding of this in Matthew 22:37-40 when he summed it up this way, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."* While God gives us freedom in our actions, He calls us not to use that freedom to serve the flesh but to love and serve others (Galatians 5:13). For it is in doing so that our loving actions fulfill the law and commands (Romans 12:10 and Romans 13:8-10).

Not only does love fulfill God's command but this passage in Colossians is a good example to show how love is a special attribute that helps to harmonize many of the other attributes God calls us to put on. It says that love binds them together in perfect unity. Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience are all made better in love. We see in I Corinthians 13 God describes love and compares it to Faith and Hope but refers to love as the "greatest" virtue. Also, in Galatians 5:22 love is listed as a Fruit of the Spirit. Love is also an outcome of an effective growing faith in 2 Peter 1:5-8 *"For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

In summary, God's love is perfected in us as we love Him and others. Each day as we abide in Christ, we can find the peace and joy of serving God by putting on love.

- 1. To put on God's love what actions should we first take?**
- 2. Why is abiding in Christ important to our putting on love?**
- 3. Why does loving God and loving our neighbor sum up all the law or commands of God?**
- 4. How can putting on love bind together other attributes in perfect unity?**



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