

GROW
What Love Looks Like
1 Corinthians 4:18 – 5:13

Babies need love; so do big old football players and corporate executives and housewives and rebellious teenagers and little old ladies. We ALL need love. We were made to love and be loved. So, the questions come: What IS love, and what does love LOOK like? The answer may surprise you! We all know that love looks like a warm embrace or a gentle word. Love looks like comfort and support and refuge during a raging storm. These things are all true. Nothing brings us joy like the wonder of being loved; even and especially when we don't deserve it! These pictures of love do not surprise us. **But will you accept the truth that sometimes LOVE DOES NOT LOOK like love? Sometimes, love may LOOK like REJECTION, or HARSHNESS, or (God forbid!) INTOLERANCE.** Are you willing to EXPAND your understanding of real love? I hope so. If not, you are going to be very confused by today's message. It is about the kind of love that God has for us, and the kind of love that God expects us to show to one another. It is NOT just a warm, fuzzy love. It is MESSY. It is HARD. It works in the middle of the worst aspects of who we are and what we do. It is relentless and ruthless. It is kind and beautiful and rough and ugly. It SEEMS to be a CONTRADICTION at times. But don't let appearances fool you. Love may not always look like love; but it is the real thing nevertheless. Believe it!

Today, we are going to see just how much God loves the church at Corinth. He loves them enough to face their faults head on and confront them with TRUTH. **He loves them enough to do something for them that may just HURT them before it HEALS them. Love does that. Today, I want to examine how love treats the beloved when the beloved is behaving badly.** Parents, you know this dilemma. No one loves your children more than you do. You have poured your entire life into them. You spent sleepless nights and endless days caring for your kids. You spent and spend insane amounts of money feeding them and clothing them and sheltering them and spoiling them. You would die for them. Maybe you already are! But what do you do when they begin to misbehave? What do you do when they foolishly put themselves directly in harm's way? If your child is blowing bubbles and mindlessly wanders into the street after them, do you just smile and let them wander into traffic, or do you wildly chase after them and abruptly snatch them out of the road? You already know the answer! But what do you do if your teenaged or grown-up child starts acting out and living like a fool? Do you IGNORE their foolishness, or even FUND it? **[Enabling their destructive habits and pretending that all is well?]** What do you do? Paul would tell you that love takes action that may push your children away before it draws them close. Love is RISKY and COMPLICATED. Love seeks out and relies upon the sovereign will and work of God to rescue the rebellious (think: Prodigal Son). Love is willing to implement a SERIES of STEPS that are meant to eventually draw the loved one back to reason and to God. Let's read about the sad state of affairs that Paul had to address in love at Corinth.
1 Corinthians 4:18 – 5:5 NLT

18 Some of you have become arrogant, thinking I will not visit you again. 19 But I will come--and soon--if the Lord lets me, and then I'll find out whether these arrogant people just give pretentious speeches or whether they really have God's power. 20 For the Kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk; it is living by God's power. 21 Which do you choose? Should I come with a rod to punish you, or should I come with love and a gentle spirit? 1 **I can hardly believe the report** about the sexual immorality going on among you--something that even pagans don't do. I am told that a man in your church is living in sin with his stepmother. 2 You are so proud of yourselves, but you should be mourning in sorrow and shame. And you should remove this man from your fellowship. 3 Even though I am not with you in person, I am with you in the Spirit. And as though I were there, I have already passed judgment on this man 4 in the name of the Lord Jesus. You must call a meeting of the church. I will be present with you in spirit, and so will the power of our Lord Jesus. 5 Then you must throw this man out and hand him over to Satan so that his sinful nature will be destroyed and he himself will be saved on the day the Lord returns.

How does that passage strike you? Does it seem CALLOUS and CRUEL? I promise you, many who are here today who may not know the Lord are SHOCKED by those words. They simply look like INTOLERANCE and RELIGIOUS ARROGANCE! **Just WHO does Paul think that he is? What right does he have to tell people whom they should or should not love? Is he the religious sex police?** Now, if this guy had been guilty of committing a string of robberies or murders, then most people would say that putting him out of the church in this way would be okay. Jail would settle that! Maybe if he was constantly shouting out racist slurs against Jews or Asians or African-Americans, or if he was sexually harassing women or mocking and attacking homosexuals, then he should be thrown out of the church. That makes perfect sense. But does the church have the right to put someone out or cause someone shame if they are simply in love with someone else? That is just wrong . . . right?

CULTURE TODAY: Your behavior is you OWN business. And no one should have the right to tell you what to do, especially about your love life! Love is whatever you want it to be! Love has no boundaries. Love RULES with NO RULES.

*You may THINK that you believe this, but do you really?

-Do you think that a couple should live together BEFORE they get married?

-Do you think a man should be able to marry another man if he really loves him? **(The world currently does.)**

-Do you think a brother and sister should be allowed to marry if they really LOVE one another? **[Culture is not here . . . yet.]**

-Do you think a 27 year old man should be allowed to marry a really MATURE 13-year-old girl if they really LOVE each other? **[11 year old?]**

-Do you think 3 people (or more) should be allowed to marry if they all are really in love and all consent to the marriage?

***Where is the LINE? Who gets to SET that line? WHY?**

AS CHRISTIANS, we believe that GOD has the right to set the boundary lines for our lives in EVERY arena of behavior, INCLUDING our sex lives. God rules; and his rule IS love! **His boundaries are not a rejection or limitation of love; they are the only proper context for healthy love!**

The Church is a FAMILY, and that family exists in a structured spiritual setting that has healthy biblical boundaries and proper authority figures. **And in a healthy family, you will experience love that is willing to DISCIPLINE you when needed!** Paul was a spiritual AUTHORITY in the church at Corinth. He was their spiritual father, and he was responsible to God for their guidance and protection. And they were in danger.

*Remember: This man was a professing Christian, and his behavior was TOXIC!

Love exercises AUTHORITY that is not afraid to look like INTOLERANCE.

False Authority will lead the Church astray: (4:18-19)

18 Some of you have become arrogant, thinking I will not visit you again. 19 But I will come--and soon--if the Lord lets me, and then I'll find out whether these arrogant people just give pretentious speeches or whether they really have God's power.

*The approval of sexual immorality is NOT unheard of in the church.

-Changing MORAL stands in some denominations today.

Revelation 2:20-21 NLT

20 "But I have this complaint against you. You are permitting that woman—that Jezebel who calls herself a prophet—to lead my servants astray. She teaches them to commit sexual sin and to eat food offered to idols. 21 I gave her time to repent, but she does not want to turn away from her immorality.

Revelation 2:16 NLT [About another church that was promoting sexual sin!]

16 Repent of your sin, or I will come to you suddenly and fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Proper Biblical Authority exercises appropriate JUDGMENT.

-All parents do this, but ONLY with their OWN children!

*We are neither to JUDGE nor AVOID outsiders [5:9-10]

9 When I wrote to you before, I told you not to associate with people who indulge in sexual sin. 10 But I wasn't talking about unbelievers who indulge in sexual sin, or are greedy, or cheat people, or worship idols. You would have to leave this world to avoid people like that.

-It is OFFENSIVE to judge those who have no commitment to Christ!

*We must practice NON-HYPOCRITICAL judgment of believers [5:11-12]

11 I meant that you are **not to associate** with anyone who claims to be a believer yet indulges in sexual sin, or is greedy, or worships idols, or is abusive, or is a drunkard, or cheats people. Don't even eat with such people. 12 It isn't my

responsibility to judge outsiders, but **it certainly is your responsibility to judge those inside the church who are sinning.**

-This kind of judgment is NOT in contradiction to Jesus or Paul's other teachings.

Biblical Authority is based on God's Word

LEAVEN (which is SIN) is not to be casually accepted! **(5:6-8)**
 6 Your boasting about this is terrible. Don't you realize that this **sin is like a little yeast that spreads** through the whole batch of dough? 7 Get rid of the old "yeast" by removing this wicked person from among you. Then you will be like a fresh batch of dough made without yeast, which is what you really are. Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us. 8 So let us celebrate the festival, not with the old bread of wickedness and evil, but with the new bread of **sincerity and truth.**

***The FAILURE to deal with sin OPENS the door to it in the family!**

Sometimes, authority may have to remove protection and blessing for a time in order to **reveal the foolishness of rebellion and restore the FEAR of God** for EVERYONE in the family, not just the rebellious one!

Love involves PROTECTION that sometimes looks like ABANDONMENT.

Rebellion is a rejection of the PROTECTION that authority gives us.

Have you ever let your child experience the CONSEQUENCES of his behavior after you have warned him (probably repeatedly!) about the risks that he is taking? This may be the ONLY way to rescue him from his sin!

Proverbs 1:29-33 NLT

29 For they hated knowledge and chose not to fear the LORD. 30 They rejected my advice and paid no attention when I corrected them. 31 Therefore, they must eat the bitter fruit of living their own way, choking on their own schemes. 32 For simpletons turn away from me--to death. Fools are destroyed by their own complacency. 33 But all who listen to me will live in peace, untroubled by fear of harm."

*Paul commands them to REMOVE the protection of family for a time. **(Vs. 3-5)**
 3 Even though I am not with you in person, I am with you in the Spirit. And as though I were there, I have already passed judgment on this man 4 in the name of the Lord Jesus. You must call a meeting of the church. I will be present with you in spirit, and so will the power of our Lord Jesus. 5 Then you must throw this man out and **hand him over to Satan** so that his **sinful nature will be destroyed** and he himself will be saved on the day the Lord returns.

-This is not the ONLY way to deal with it, but it must be an OPTION!

-Do YOU want to be handed over to your sin and sin's master?

*The command to remove him was done in a right spirit of SORROW! **(Vs. 2)**
 You are so proud of yourselves, but you should be mourning in sorrow and shame. And you should remove this man from your fellowship.

-Paul wrote these words with deep sorrow! **2 Corinthians 2:4 ESV**
4 For I wrote to you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

-Paul reminded them that *the one that sinned* CAUSED the sorrow!
2 Corinthians 2:5 ESV
5 Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to all of you.

- Sorrow and SHAME for his FAMILY and his CHURCH.
- DAMAGE to the TESTIMONY of believers everywhere.

The GOAL of this command was RESTORATION, not HUMILIATION!

*They were to remove FELLOWSHIP, not RELATIONSHIP!
2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 NLT
14 Take note of those who refuse to obey what we say in this letter. Stay away from them so they will be ashamed. **15** Don't think of them as enemies, but warn them **as you would a brother or sister**.
 -CHURCH DISCIPLINE at CHC [\[My experiences\]](#)

*The command to remove him was meant to produce REPENTANCE!
2 Corinthians 7:8-10 ESV
8 For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it—though I did regret it, for I see that that letter grieved you, though only for a while. **9** As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. **10** For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death
 -Do you see the WISDOM in discipline that HURTS so that it may HEAL?

*They were to RESTORE him quickly and fully! **2 Corinthians 2:6-8 ESV**
6 For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, **7** so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. **8** So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him.

Christians, God has called us to live a life that is fully submitted to the WILL of our Good Father. His ways are not meant to DEPRIVE us of life, but to DELIGHT us in life. And we are a FAMILY that must ENCOURAGE one another to fully follow him; even when that involves SORROW. **That is what love really looks like!** Are we willing to be a truly LOVING family?

Let's pray.