

Series: **“Being the Church in a World Gone Wild”**

CDOBC – beginning on 1/28/18

Today’s Title: **“Visible Love in the Church”**

February 17, 2019 - 1 Corinthians 16:15-24

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**Objective:** To help people’s faith grow and their love increase.

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On January 28, 2018, we opened our bibles to 1 Corinthians 1:1-17. Today, we open our bibles to 1 Corinthians 16:15-24. It’s taken 47 sermons to cover this amazing letter from the Apostle Paul to the struggling and dysfunctional believers in Corinth. Next Sunday I will begin a series, “Love Like That” - which I hope will help us love like Jesus loved so we can reach more people for Christ and help them grow in their faith. It will be 6 weeks and take us to April and the Easter season.

*Opening prayer*

vs. 14 - “Let all that you do be done in love.”

This verse not only wraps the 4 commands in vs. 13 in a blanket of love, but it’s a book-end to the closing section of the letter.

The other book-end is the last verse - vs. 24 - “My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.”

Love.

I was interviewed this past week by Charlotte (Baxter) Garcia - she was involved in the student ministry while she lived here in Tucson - and she’s now married, has 2 little kids -

scheduled to graduate from GCU this August - and she interviewed me and Pastor Scott for one of her classes. One of the questions she asked me was, “*What’s the most important trait for a church in today’s world.*” That was easy. LOVE!!!!

Jesus said we must love each other as He has loved us - and when we do, the world will know our faith in Christ. (John 13:34-35)  
Love.

Paul’s 1<sup>st</sup> letter to the Corinthians was a love-letter - with chapter 13 being the apex! It was a letter with a great deal of rebuke and correction, which is in part what love does. ***Love cares enough to fix what’s wrong - to point out the dangers - to bring health to dysfunction.***

Proverbs 26:7

“Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.”

***Beware of the kiss-up!!***

A friend who loves you will say the difficult things you need to hear.

Paul had great love for those in Corinth - and he closes out the letter with some personal remarks, but these personal remarks reveal the actions of a loving a church.

Love is the driving force of every good thing in life - and every good thing in a church.

- Obedience is driven by love for God.
- Serving others is driven by love for others.

Love is not a *thought* - it’s not a *mindset* - it’s actionable.

Christian love is a verb - which means our love must be in action - it will be visible.

We see in our verses today the results of visible love. As we walk through these today, examine your own life and see if this describes you.

When love is visible in the church, that church will:

**Share the gospel** vs. 15a

“Now I urge you, brothers and sisters - you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia...”

Achaia was the southern region of Greece - and Corinth was in that region. We don't know much about Stephanas, but Paul focuses the spotlight on him and his household as “the first converts in Achaia”.

The emphasis here is the evangelism that was important right from the beginning of Paul's ministry in the Achaia region. His love for Christ - his love for the gospel - and his love for people made evangelism a necessity for him.

A church that loves God and loves people will be a church that shares Christ with non-believers.

*When love is visible in the church, that church will:*

**Devote themselves to serving** vs. 15b

“they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints...”

They took the initiative - “they...devoted themselves”

They didn't wait around for an invitation and red carpet trying to convince them to serve.

They "devoted themselves" to serving others in the church.

The church is not designed to be divided into 2 groups: those who serve/labor - those who watch and receive.

Every member of the Body of Christ is expected to serve. Every member has been gifted by God to serve (1 Cor. 12) and every member is needed if the local church is to function at full speed - full potential.

Are you serving? If you are, thank you. I pray God will not only bless you, but I pray your service will be a huge blessing to those you serve!

If you're not serving, devote yourself to serving in the church...and start that process today!

*When love is visible in the church, that church will:*

**Submit to one another** vs. 16

We are not called to fight for prominence or insist on our 'rights' - or being in control - or in a position of power.

We are called to serve - to follow the example of Christ and humbly serve others.

"...be subject to such as these (Stephanas), and to every fellow worker and laborer."

You must be selective as to who you submit yourself to. The qualification Paul highlights here are those who

serve well in the church - those who are living out their faith in love as they serve “the saints”.

*Negative example - 3 John 9-11 - Diotrephes*

Submission’s purpose is to learn - to be mentored or taught by word *and* deed.

When love is prominent people will be eager to submit to godly leadership. They’re eager to serve - eager to be at the back of the line - eager for others to be first.

**Ephesians 5:21**

“...submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

There are different roles in the church - different levels of authority and responsibility, but nobody is *above* another - nobody is *better* than another.

Therefore, we submit “to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Those in positions of leadership have a high calling and high responsibility before God to set an example for the entire church.

**Hebrews 13:7**

“Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.”

**1 Timothy 4:12** - *a call for leaders to live as examples*

“Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.”

**1 Corinthians 11:1**

“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”

The Great Commission calls us to share the gospel - to “make disciples” - and Jesus also calls us to “teach them to observe all that I have commanded” - which means leaders set an example which will help the church grow into Christ-likeness.

**Luke 6:40**

“A disciple is not above their teacher, but everyone when they are fully trained will be like their teacher.”

What a humbling group of verses!

Submitting to one another is how Christian living is taught. It's not all teaching - lecture - it's setting an example, and we're called to submit to each other so we can learn how to live for Christ. Submission is not only an issue of godly authority, it's also an issue of discipleship - an issue of training / growing.

*When love is visible in the church, that church will:*

**Rejoice, refresh and recognize each other** vs. 17-18

***Rejoice:***

Do you look forward to church?

Do you look forward to seeing the people you know at church?

“I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence...”

These 3 men who probably went to Ephesus on business, were likely the couriers of the letter the Corinthians wrote to Paul. He “rejoiced” when he saw

them - not only for Paul's friendship with them, but they reminded Paul of the Corinthian believers.

Some of you don't have any relationships with others in the church. You come to worship - and you go home.

*'Well nobody invites us out.'*

*'Nobody invites us over to their house.'*

So.

Invite them!

Invite them out to dinner - or over to your home to watch the game, for a meal or to have dessert.

You know the saying: *If you want a friend, be a friend!*

This is what often develops in small groups - where friendships are developed, and relationships deepened - you look forward to getting together - you "rejoice" when you walk into the room and see everyone else.

Do you rejoice when you see people at church...and do you cause them to rejoice when they see you?

***Refresh:***

Are you someone who lifts the spirits of others?

Are you someone who encourages others - and is eager to listen to how they're doing?

"for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours."

What a beautiful thing to be said about you...that you refresh the spirit of others!

To be a person who refreshes others, don't just focus on problems - on difficulties.

Don't be hypocrites - don't put on a smile face for public view - but listen to yourself - listen to how you talk with others.

Pay attention to the tone of your voice?

Listen to yourself speak...are you a constant complainer? (spiritual gift of whining!)

Do you lift people up...or wear them down?

Are your prayer requests always in regard to problems - or do you offer praises?

Refreshing one another takes place when we're listening, celebrating, rejoicing in God's work in their life - even God's work through trials!

**2 Corinthians 7:6, 13**

"But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus..."

Therefore we are comforted. And besides our own comfort, we rejoiced still more at the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all."

**2 Timothy 4:9-13 - *Read passage***

***Recognize:***

Recognize their contribution - their work - their dedication - their support - their faithfulness.



Praise and celebrate those who are faithful in ministry - those who lead ministry - those who sacrifice for the cause of Christ. “Give recognition to such people.”

AWANA - year-end awards ceremony - when the kids are recognized for their work that year - and the leaders are recognized for how many years they've been serving in AWANA. When she was still with us, **Marilyn Karlberg** had served in AWANA for over 20 years!

**Ken Cottrell** - about 21 years in AWANA

**Lowell and Clara Jensen** - Lowell = 30 years / Clara = 20+ years in AWANA

**Meghan Davidson** - 15 years

**Dale Beyer** -

Honor each other for their faithful Christian living - their patient and enduring parenting - their long-suffering through illness or difficulties in life.

**Philippians 2:25, 29**

“I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus... So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men...”

**1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 (NLT)**

“Dear brothers and sisters, honor those who are your leaders in the Lord’s work. They work hard among you and give you spiritual guidance. Show them great respect and wholehearted love because of their work.”

*When love is visible in the church, that church will:*

**Have a Kingdom mindset of Christianity** vs. 19-20

“The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord.

20 All the brothers send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.”

A kingdom mindset and view of Christianity means that you realize this church - whatever bible-believing, Christ-exalting church you are in - is not the only legitimate church.

It means you understand the bond of love - the bond of commitment you share with other bible-believing Christians in other churches.

“The churches of Asia” - refers to the churches in Asia Minor - modern-day Turkey - and some of those churches would have been: Ephesus, Philadelphia, Laodicea, and Colossae.

Living this out in our world today:

- Partnership and support of Hope City Church
- Encouragement and support to other churches in our association

“Aquila and (his wife) Prisca (*Priscilla*), together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord.”

Aquila and Priscilla were from Corinth. **Acts 18:1-3** details when Paul arrived in Corinth and met them - and began to work with them because they “were tentmakers by trade”.

Their greeting would have been well received by their old friends in Corinth. The “church in their house” is likely the church in Ephesus which Paul was serving when he wrote his 1<sup>st</sup> letter to Corinth.

“Greet one another with a holy kiss.”

Affection.

What is love without affection?

This doesn't mean we need to start kissing each other.

This still happens in middle-eastern cultures - but in our culture we don't do a lot of kissing outside of family or romantic moments.

Because of so many perversions and abuses in our society - and within the church - we have become a society where affection is so limited - so rare.

We need to be aware of and sensitive to the other person and their comfort zone.

Like the Colgate toothpaste commercial during the Superbowl this year titled *“Close Talker”* - it's possible to be way too friendly...but a little affection would certainly help in today's world where everyone seems to be against everyone else.

Staring at the back of another person's head in a church service - and talking about love - can seem distant and separated from reality - if there's never any affection displayed in the body of Christ.

*When love is visible in the church, that church will:*

**Cover everything with love** vs. 21-24

Paul has dictated this letter to his secretary - and now he takes the pen in his own hand.

“I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand.” - this gave the letter authenticity - it was clear this was from Paul - who authored the letter was not in doubt.

“If anyone has no love for the Lord, let them be accursed.”

The word for love Paul uses here is the word *phileo* - which means to have an affection for. This was a word normally used for love of family or close friends. It was not a sexual affection, just a warm affection of love.

Is your love for Christ a theological love...ritualistic... rooted in church vocabulary - or do you have an affectionate love for the Lord?

This is not only a reminder for us not to be ritualistic and cold in our attitudes toward Christ, but it was Paul’s last ‘shot’ at those in the Corinthian church who were contrary to the Apostle’s teaching. Those who were insisting on human wisdom instead of God’s wisdom, those who were sexually permissive, those who were embracing idol worship and speaking in tongues saying, “Jesus is accursed” (12:3) had no love and were not affectionate toward Christ.

Paul uses the strongest language possible here for those who don't have an affectionate love for Christ - he says, "let them be accursed". - devoted to destruction - damned!

Is this loving?

Yes!

It's a warning - it is protective and preventive for you if your love is not affectionate and simply due to church liturgy or dogma. It alerts you to the problem of *emotionless love* for Christ!

"Our Lord, come! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. (Amen)."

Warm ending to a letter written out of love and with love. A difficult letter to write - and no doubt it was a difficult letter to read and accepted.

"grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus."

The "Amen" is in some manuscripts. If it was added later by a scribe, you can certainly understand why it was added - it fits. "Amen" means: *So be it - or may it be so.*

### ***Apply it...***

Do you have an affectionate love for Christ?

(worship / service / obedience)

Is your love "in word *and* deed" - is it visible to others?

(sharing Christ / serving / submitting / refreshing & recognizing / Loving other Christians from other churches)

Close in prayer