

PART SEVEN HANDOUT: DRRESSED TO SERVE "The Most Important Virtue...LOVE!" Col 3:14

We've seen that God wants us to Take Off Our Old Nature and Clothe ourselves in the Character of Christ. Paul Gives us the Secret Sauce to do this: READ Colossians 3:14 *The God Given Virtue that Enables and Empowers Us to Exercise each one of these Virtues into our Lives is...LOVE!*

- NOT Natural! We Must Choose to Surrender Our Old Nature to Christ and Follow His Example!

Issue: Incorrect Attitudes of Love Keep Us from Demonstrating the Character of Christ!

God Makes it very Clear that without Love for Our Brothers/Sisters...We Cannot Say We Love God!

- **READ Matthew 22: 37-39; Romans 12:9, 10; 1 John 4:20-21**
- John tells us that the true measure of whether we love God or Not is shown in how well we Love our brothers & sisters Like Christ...Putting Others before Ourselves! **READ Colossians 3:14**

This Begg the Question>>>How am I known by others? Theologically sound? An active member of the church? Maybe people know you for the gifts you have. But these Gifts and Talents are NOT the Lord's Focus...He Goes Right to the Major Point and asks the Penetrating Question: "Do You Love Like Christ?!"

Corinthians Chapter 13: 1-3 Tells Us How God Evaluates our Abilities, Gifts and Talents when they are Demonstrated Without Love: I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I Am Nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I Gain Nothing.

- True faith has a practical Expression...And that Expression can Only be Agape Love!
- **KEY: To Love Is Supernatural! So...How Do We Begin to Love Supernaturally?**

For Christ to be Seen and Experienced in Our Lives Love Must be the Predominant Characteristic of Christians... Unfortunately, in Practice...Love is Often Absent. **Gordan MacDonald makes the important statement that the world can do everything the church can do...and better...Except for One Thing...Only the Church can Extend Grace.**

When the New Testament was being written, there were 4 primary Greek words to describe the concept of Love...Eros...Stergo...Phileo and Agape. Agape depicts the *Supernatural Love of God*. This is the word used in Galatians 5: 22 as a fruit of the Spirit. There is No Higher Level of Love than Agape!

- *Agape occurs when an individual sees, recognizes, understands, or appreciates the value of an object or person, causing the viewer to behold this object or person in great esteem, awe, admiration, wonder and sincere appreciation!*

When God Looked Upon the Human Race...Even though Mankind was Held Captive by Satan...He Loved You and Me so Deeply that "*His Heart was Stirred*" to Reach Out and Do Something to Save US!

- **KEY: GODS LOVE DROVE HIM TO ACTION! AGAPE LOVE YEILDS GRACE!**

KEY: When You and I Love Someone with AGAPE Love "*We Expect Nothing in Return*"...Therefore...It is Impossible to Feel Hurt or Let Down by the Response of the Recipient of Your Love!

How Do We Do This? Paul tells us to "Put On Love!" We are required to Do this daily.

God's Standard Demands that at All Times we Ask... "Am I patient, kind, and without envy in my relationships? Am I seeking to help those who have a need? Am I desiring the best for those that God has brought into my life? Am I seeking to build up others or only to build up myself through others? Am I willing to forgive an offense in an effort to live Peacefully with all people? Am I Willing to Look beyond an Offense and See the Persons Potential Rather than the Problem! Am I willing to Accept People Where they are...With No Exceptions?

This is what we See in Jesus. He met the fishermen, the tax-collector, the adulterer, the military leader, the worried women...Right Where They Were.

- ***He longed to Cleanse them and make them Holy...But He started this process at the point at which he found each individual.***
- He spoke their language and started with what they could understand. He worked to meet their unique needs...Love does Not Demand that Everyone be Like Us!
- ***It doesn't demand that people have the same experience, the same tastes, the same background. True love embraces people as they are...Overlooking Irritations.***

Loving people requires we see these irritations in life as bumps in the road as we head to spiritual maturity...Looking for Potential rather than for Problems.

Love does Not Happen Naturally.

- When we see unloving feelings beginning to creep in, we must stand against them. We must repent of our attitude and return to love. We must eliminate the harmful "buts..." from our lives.
- You know: "he's a nice person but..." "He works hard but..."; "I like him, but..." **The loving person knows that there are No "buts" about Love.**

God's Word in Colossians makes it clear that love is the trait that makes all the other godly traits effective.

- It is This Love that Brings both the Virtues of Godliness and People Together.
- Jesus tells us in "John 13:35" that we are to love one another as He has loved us. Then he says, "by this will all men know that you are my disciples".

Closing Story: John Trent, writes: When I led a Young Life group, I did my best to round up kids who really needed to hear the gospel when we went to summer camp...Mark was one of those kids. Bob Mitchell, the main speaker that week, called most of the shots--including when meals would be served. So "Mitch" was always talking with the cook. The cook loved her work, but it was exhausting. She always looked tired. Whenever she talked to Mitch, he got up and gave her his chair--and a moment's rest--while they discussed meal plans...Nobody noticed Mitch doing this ... Except Mark.

Mark hadn't come to hear about Jesus...But when he saw Jesus' love lived out in that simple act of kindness by the camp speaker, he began to listen to his talks. Later that week, Mark asked Jesus to be his Savior.

It wasn't because of the messages, Mark said, but because of the Love he saw in Mitch. "If that's what it means to be a Christian," Mark said, "I Want to Be One."

KEY: The greatest way to reach the world is to show them Jesus through the Love of Compassion, Kindness, Gentleness, Humility, Bearing up each other and forgiveness!

- This is True Christianity that will Impact... Even a hard-hearted world...

POINT: To Love is NOT Natural...It Is Supernatural!

Your Life May be the Only Epistle That an unbelieving Soul may Read...What Will They read as They see How you Respond with Words, Actions and Choices? You Have a Choice each Day...To Live Life Naturally...OR...To Deny Yourself...Clothe Yourself in Christ...And Love Those Around You with a Radical, Supernatural Love!

As We the Body of LifePoint Church...Demonstrate Love We Become a Glove that God Slips His Hand into...He Will Use Us To Reach Our Jerusalem and Draw All People to Jesus Christ!