

Sunday, December 31, 2023
THE END OF THE BEGINNING
John 13:34-35 (NKJV)

At the beginning of 2023, we shared the vision for this year: *Revival through Relationship*

This word directed us to focus on living our relationships in a godly way and by doing so, we will experience personal revival. This last year, we have endeavored to get together in differing formats, realizing that our gatherings focused on Jesus will give us opportunities for growth. Relationships are challenging. But *God has chosen relationships as the proving ground of His disciples.*

Jesus said: “By this all will know that you are My disciples, by your love for one another.” And Jesus gave us the example of what type of love He is seeking in the body of Christ: the same type of love He has for us. This type of love will transform people and will make the church distinct from the world.

Today is the last day of 2023, and we’ll be sharing the vision in full next week, but the word we will share is contingent upon walking in the vision of 2023. That’s why today’s teaching is called “The End of the Beginning.” Everything God has for us—is building in us, is doing for us—is rooted and grounded in love for Jesus and one another. Let’s go back and look at more of John’s inspired writings:

1 John 3:14-16 (NKJV)

What a contrary teaching to that of the world. These words precede the command to share our worldly with those in need. God is serious about them. They – not church attendance, Bible reading, or other activities are the proof of our salvation and discipleship. If you are new to the Body of Christ, then you are on a journey of learning love. The biblical definition of love is quite different from that of the world. The world uses tolerance to identify love. The Bible does not. Sacrifice is the foundation of our understanding of love. Sacrifice that leads to true liberty. Jesus is our example of love:

By this we know love, because He (Jesus) laid down His life for us. /// 1 John 3:16

What is the outcome of such love? Security from fear. Liberty from sin. Purpose in life. In experiencing His love, we experience personal revival. His love is proven in us when we love those who are unworthy of such love. Loving this way reveals the love that God gave us. Loving this way reveals that we are under the Lordship of Christ. *Our church will develop into the church the Lord wants it to be if we trust Him and love one another.* We are on our way. God has factored our weaknesses and imperfections into His plan for our success. They cannot stop us if we are under His Lordship. Even the water poured upon the sacrifice in on Mt. Carmel by Elijah could not stop the purifying fire of God. *The only thing that can interfere is fear and selfishness.*

God will send the “fire” of His Spirit upon our sacrifice of love for Jesus and love for one another. Let everything you do this year: prayer, reading your Bible, going to meetings, giving, serving, etc. – let it all be a reflection of the love you have for Jesus and the love you have for one another.

Matthew 22:37-40 (NKJV)

Today's Scriptures:

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