

"Love like Jesus"

I Corinthians 13

I. Introduction

A. Jesus cares deeply for the one

1. He would have died on the cross if it were just for one person
2. As believers, our calling is to care for the one
 - a. This includes everyone—the outcasts, those who disagree with us politically, and those who disagree with us spiritually
 - b. Our mandate is to reach out to everyone
3. We want to see every hand, every heart, and every home won for Jesus

B. We are called to love "the least of these" (Matthew 25:40):

1. Those the world has forgotten
2. Those the church has marginalized
3. Those the government has oppressed
4. Those whom society has cast out

C. The world will know we are believers by our love for other people (see John 13:34-35)

1. Your identity in Christ isn't found in your love for God but is reflected in your love for other people
2. The least of these aren't relegated to third-world countries—they're right here in our backyard, in our city, in the neighborhoods we try to avoid
3. The least of these is every heart that is broken, every hand that is shunned, every home that is avoided
4. We need to remember the forgotten, pursue the marginalized, fight for the oppressed, and love the outcast

D. The benchmark for our love is the love Jesus has for us

1. He loved those the world hated, touched those the world shunned, and reached for those the world avoided
2. We don't get to determine how far is far enough
3. Matthew 5:16

E. Your goal as a Christian isn't to be bright, but to try to be Jesus

1. How can I look a little bit more like Jesus today?
2. How do I love people more like Jesus?
3. Never stop loving, never stop forgiving

F. How do we genuinely love people we don't genuinely love?

1. There are people who are genuinely difficult to love, yet we're called to genuinely love them anyway
2. The world will experience Jesus through our love for people (see John 13:35)
3. If there's one thing that should characterize the church, it's love

G. I Corinthians 13 is the most comprehensive description of love in Scripture, and it doesn't focus on what love is, but on what love does

1. Love is not abstract—love is active
 2. Love is fully love only when it acts
 3. Love doesn't make you feel something—it makes you do something
 4. I John 3:18
- H. This passage is also a description of Jesus' love toward us
1. This is a portrait of Jesus
 2. His love is to be our love (see Romans 8:29)
- I. His love can be your love if you let it
- J. To live like Jesus, you need to look like Jesus
- II. You Never Look More like Jesus Than...
- A. When you're patient
1. "Love is patient" (v. 4, NIV); *patience* literally means *long-tempered*
 2. Love's patience is the ability to be inconvenienced or taken advantage of repeatedly
 - a. This is also seen in forgiving those who continue to hurt you (see Acts 7:60)
 - b. Pray blessings upon those who hurt you, not vengeance
 3. This is the love that turns the other cheek (see Matthew 5:39)
 - a. Its primary concern isn't for itself, but for others
 - b. Patient love allows itself to be wronged
 4. To love like Jesus is to love those the world hates, touch those the world shuns, reach out to those the world avoids
 - a. Start with patience—start with the self-sacrificial, tender love He has for us
 - b. We must make the choice to be patient
- B. When you're kind
1. If patience will put up with anything from others, kindness will give anything to others
 2. Patience and kindness are two sides of the same coin
 - a. Patience says, "You can do anything to me"
 - b. Kindness says, "And I will do anything for you"
 3. Kind love is active goodwill
 - a. It doesn't just feel generous—it is generous
 - b. It doesn't just desire change, but it also works toward that change
 4. When you love someone despite what they do to you, it will change your heart
 - a. It's hard to be bitter toward someone you're praying for daily
 - b. It's hard to hate someone you've purposed in your heart to bless
 5. Kind love puts up a barrier around your heart and protects you from growing bitter, from allowing that bitterness to fester and poison all of your relationships
 - a. When you love people the way Jesus loves people, you stay in an innocent, childlike purity, in awe of who God is and in awe that He would love you in the first place (see Romans 2:4)
 - b. If love is learned but not lived, it is a lie; don't say you love someone if you're not going to live it
 6. Oftentimes, the first thing we forget is the simplest thing—nothing else matters if Jesus doesn't love people

- a. The longer we immerse ourselves in religion, the more we tend to forget what makes it work in the first place
 - b. We can become so caught up in events, programs, ministry, etc., that we forget what ministry is actually about
 - i. "When the world sees the church doing evangelism, making converts, it only sees us increasing our numbers and increasing our power. When it sees us sacrificially serving the needs of our neighbors, whether they believe or not, then it may see that we are motivated by love, not the desire for power. We must both preach the gospel and serve those who can do nothing for us in return" —Tim Keller
 - ii. Our city needs to see our love before they'll listen to our message
 - 7. You don't have to sacrifice your convictions for compassion
 - a. If you don't love people from all walks of life, then you're not following the Bible
 - b. "If God's love has flowed into our lives, it ought to flow out of our lives" —Skip Heitzig
 - c. If God's love is not flowing out of our lives, it's questionable whether it has flowed into our lives in the first place
- III. You Never Look Less like Jesus Than...
- A. When you're rude
 - 1. Be kind to people; true love has manners
 - 2. We might not understand why people do what they do, but they're still people, created in the image of God, and they deserve respect no matter what choices they've made
 - B. When you're easily provoked to anger
 - 1. When did it become more important for us to be a Democrat or a Republican than to be a Christian?
 - 2. If there are things you know will cause you to be angry, guard against those things
 - C. When you judge in your heart
 - 1. As humans, it's easy to be cynical and judgmental of others
 - 2. So many of us have misunderstood this; it's not okay, even if you don't say it out loud (see Matthew 7:3-5)
 - 3. How often are we guilty of thinking of and looking at others with judgment and contempt?
 - a. We have to choose to see people through the eyes of Jesus
 - b. Leave the judgment to God—everyone has to give account of himself to God
 - D. When you're suspicious
 - 1. We need to spend less time looking at where someone is and more time learning about their story
 - 2. Instead of coming to them in judgment, build a relationship with them first—cover them in the love of Christ
 - a. Instead of looking for ways to judge people, look for ways to love people
 - b. "Burning down others' opinions doesn't make us right. It makes us arsonists" —Bob Goff

IV. Conclusion

- A. On your very worst day, God still calls you "beloved"
- B. "Love never fails" (v. 8)
 - 1. Love refuses to give up, to stop hoping
 - 2. Love will simply not stop loving
- C. It shouldn't be surprising when Christians love people
 - 1. Jesus loves you desperately, no strings attached
 - 2. In the church, every heart should feel welcome, every hand safe, every home loved
 - 3. We will remember the forgotten, pursue the marginalized, fight for the oppressed, love the outcast
 - 4. To love like Jesus means both sacrifice and commitment
- D. Encountering an unloving believer doesn't excuse an unbelieving behavior
 - 1. Jesus wants you to bring all your baggage and come to Him
 - 2. He wants to take all your baggage, all of your pain, and carry it for you

Figures referenced: Bob Goff, Skip Heitzig, Tim Keller

Cross references: Matthew 5:16, 39; 7:3-5; 25:40; John 13:34-35; Acts 7:60; Romans 2:4; 8:29; I John 3:18

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