



... Not Self-Seeking

Focus

Children ages 4-8 were asked their views on love. Here's what some of them had to say:

- Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your French fries without making them give you any of theirs.
- Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving cologne and they go out and smell each other.
- Love is when you tell a guy you like his shirt, then he wears it every day.
- When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love.
- If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend who hates you.
- Love comes from people's hearts, but God made hearts.

1 Corinthians 13 outlines some wonderful definitions about what love is. The Greek word in 1 Corinthians 13 is agape. It is a love like no other. It is a God-like and focused love, not a self-focused love. This morning we are going to consider from 1 Corinthians 13 the little phrase – “love is ... not self-seeking”. That is it is not selfish or self-focused.

But first let me show you some pictures:

- here I am in Niagara Falls last month
- here I am back at home in my backyard
- here I am at the office

Have you noticed how our society is so self-focused? What's up with all these “selfies” anyway? Why do people take so many pictures of themselves and then post them all on Facebook? And speaking of Facebook – it's a web site all about me – what I like, what I do, who I like – me, me, me. And then there are tweets – because everyone needs to know what I'm doing right this minute because I'm so important. For all the Apple users out there – everything is all about you – with the Iphone, Ipad, I pod – I, I, I.

From an article titled, "How To Be Miserable", the author writes - *"Think about yourself. Talk about yourself. Use "I" as often as possible. Mirror yourself continually in the opinion of others. Listen greedily to what people say about you. Expect to be appreciated. Be suspicious. Be jealous and envious. Be sensitive to slights. Never forgive a criticism. Trust nobody but yourself. Insist on consideration and respect. Demand agreement with your own views on everything. Sulk if people are not grateful to you for favors shown them. Never forget a service you have rendered. Shirk your duties if you can. Do as little as possible for others."* ([Daily Walk, June 29, 1993.](#))

1 Corinthians 13 outlines a better way. It says – “Love is not ... self-seeking”. It does not demand its own way. It does not trample on the rights of others. It does not insist on getting what is owed.

In the context of 1 Corinthians a self-seeking love led to divisiveness (chapters 1-3), law suits against one another (6), disregard for others at the Lord's Supper (10,11), competition about spiritual gifts (12), disorderliness at worship (14).

As we look at love as not self-seeking, I want to look with you this morning at some radical statements Jesus made about a love. Because the kind of love Jesus talks about and demonstrated – agape love is

a revolutionary kind of love. Turn in your Bibles this morning to Luke 6 to see the kind of love Jesus calls us to. It is a radical kind of love. It goes against the grain of society. It goes against our natural impulses. It is not a normal kind of love. It is revolutionary. RDG - 27-36.

1. A SELF-FOCUSED LOVE – vv 32-34

In verses 32-34 Jesus draws a contrast between the standards of love in the world around us and the love He calls for. For instance Jesus states that everyone usually:

1/ loves those who love us. 2/ repays good deeds with good. 3/ lends to those who need it with the assurance of getting it all back again. This is normal. This is what we all find natural.

The love of the world and the love that we find most natural is a reciprocal kind of love.

For instance: The Simpsons sent you a Christmas card last December, so you'll be sure to send them one this year. The Bradfords had you over for supper, now it's your turn to have them over. And they probably won't invite you over again until you have done so. Your buddy bought the coffee yesterday, so you'll buy it today. Your teenager is especially nice one Saturday – helps you with a project around the house and cleans up supper. So when he or she asks you later on if they can borrow the car you'll be more inclined to say "yes". This is normal.

The idea here is that you ought to be nice to those who are nice to you. But of course you are under no obligation to be nice to those who aren't nice to you. Right?

Now Jesus is not saying that this is wrong. No. It is good. In fact it helps hold our society together. People can be depended on. There are reasonable expectations from one another which give us a level of certainty. If the opposite were true then we would live in a world of fear, distrust and eventual anarchy.

What Jesus is saying is – that's all good - but it is not the test for a follower of His. A disciple of Jesus is to go far beyond this kind of love. There is a much higher and radical standard of love for one who wants to follow Jesus.

You may have heard the story of two friends who met for dinner in a restaurant. Each ordered filet of sole, and after a few minutes the waiter came back with their order. Two pieces of fish, one large and one small, were on the same platter. One of the men proceeded to serve his friend. Placing the small piece on a plate, he handed it across the table.

"Well, you certainly do have nerve!" exclaimed his friend.

"What's the problem?" asked the other.

"Look what you've done," he answered. "You've given me the little piece and kept the big one for yourself."

"How would you have done it?" the man asked.

His friend replied, "If I were serving, I would have given you the big piece."

"So what's the problem," replied the man, "I've got it, haven't I?" ([Daily Bread, August 11, 1992.](#))

Love is not self-seeking, but instead seeks the good of others. It is instead ...

2. A GOD-FOCUSED LOVE

So what kind of love does our Jesus call us to instead? It is first of all an ...

A. Initiating Love

It is not enough to just reciprocate or do no harm to others. The love of the disciple of Jesus must be active in doing good to others. And not just to those who deserve it – but also to those who don't. Jesus emphasizes this with 2 exhortations here.

1/ "Love your enemies" (v27)

This command is unlimited and uncompromising. Some people in Jesus' day were saying, as the parallel passage in Matthew 5:43 records, "love your neighbour and hate your enemy." But the love of the follower of Jesus is not to be selective in any way. It encompasses all, including those who we might identify as enemies. Our enemies won't initiate love toward us, usually quite the opposite. But as

followers of Jesus we are to initiate love even to our enemies. How? Jesus goes on to tell how with 3 phrases in vv27-28.

a) *“Do good”*

Imagine the impact of Jesus’ words on the people of Jesus’ day. They were an enslaved people, ruled by the Romans. Yet Jesus said they were to do good to them.

Imagine what this means in your life. This goes beyond mere words, but calls for looking for ways to express love to those who you really don’t want to express love to.

b) *“Bless them”*

This is the opposite of cursing. When someone tells you off in an angry and condescending way, to curse them would be to lash out at them too, or mutter some unkind response under your breath as you turn away.

To bless them though would be to say, *“Thank you for pointing that out to me, I will carefully consider it.”* Or at least to say nothing and in your heart forgive them for their wrongs.

One person humorously put it – *“Always forgive your enemies, nothing infuriates them more!”*

c) *“Pray for them”*

You know, if you take the time, and force yourself to pray for those people you don’t like, it will make a big difference in the way you respond to and even think about them from then on. Praying for your enemies will keep you from becoming bitter, hostile and reactionary.

It has been said – *“The best way to destroy an enemy is to make them your friend.”* An effective way to do this in your own thinking is to pray for the person.

These 3 commands and principles are in opposition to the attitude of retaliation and revenge, which Jesus picks up on and expands in vv 29-30. RDG.

Are we to understand Jesus’ words literally? No. The main point of the illustrations Jesus gives us here is in the attitude that is called for. He is not necessarily saying that we ought to always literally let someone hit us on the other side of the face, or give them the shirts off our backs too, but Jesus is definitely emphasizing that we need to have an attitude of non-retaliation and forgiveness. Which we will have if we are doing good to those who hate us, and blessing those who curse us, and praying for those who mistreat us.

Our natural reaction to someone who hits us with a hard fist or with harsh words is to react and hit them back – and harder too. Our reaction when we see our neighbour’s cigarette butts tossed onto our lawn is to allow our garbage can to spill over his, and maybe even help it along a little.

Think for a moment about that creep at work who infuriates you, or that jerk at school who is always bothering you, or that family member who is so obnoxious, and hard to get along with. Do we give them a taste of their own medicine, or do we give them a taste of the fruit of the Spirit of love?

Writer G.K. Chesterton expressed it this way: (3x5 – Love)

“Love means to love that which is unlovable, or it is no virtue at all; forgiving means to pardon that which is unpardonable, or it is no virtue at all; and to hope means hoping when things are hopeless, or it is no virtue at all.”

The kind of love Jesus calls for is an initiating love – even to our enemies. It is a radical, unique, supernatural kind of love that loves our enemies and even initiates love to them.

Then in verse 31 Jesus gives us a second exhortation that summarizes the kind of initiating love we ought to display as followers of Jesus. It is the saying of Jesus we call – The Golden Rule. RDG.

2/ “Golden Rule” of love. (v31) Rdg

The *“Golden Rule”* is probably the best known saying of Jesus. It’s easy to know it in our minds and memories, but unfortunately much harder to show it in their lives and actions.

There were others before Jesus who said something similar to Jesus’ Golden Rule in v31. But as far as we know there was always one difference. All others put the words in the negative. EG: *“don’t do to*

others, what you don't want them to do to you." Jesus seems to be the only one who put it in the positive form – "*Do to others, what you want them to do to you.*" Again Jesus is saying the love of the follower of His is radical and completely different. Our love ought to be active and ought to take the initiative. Do to others.

The Golden Rule defines true agape love – it is positive and active.

- It is more than NOT doing wrong – not lying, not stealing, not cheating, not being mean
- And it is also more than JUST doing good – helping others, caring for others, giving to others.

The kind of radical love that Jesus says should define a follower of His is a love that looks for, searches for and seeks for ways to do the good to others that you would want them to do to you. Jesus calls us to do what is not natural, but that which is revolutionary. The love Jesus calls His followers to demonstrate is first of all an initiating love that goes out of its way to love even our enemies.

Secondly – the kind of radical love Jesus calls His followers to demonstrate is also an ...

B. Imitating Love (vv 35,36)

Our example and model of this kind of radical, active, and forgiving kind of love is God Himself – RDG vv 35,36.

Why should we love the way Jesus outlines for us in the passage? Because this is the way God loves.

God's love extends to those who are His enemies. Before you and I come to the place of accepting Jesus and knowing God personally, the Bible tells us that we are enemies of God. We are enemies of God because of our sin which is at opposition to such a holy God. But the Scriptures tell us that God, even when we were sinners and enemies of Him, loved us and gave His Son Jesus up for us so that we might have the promise and prospect of full forgiveness and come to enjoy the richness of the initiating love of God.

If you have never come to this place of accepting the free and full love of God, I would encourage you to find it today. Talk to someone from the church after the service. We'd be happy to share how you can know God's love in your life today.

If you do know this kind of love of God in your life then Jesus is saying to you – you need to demonstrate this same kind of God-like love to others. It is agape love. It is a love that is not based on emotion or feelings, but on a choice. It is the kind of radical and revolutionary love that will challenge the world around us to sit up and take notice that we are disciples of Jesus.

Quote – Joseph Stowell – 3x5 – Love –

"I will tell you this, in this world of "Me First" and "Look out for #1", those of us who have been to the foot of the cross and have learned Christ's love for us firsthand, when we begin to exercise that love toward others, we become uniquely distinct just like the Saviour. That is our badge of identity"

Conclusion

Love is not self-seeking. Instead it is other's focused and God-focused. As Jesus said on another occasion – the whole law is summed up in 2 statements – "love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.

How will you, as a follower of Jesus, demonstrate this kind of radical love to those around you this week?