

Sermon Outline

“Love” – John 13:34-35 – Joshua Harris – July 17, 2011

The Priority of Love

1. In John 12:34-35, Jesus’ call to love is a commandment. It is not a suggestion, a nice ideal or an optional plan for when times are good and everyone is lovable. It is a commandment because love is the foundation for everything else.
 - a. In Matthew 22:34-40 when Jesus was asked to name the most important commandment, he answered, “You shall *love the Lord your God* with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: you shall *love your neighbor* as yourself. *On these two commandments depend all the Law and Prophets.*” (emphases added)
2. There is never any aspect of life that can be disconnected from love. We can be extraordinarily gifted, intelligent, popular or successful. But without love, it amounts to noise. As Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:1-2, “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.”

The Nature of Love

1. In John 13:34, Jesus answers the question of the nature of love. He says this is how you are to love one another, “just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”
2. Our love for others is to be informed by and modeled after the love Jesus has shown toward us. Jesus’ love is a self-giving love.
 - a. In the beginning of John 13, we watch Jesus take the place of a servant and wash his disciples’ feet. He lowers himself to serve.
 - b. In Philippians 2, Paul tells us that Jesus emptied himself of his glory and became a servant. At cost to himself, he pursued our interest.
3. Love is the giving of ourselves for the good of another. This is what Jesus has done for us. “Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13). The cross tells us of the depth of the love of God for us. Jesus gave everything to save us. He took our guilt on himself and suffered ultimate loss for our eternal gain and eternal joy. This is how we ought to love.

“The second commandment seems to me to be an overwhelming commandment. It seems to demand that I tear the skin off my body and wrap it around another person so that I feel that I am that other person; and all the longings that I have for my own safety and health and success and happiness I now feel for that other

Sermon Outline

person as though he were me. It is an absolutely staggering commandment. If this is what it means, then something unbelievably powerful and earth-shaking and reconstructing and overturning and upending will have to happen in our souls. Something supernatural. Something well beyond what self-preserving, self-enhancing, self-exalting, self-esteeming, self-advancing, fallen human beings like me can do on their own."

—**John Piper**, *What Jesus Demands of the World*

The Application of Love

Love and Disagreement

1. We are not going to all agree on every detail of how our church should walk through this season. We won't see eye to eye with everyone in our circle of friends. In a time like this, it is tempting to begin labeling people and distancing ourselves from them. This is a contradiction of the glorious gospel that unites us. We should never withdraw our love and affection for someone because of a doctrinal difference or because they attend another church or because their kids weren't doing well.

Love and Blogs

1. There are several websites or blogs devoted to critiquing our church and Sovereign Grace Ministries. The people who run them sincerely believe they are serving us. We need to acknowledge that some of their critique has been valid. They have forced us to see mistakes and problems that we didn't see, and for that we can thank them.
2. But these blogs also have the potential to be very destructive. In many instances, they have become a platform for people to anonymously make false accusations with no way to verify or follow-up on their claims. If you do read them, please read them with much discernment and significant prayer. Please don't accept as fact everything written on them because these blogs are filled with gossip.
3. Definition: Gossip is casual or unconstrained conversation or reports about other people, typically involving details that are not confirmed as being true.
 - a. Consider what God's Word says about gossip:
 - i. Proverbs 18:8 - "The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts."
 - ii. Proverbs 16:28 - "A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends."

Sermon Outline

- b. Gossip is divisive. It is the opposite of love that resolves conflict face to face with people. It goes behind people and talks about them. We need to diligently guard against being involved in gossip.
4. However, there is a greater principle than to merely “avoid gossip.” God wants us to pursue love. When it comes to these blogs we need to grow in genuinely loving all those involved.
 - a. First, we need to ask God to give us a heart of love for the people who are writing on these blogs. Many are brothers and sisters in Christ, made in God’s image. Many carry real hurts. It doesn’t honor God for us to despise them or revile them. We should pray for them and love them.
 - b. Second, we need to love the people being gossiped about. Don’t sit on an accusation against someone in this church. Refrain from believing it, and love your brother or sister enough to talk to them and get their side of the story. If you’re not willing to do that or can’t do that, then you probably should reconsider spending time on these websites.
 - c. In a different way, the same principle applies to C.J. and the documents that Brent has released. If you choose to read these documents, please read cautiously. There are a lot of facts. But there are also many places where Brent assumes he knows the motives and intentions of C.J.’s heart. Let’s love C.J. and the other men being written about enough to let their side of the story be told before we pass judgment. Proverbs 18:17 says, “The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him.”

Love and Courage

1. Last week, we learned from Hebrews 12 that God demonstrates his love by disciplining his children. He brings difficult circumstances and experiences into our lives that train us and refines us. God loves us enough to give us what we don’t want so that we’ll be who has redeemed us to be.
2. Sometimes we are called to love others in the same way. Sometimes love involves hard conversations. Sometimes it means challenging people. Sometimes the most loving thing we can do for someone else is to tell them what they don’t want to hear. We need to love each other even when we disagree. This kind of love takes courage.

Conclusion

“We as Christians are called upon to love all men as neighbors, loving them as ourselves. Second, that we are to love all the Christian brothers in a way that the

Sermon Outline

world may observe. This means showing love to our brothers in the midst of differences—great or small—loving our brothers when it costs us something, loving them under tremendous times of emotional tension, loving them in a way the world can see. In short, we are to practice and exhibit the holiness of God and the love of God, for without this we grieve the Holy Spirit. Love—and the unity it attests to—is the mark Christ gave Christians to wear before the world. Only with this mark may the world know that Christians are indeed Christians and Jesus was sent by the Father.”
—Francis Schaeffer, *The Mark of a Christian*, 1970, p. 29.

Fellowship Starters

1. Take time as a care group to read John 13:34-35.
2. How often do you think about the priority of love? When you think about your obligations as a follower of Christ do you consistently think, “I must actively and purposefully *love* fellow Christians”?
3. In John 13:34, Jesus commanded us to love others as he has loved us. What ways has Jesus demonstrated his love for you? Where would you desire to grow to be more like Jesus?
4. What situations tempt you to withdraw your affection from someone (e.g., doctrinal differences, relational conflict, disagreements, etc.)? Instead of withdrawing, what would it look like for you to love?
5. When someone else’s sin, weaknesses or immaturity affects you, how do you typically respond—with grace-filled love or with self-righteousness impatience? How would like to grow?
6. From a biblical perspective, what is the danger of reading or listening to gossip? How can you develop biblical convictions about participating in gossip?