Coronavirus Social Distancing Daily Devotion #46

Love One Another

**1 John 4:11 (NASB)** “*Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”*

Let’s be honest. Of all the commandments the Lord gave us, loving people is the most difficult one of all. But the Lord must be serious about it because in the New Testament alone the command to love one another is written seventy-nine times in some form.

I believe the Lord knew He had to continually reemphasis His command because He knew how difficult people can be and how challenging people can be to love. There were a few times when He showed some of His frustration with loving people. Listen to how Matthew records Jesus’s words, ***Matthew 17:17 (NASB)*** *“And Jesus answered and said, "You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you?”* It was not that Jesus didn’t love the disciples; He did, and He proved His love over and over. Which is really the point. Love is so much more than words. And our Lord spent at least three years of His life teaching us the importance and value of love.

You and I know it is one thing to say we love someone. For those of us who are particularly inclined to hearing the words, “I love you”, we know how much we are encouraged. But words alone don’t express the full measure of true love. For example, you might be a person who expresses your love through words like saying to your spouse or someone close to you, “I love you” and they in turn say, “That’s nice, now if you really love me, clean out the dishwasher or fold the closes or help me mow the grass or take care of the kids or pay the bills.” Whatever the issue is, love is not fully expressed until it puts action to the words.

Our Lord spoke of His love to His people often. In fact, Jeremiah records God’s words when he writes, ***Jeremiah 31:3 (NASB)*** *"I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness*.” But the Lord also lived His words. It was God who put up with His people more than anyone. The very people who saw His work and witnessed miracle after miracle from the time of the exodus to the time of their release from captivity, God was proving His love over and over. And the people continually rebelled and are still rebelling. But God’s love has not changed.

His command to us is that we love one another. Why? Because He loves us. It’s that simple. And our love is to be more than words. Our love is to be manifested in the way we live with one another. God created the church to be an expression of His love where the watching world sees His love poured out through His people. We are the way the world sees the Father. And the primary way God wants us to exemplify His love is for us to love one another. ***John 13:35 (NASB)*** *"By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*

I understand how difficult it is to love people. But it is the Lord’s command. Not because He is punishing us, because let’s be honest again, sometimes it feels like punishment to love people, but because He loved us when we were hard to love. Think about it. He gave up everything to come to earth to live in the muck and mire of sin and our evil hearts to prove His love for us. And all He asks is that we do the same for those who are in the same condition we were in.

It takes a willing heart. It takes a heart that is willing to go outside of its comfort zone and into the life of another to show them God’s love. Some of the most challenging people you meet are people who need God’s love the most. It is entirely possible that you are the chosen vessel God will use to show that person His love. But it must start in the church. If we don’t love one another with the real love of God, how will the world ever see His love for them. That’s a lot of responsibility, but that’s why He chose you. Aren’t you glad for that?