

The Heart of the Family

10/2/2016

How do you communicate caring?

What are your love languages?

What would you say is “at your very heart?”

(What would that sentence even mean, anyway?)

What should be at the very heart of the family of God?

Isn't it what is at the heart of God,

at the very core of what makes God who he is?

We start this morning not in I Corinthians 13, but in I John 3.

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us,

that we should be called children of God!

And that is what we are!

² Dear friends, now we are children of God,

and what we will be has not yet been made known.

But we know that when he appears,

we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

4:7 Dear friends, let us love one another,

for love comes from God.

Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God,

because God is love.

(The Greatest Command #448)

⁹ This is how God showed his love among us:

He sent his one and only Son into the world

that we might live through him.

¹⁰ This is love: not that we loved God,
 but that he loved us and sent his Son
 as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us,
 we also ought to love one another.

¹² No one has ever seen God;
 but if we love one another,
 God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

What truths do we learn from these passages?

1. God IS love.

Not God HAS love as one of his characteristics.

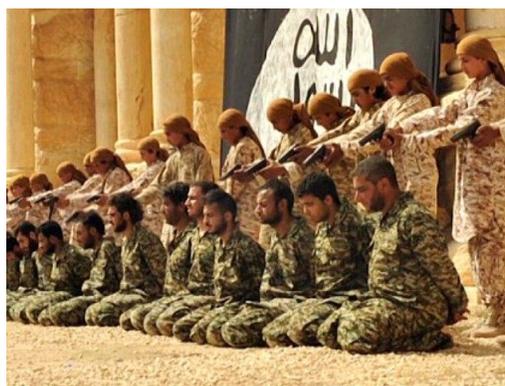
The core of who God is, is love.

So to understand God, we need to understand love,
 or we completely miss or distort who God is.

There is so much “God distortion”

going on in the world today.

THIS is NOT God, and THIS is not God.



I was going to show more, and decided not to.

Is the point sufficiently made?

Whatever love is, it's not what is plaguing our world today.

2. God has chosen (didn't have to),

God has chosen to make us His children.

That IS what we ARE, not WILL be.

NOT if we are good enough,

not in Heaven someday.

We are His children RIGHT NOW.

Parents, on a good day,

how do you feel towards your children?

That's how God loves us

and wants the best for us all the time.

3. When He appears, we shall BE LIKE HIM.

(Translation- we will also be love,

so we might as well start practicing now.)

4. If we love one another,

God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

But what IS love anyway, and "what's love got to do with it?"

Paul is writing to- NOT mega church,

but mega-dysfunctional church.

Lawsuits, incest, idolatry,

social divisions, fighting over spiritual gifts-

they need a primer, a tutorial- on what love is.

I Corinthians 12:31

"And now I will show you the most excellent way."

Our tendency is immediately to jump to v. 4-

"Love is patient, love is kind"... But Paul doesn't.

There is something that needs to be communicated first.

1. How primary is love?
2. How central is it to faith and sacrifice?
3. Isn't it enough if I just believe the right things,
do the right things, have the right spiritual gifts?

Paul makes it abundantly clear that no, it is not enough at all.

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

³ If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Now it is important that we get this,
because so much of what is done in the name of God
is done with love being the furthest thing
from the minds of the people involved.

1. It is more important to be RIGHT.
2. It is more important to be relevant.
3. It is more important to be edgy, cool, cutting edge,
whatever.

Paul and John's teaching, and Jesus' example,
couldn't make it more clear that the way we feel
towards the person we are doing whatever it is to-
-our motive and intention-
make all the difference in the world.

Without love-

1. The most beautiful words in the world
are only empty noise,
2. Having the most awesome spiritual gifts = I am nothing.

3. The most extravagant personal or material sacrifice
gains me nothing... so why bother?

So what happens if I give this sermon this morning,
and don't have love for you, my brothers and sisters?

And what if the people
in the nursery and children's church don't have love?

And what if you take food to the homeless shelter,
or help make mats for the homeless,
or work in the preschool,
or feed your family this afternoon,
and don't have deep caring,
and a desire to do what is best for them?

Make it real, folks. Make it personal, and make it specific.

Whatever comes next is extremely important,
not just in the context of weddings and marriages,
which seems to be the only place where we apply it,
but also to-

1. parents and children,
2. Adult children and elderly parents and siblings,
3. Relationships with neighbors and coworkers,
4. How we treat people on Facebook and the internet,

And actually, in context,
to how we deal with each other in the church,
the family of God.

THAT is where Paul sticks this material in the letter,
not in chapter 7, about marriage.
(Isn't THAT interesting?)

So now we are more ready, I hope,
to look at what love is, and isn't.

First, two things it IS, then 8 things it isn't.

I thought that was kind of interesting.

(verse 4)

First- love "suffers long" for people, and with people.

You give people time to work through things,
to figure them out.

You don't expect immediate perfection,
immediate compliance.

"Macro-thumia" (big mood)

This is not the word for endurance against tough times.

It's the word for going the distance with and for people.

Put up with, and don't give up on them.

Isn't it interesting

that as Paul writes to dysfunctional church,

that THAT is the first thing he lists?

How would our practicing

that facet of love change life around here?

But what comes next is awesome,

a beautiful word from the Greek- (It even sounds beautiful)
(Chres-teu-tes)

Love is kind.

"God's love, which is revealed in Christ, and shed abroad in the hearts of His people by the Spirit...works itself out in them as (kindness) χρηστότης towards their neighbours."¹

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this:

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom. 5:8)

What God did for you through Jesus,

he now does for others, through you.

He healed people through Jesus: now He heals through us.

¹ Kittel, G., Bromiley, G. W., & Friedrich, G. (Eds.). (1964–). *Theological dictionary of the New Testament* (electronic ed., Vol. 9, p. 491). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Jesus comforted people, saved people,
 held and blessed children,
 cleansed the lepers of his culture
 by being willing to touch them.

He made time for people.

He challenged their hypocrisy in order to help them,
 to try to reach them.

He figured out what they needed
 in order to be restored to God,
 and then did whatever it took to make it happen,
 while still respecting their free will.

He gave time, energy, resources... whatever it took.

He gave his life- little by little, then all at once.

Now God wants to do the same through us.

Kindness is such much more than being “nice.”

To us, kindness is sort of soft and squishy,
 not robust and manly.

I’m telling you, no one was more manly than Jesus,
 and he personified “kindness.”

We need to change our paintings of Jesus,
 and let him be manly,
 and we need to redeem kindness
 to be the brave, courageous characteristic
 that the Bible is talking about here.

1. Love goes the distance with and for people.
2. Love is that willingness to do whatever it takes
 to show God to the person or people we are “loving.”

Have we got the first 2 characteristics of love down?

You got them?

Are you ready for the 8 negatives?

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind.

It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

⁵ It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

⁶ Love does not delight in evil...

So much of what we do and why we do,
 we just need to stop...just, stop.
 that's not helpful to the situation,
 and as a counselor I know this to be true.
Just...stop.

1. Stop being envious,
 wanting what someone else has, or can do.
 Practice some contentment and gratitude.
2. Stop boasting. What do you have to boast about
 that didn't come from God?
 So praise God already,
 instead of comparing yourself to others.
3. Stop being proud.
 You don't have to be boastful
 to still be stuck on yourself.
 But it's not about you. It's not about me.

You think you are pretty hot stuff?

Compare yourself to the great God of Heaven,
 who just happened to throw a universe together
 with His powerful word.

And because Love is not proud,
 and God is love, that means HE is not proud either,
 and He, of all beings, has every right to be...
 but he isn't.

Satan is, and that's been the problem.

He wants us to imitate him instead of God.

So I guess each one of us has a choice to make,

which one we want to be our Father.

Jesus makes this very point in John 8:34-44.

³⁴ Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. ³⁵ Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. ³⁷ I know you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word. ³⁸ I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what you have heard from your father."

³⁹ "Abraham is our father," they answered.

"If you were Abraham's children," said Jesus, "then you would do the things Abraham did. ⁴⁰ As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. ⁴¹ You are doing the things your own father does."

"We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself."

⁴² Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. ⁴³ Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. ⁴⁴ You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire.

Harsh words, but spoken in love.

Serve our Father, God, who IS love,

or serve our Father, the devil and carry out his desires.

His desires are envy, boasting, and pride.

**You choose your father, according to Jesus,
not by your words, but by your actions.**

**v. 39 “If you were Abraham’s children,” said Jesus,
“then you would do the things Abraham did.”**

**If you are God’s children,
you do what your Heavenly Father does...**

**How great is the love the Father has lavished on us,
that we should be called children of God!
And that is what we are!**

**4:7 Dear friends, let us love one another,
for love comes from God.
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because God is love.**

**¹¹ Dear friends, since God so loved us,
we also ought to love one another.**

We close with the OTHER John 3:16- (Let’s read together.)

¹⁶ This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. ¹⁷ If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

