

Sunday April 28, 2013
“This Thing Called Love”
by Keith Steele

You may have heard the line before, “I was complaining because my arm was hurt and then I met a man with no arm.”

I came across a similar situation in my own life. I was upset that my 9 year old son may be losing his sight and becoming permanently blind because of Juvenile Rheumatoid Arthritis. I began to be afraid for him and although I was careful not to complain about fairness, I was still knocked back when I saw that someone else lost their 8 year old son in an act of terrorism. I then became aware that blind or not he would still be around to talk to us, spend time with us, and we could still watch him grow up.

The eye doctor told DeDee that because the problem was found early on, that it could be reversed but there is no reversal for that 8 year old in the picture holding up a sign he made saying “No more hurting people.” Peace”.

I thought that I was tired from being too busy, going from one thing to the next and then I called to check on a friend and found out that she has been going none stop between school and work and dealing with the fact that her new husband has been out of town for over a month.

It is not that we celebrate when we find that someone is in worse shape than we are. It is that by seeing what others go through we are able to step outside of ourselves and gain a different perspective.

It is when we step outside of ourselves to think about others needs that our own problems become smaller.

In the Dare to be a Disciple home team we've had some excellent discussions on Discipleship and what is involved in it. When a person is Discipled, a mature Christian takes on the responsibility of teaching another Christian how to walk in Christ in their daily life. The Disciple may be someone who has just finished Basic Bible Truths and is ready to move forward in their walk. They may be given weekly lessons. The mature Christian maintains contact with the Disciple at least weekly. The expectation is that the Disciple will grow and be able to take on another Disciple of their own.

Discipleship is not just a Bible Study and it is not a church program. Bible Study should be a part of discipling a younger Christian and you should have a plan for following through with it. Discipleship is life on life. It is one person pouring their life into another person.

In order to lead someone to Christ you have to have been concerned enough for their soul. In order to help a Christian younger in the faith to grow to maturity, you have to have concern for their life and be willing to give a part of your life to them. There

has to be a special element in that relationship, something that can't be printed in a packet or handout. The answer to that something special came to me as I read

John 15:12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

The vision that immediately comes to mind for me is that of a soldier throwing himself on a grenade to save his fellow soldiers. We hear those words and think of Jesus on the Cross laying down his life for the sins of the world but more importantly for our sins.

But, could it be that when Jesus spoke those words he was not only speaking of dying for our friends but of dying to self. Paul said in 1 Cor. 15:31 "I die daily". Laying down our lives may also mean, putting aside ourselves. It may mean putting aside those things in our life that occupy it and are important to us but keep us from loving others, from taking an interest in the lives of those around us. Things that prevent us from looking past ourselves.

After all, Don't we have problems of our own that need to be dealt with?

The whole book of Job, is about Job. If anyone suffered in the Bible it was Job. He lost everything

he had, his children, his wealth, and his health. The only thing he had left was his lovely wife who told him to “Curse God and die.” And his friends who did all right sitting with him quietly for many days until they opened their mouth to tell him how much of a sinner he must be for God to make him suffer in such a way.

At times he’s naval gazing. He’s being introspective. He’s looking at his misfortune and justifying himself to those wonderful friends. Other times he’s marveling at God’s creation. Until you get to

Job 42:10 And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.

God’s wrath was kindled against his three friends who had been insulting his servant Job. Yet Job prayed for them in spite of that. Because he did that, God not only turned away from his wrath, but also restored Job.

Love

A lawyer asked Jesus what the greatest of all the commandments was.

Jesus answered in Matthew

Matthew 22:37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38 This is the first and great commandment.

Love God

1 John 4:10 Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

No man has seen God, but through our love for each other, his love is shown to us.

Romans 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

We don't love God the way we should. In fact we often knowingly turn our back on him. God didn't set a condition for sending his Son. God didn't say "All right, listen up! Sinners" I love you guys but until you start loving me with all of your heart, your mind, your soul and your strength, I'm not going to do anything for you. If you do that then I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to send my Son down to die for your sins.

No God didn't do that. Romans 5:8 said that God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

God did something for us that we will never earn. That is the love of God and as John said in

1 John 4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

Just imagine how that raises the stakes for a minute. We who were unworthy, received the greatest gift of all time. The Bible says "there is none righteous, no not one." "All of our righteousness is as filthy rags."

In spite of that, God sent his Son down into this filthy sin infested world, full of people who not only had no love for his Son, they were trying every which way they could to get rid of him.

John said, "...if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

John didn't stop there. John wanted to make sure that you didn't miss his point.

1 John 4:12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

We can't see God directly, but he can show his love through us.

13 Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

17 Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

19 We love him, because he first loved us.

(There it is again. He loved us first, he didn't wait around for us to wake up)

20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

(If you can't love the person that you can physically lay eyes and hands on, how in the world do you

think, your relationship is going to be so great with someone that you can't even see.)

21 And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

John 15:12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

Remember that John wrote both the book of John and the 1 John letter.

Love Your neighbor

Jesus didn't stop at one commandment when he was asked about the greatest commandment. He pulled out a commandment that wasn't with the Big Ten. He pulled it from Leviticus.

He goes on to say:

Matt 22:39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Paul discussed this in Romans

Romans 13:8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not

bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

If you love your neighbor and the brethren, you won't do these things.

If you love your neighbor, you won't commit adultery with his wife or her husband.

If you love your neighbor, you won't kill him or her.

If you love your neighbor, you won't steal from him or her, no matter how cool or shiny it is.

If you love your neighbor, you won't lie to them.

If you love your neighbor, you won't lust after what they have (that would make keeping up with the Jones' a non sequitur.)

If you love your neighbor the way you love yourself, you won't want anything bad happening to them because you wouldn't want anything bad happening to yourself.

Matthew 22:40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

If you love your neighbor, you are doing something that God was laying out for his people in writing and action from the time of Genesis to the book of Malachi and throughout the New Testament as well.

When Cain killed Abel he wasn't loving his brother who was his neighbor.

1 John 3:10 In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

12 Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.

When Jonah refused to go to Ninevah and God put him in the belly of the whale for three days, the lesson he should have learned was to love his neighbors, the Ninevites, as himself.

Love in Action

Romans 12:9 Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Such a simple thing like love your neighbor as yourself can seem like such a steep hurdle but when you get ahold of it and don't let go, it can change your entire perspective. It is then that a thing like discipleship, laying aside your life, or your time (the stuff that life is made of) seems to be more of a commandment because if you loved your neighbor as yourself, you would want someone to take up that time to teach you, to guide you and to show you the love of God so that you could avoid the pitfalls while learning more about sharing God's love with the people.

Undercover Boss.

Jesus will be the ultimate Undercover Boss

Matthew 25:34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying,
Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee?
or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in?
or naked, and clothed thee?

39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and
came unto thee?

40 And the King shall answer and say unto them,
Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it
unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have
done it unto me.

41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left
hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting
fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I
was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked,
and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye
visited me not.

44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord,
when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a
stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not
minister unto thee?

45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say
unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the
least of these, ye did it not to me.

46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.