

Extend
Session 2

Love is a
Commitment

Updated: June, 2013

LOVE IS A COMMITMENT

In the first session of this “Extend” segment we discovered that Jesus will hold us responsible for fulfilling His last Great Commission.
(making disciples of all nations)

Now, in these last three Extend Sessions we will seek to understand and come to grips with His **Great Commandment**

- * Above all else we are to love one another.
- * We are to exhibit a love that continually grows and grows
 - Eph. 4:16 “...*healthy and growing and full of love*”
 - I Pet. 4:18 “*continue to grow in deep love for each other, for love makes up for many of our faults.*”

LOVE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL THE “ SIGNS .”

John 13:35 “*Then, the world will know you’re my followers*”

- * We can have all kinds of other spiritual gifts but without Love “We Are Nothing” I Cor. 13: 1-3)
- * Other signs can be counterfeited.
- * Even the “Disciplines” we develop in our Christian walk are not sure signs
 - Prayer - The Pharisees did it to be seen
 - Giving – here are many reasons and promptings to give
 - Pagans = (fear, appeasement)
 - Pharisees = to show how great and generous they were
 - Fasting- To show how spiritual they were, gain points with their deity

JESUS KIND OF LOVE – RELEASED IN OUR HEARTS AND ACTIONS BY THE HOLY SPIRIT – NEITHER SATAN NOR THE HUMAN SPIRIT CAN FAKE

LOVE IS COMMITMENT

LOVE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL THE “SIGNS” John 13:34-35.

THIS LIFESTYLE OF LOVE INVOLVES BOTH:

1. LOVE FOR GOD Matthew 22:37-38

What before had been an intellectual exercise now becomes an experience that pours forth freely from heart, life and mouth.

Ephesians 3:17-19

...that you, being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with the fullness of God.

2. LOVE FOR MAN Matthew 22:39

God’s love is active (John 3:16), and so must ours be. If our love for God does not express itself in a corresponding love for man it is not the real thing!!

- v. 20 *If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?*
- v. 21 *And this commandment we have from Him; that he who loves God must love his brother also.*
- v. 1 *Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him*
- v. 2 *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep his commandments*

—I John 4:20-5:2

Illustration: The Gauge on a boiler

THE QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF YOUR LOVE FOR GOD IS MEASURED BY YOUR LOVE FOR YOUR BROTHERS

:

1. LOVE FOR GOD This is the “vertical” dimension in this “lifestyle of love.”

Jesus affirms the first and greatest commandment in Matt. 22: 37-39

(Part 1, is love for God. Part 2, is love for our fellow man)

BEFORE the Holy Spirit came:

- God’s people tried to observe this law by rote obedience and by determination. They made themselves work at it. But, it was hard.

NOW that the Holy Spirit has come:

- God’s love is birthed within us and just naturally wells up from our new nature.
- God enables a releasing of His love upon us and a releasing of our love for Him.

Illustration:

C.L.Moody - Experienced a washing over of God’s love, wave upon wave. Finally he cried out, “God, no more or I will die.”

Eph. 3: 17-19 Paul writes - this is what I am asking God to do for you:

“And I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts, living within you as you trust in Him. May your roots go down deep into the soil of God’s marvelous love. And may you be able to feel and understand, as all God’s children should, how long, how wide, how deep and how high His love really is, and to experience this love for yourselves.”

* All barriers down.

* A new Capacity “*more and more*”

* The Goal “*you will be filled up with God Himself*” v.19

* Something is wrong if you do not have an increasing capacity to receive God’s love and to retain it!

THE BIBLE SAYS, WHATEVER LOVE YOU MAY PROFESS TO HAVE FOR GOD IS ALL PRETENSE, ALL MEANINGLESS SENTIMENTALITY, IF IT IS NOT COUPLED WITH CORRESPONDING LOVE FOR YOUR FELLOW MAN!

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2. LOVE FOR _____ MAN _____ This is the “horizontal” dimension in this lifestyle of love

If there is no corresponding love for man then your professed love for God is not the real thing (Matthew 22:39)

* Look with me at I John 4:20 – 5:2 printed in your class notes

v. 20 Inevitably the Bible links together love for God and our brother

v.21 If you don't love your brother, then your love for God is suspect

v.1 If you love God and are one of His children, then what will you do? Not maybe, not possibly, not hopefully. No – You **Will** love your brother! There will be a love that flows through you – a family type love.

Illustration: The gauge on a boiler:

There is a gauge on the outside which tells you how much water, or steam, or pressure is taking place inside the boiler. You don't have to stick your head in the boiler to find out.

Nor do you have to stick your head in a person's heart to tell if they love God. There is a gauge!

ACTIVE LOVE

* Our love for our brother is an active love – or it is not the real thing

- John 3:16

- I John 3:16

The Greek word for this love is “Agape” which refers to a totally self-sacrificing love. It is not just good feelings toward everybody, (Here in the West we have romanticized love into being a feeling). The *LOVE* God wants us to walk in refers to our daily actions. It motivates us to lay down our lives for one another.

For example:

I John 3:16-18 makes the general love spoken of in v. 16 both specific and practical in v.17-18 (it may cost us money. We may have to give up some things).

* It's the love “of God”

* It's love “for the Brethren”

* It is “supernatural”

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* It's tough to love on our own:

- Be unselfish
- Lay down our own perceptions
- Not demand our own rights

We don't "generate" this love; God "gives" it

We don't "have it" in our own nature; God "gives" it and we "receive" it.

Listen carefully to what Paul says about this love in I Corinthians 13: 4-7 (The Living Bible)

Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud.

Never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong.

It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices when truth wins out.

If you love someone you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. You will always believe in him, always expect the best of him, and always stand your ground in defending him.

How many can say, "that's a gutsy love?"

How many got through the first 2 or 3 phrases without your heart saying, "oh, NO. I need to work on my love a bit more?"

(This will be your "feeding" passage for this week

Let God speak it deeply into your heart and life)

THIS IS A TOUGH LOVE. GOD'S KIND OF LOVE. AND, THAT'S THE KIND OF LOVE GOD WANTS US TO HAVE FOR ONE ANOTHER.

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THERE ARE THREE BASIC EXPRESSIONS OF A COMMITMENT TO LOVE

I. **FAITHFULNESS**

Our commitment to love should not be based upon **feelings or convenience**.

* Too often our actions indicate – “I’ll express love to you as long as it doesn’t put me out too much, otherwise, I’m not sure.”

Our commitment to love should not be based upon whether we **like what is being done**.

Too often we’ll go along lovingly until- - - and then, “Well, if that’s the way you’re going to be...!”

What should be our loving response if a brother does something we don’t like?

Not to blast them out. Not to write them off. Not to avoid them completely.

But,

To pray, to consider, and then to speak to them honestly and with loving concern. We’re “Hessed” people. We’re faithful to each other, committed to each other.

In II Samuel 7:21 David rejoices in the two great motivations for God’s Love:

- (1) His Will – a Decision from the loving generosity of His heart.
- (2) His Word – His very nature (Character) is faithfulness to His word

God’s Covenant of Love is not based on the following:

- * Whether God likes us
- * Whether we please God
- * Whether we are doing things right

GOD IS COMMITTED TO LOVE US NO MATTER WHAT BECAUSE GOD’S CHARACTER IS SUCH THAT HE WILL NEVER GO BACK ON HIS WORD OF COMMITMENT. WE CAN ALWAYS COUNT ON GOD. SCRIPTURE IS FULL OF GOD’S DAILY FAITHFULNESS AND LOVING KINDNESS.

THERE ARE THREE BASIC EXPRESSIONS OF A COMMITMENT TO LOVE

I. FAITHFULNESS

—God’s family expresses “Hessed,” loving faithfulness, in all their relationships together.

—This faithfulness is not based on:

Feelings and convenience.

-or-

whether we like what is being done.

—It is “I can be counted on” -not- “we’ll see.”

Psalm 15:4—*He who swears to his own hurt, and does not change.*

II. LOYALTY

Loyalty is using adversity to confirm my commitment to those who God has called me to serve. (Bill Gothard)

1. In Times of Stress

Loyalty means that when under fire, being criticized, about to lose our job, in family crisis, etc. we will stand by one another and stand up for one another.

2. In Protecting Their Reputation

Loyalty leads us to guard our lips as we become jealous of one another’s reputation. When we are loyal we work hard to the end that all men may SPEAK WELL of our brothers and sisters.

3. When They Dissappoint Us

It is in regard to one another’s weaknesses that we may most have to be loyal. This is especially so if those weaknesses have been a personal disappointment to us, have brought a sharp word, or have hurt us in some way.

We are to be an “**I can be counted on**” people, not a “**Well, we’ll see**” people.

It is painful for me to remember the number of people who have lied to me. Maybe they just wanted to get me off their back, or to tell me what they thought I wanted to hear. They might even have been genuine at the moment. But, as it turned out, they lied. They were not faithful to what they said.

I Love the man described in Psalm 15:4.

-It may have cost more than he thought,
-or he would much rather be doing something else,
-or when the time comes he doesn't feel like it

– BUT STILL HE DOES IT!

Jesus told the story of the two sons Matthew 21:28

Which one did the father's bidding?

It breaks a father's heart to have a son who, as it turns out, you know is lying to you. He never intended to do it even though he said that he would.

How that must grieve God when His children do this.

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My sad observation about the church through the years is that there are many who can not be counted on. Their word doesn't really mean anything.

Illustration: A ministry leader prepared a meal and program for 15 co-workers who said they would come. Only 5 showed up. She was left with all that food and to wonder: Were they sick? Were they upset with me? Did something else come up? They just didn't come. No call, no accountability. Don't ever do that!! It is such an unloving act.

Granted, sometimes situations develop which we can not avoid; but, with a true sense of apology and concern we should at least:

- let the person know,
- get someone else to effectively take our place,
- or try to make it up in some other way.

Don't just forget about it and say, "Oh well, it doesn't matter." Sure it matters!!

God's children should have "Hessed" in their relations with each other. They can be counted on.

When at work, in their social circles, or at church God's people display a "Faithfulness" that grows out of their commitment to love God and to love one another, the rest of the world sits up and says, "Wow! You can really count of them. That is so rare!"

And, God's people say, "Of course, we're one of His kids – the characteristics of our Father are flowing through our veins too. He is "Hessed" – loving and faithful. You can always count on Him and so you can always count on me too!! Amen!!

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II. LOYALTY - is the integrity that binds our covenant relationships together.

- * Jesus said to His followers, “You are the salt of the earth.”

Illustration: – of a salt lick. Just as weather conditions merely cause the “Lick” to become harder and the salt more closely bound, so circumstances, pressures, or heat will serve in the midst of a loyal and faithful people to strengthen their ties one to another rather than to drive them apart.

See the Bill Gothard definition

In I Cor. 13 we saw that loyalty is one of the qualities that love leads us to exhibit. *“If you love someone, you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. You will always believe in him, always expect the best of him, and always stand your ground in defending him”*

THERE ARE 6 WAYS IN WHICH WE EXPRESS LOYALTY:

1. In times of stress

- * In times of trouble, friends begin to drift away.
- * God’s love will stand with those who are going through hard times.

Illustration: Watchman Nee

The communists couldn’t turn Nee or his congregation against one another no matter how hard they tried or how many lies they told.

2. Protect their Reputation

- * We will not say anything bad concerning the people we love
- * We will not stand for anyone else to say anything
- * We will work to keep their reputations shining.

Don’t criticize and speak evil about each other, dear brothers. If you do, you will be fighting against God’s laws of loving one another, declaring it wrong ~ James 4:11

3. When they disappoint us.

- * It is hard to remain loyal when we are personally disappointed, let down or deeply hurt by family and friends
- * It is difficult to be loyal to that person – but God is loyal
 - God’s love in our hearts enables us be loyal as well
- * This doesn’t mean that we don’t confront the disappointment. We do.
- * But, we don’t turn our back on them because God has put us together in His spiritual family.

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4. Difficulties of their own making

The old, unloving way of the flesh would say, “They made their bed, now let them lie in it.” It is true the Bible says what we sow we also will reap. But, even when people are “reaping”

we:

- stay with them
- support them
- love and encourage them
- speak truth to them

We help see them through their fault to the other side. That’s loyalty!

5. Interests and Concerns

How we relate to our supervisors is a significant factor in the work place. God wants us to do our best to make the people to whom we report look good and succeed.

In fact, we are to carry this same response over into all of our other relationships and opportunities as well – even, at times, before our own interests

6. Supporting Their Ministries

* We will encourage, support and help those who have stepped out to take responsibility in every way we can.

Illustration: Worker Burnout

I have regularly seen those who have been willing to take oversight responsibility for some area of ministry or service left hanging out on the end of a limb by those supposed to be faithful and loyal partners in that ministry. These leaders have told me that what takes the “sap” out of them is not the work itself, or even the preparations for the ministry which they have to do; but it is the lack of loyalty (when it comes right down to it – the lack of love) on the part of those who have promised to help them and to work along with them.

CONCLUSION:

Because we have not been trained in walking the path of loyalty during our earlier years, to begin to walk that way now as part of our “Commitment to Love” will for many of us necessitate a real change in our personal habits of thinking, acting, and speaking.

4. Even When Their Difficulties **Are of Their Own Making**_____.

Loyalty eliminates the old spirit of “you made your bed, now lie in it!” Remember, we were not placed together primarily to see through one another, but rather to see one another through!

5. By Supporting Each Other’s **Interests and Concerns**_____.

Loyalty leads us to work for the good, the advancement, or the enrichment of our brother and sister in all things, at times even before our own interests.

6. By Supporting **Their Ministries**_____.

When we are loyal to our brother or sister we will not stand by when they flounder, and we will not let them “go it all alone.” One of the reasons we are faithful to our responsibilities is because we are loyal to those affected by our actions...especially to the one who is overseeing the ministry in which we are engaged.

III. SERVICE

—We are obligated to love, to care for, to seek the highest well being of, and even, to help meet the obligations of those to whom we are committed in love.

—We do this by laying down our life in big and little ways for them, even to the:

- (1) **The adjusting** _____ of our schedules.
- (2) Putting of their **interests** _____ before our own.
- (3) Learning to know and follow their **wishes** _____.

This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends—John 15:12-13

III. SERVICE

* Love is servant-spirited.

The worldly mind will never accept this. Servants are viewed as performing the unworthy tasks considered beneath those whom they serve.

But, Jesus says that those who function as His servants – serving the world in His name – will be honored by the Heavenly Father. If we follow and serve our King, in that act of service we are elevated to a place of honor in God’s scheme of things.

Jesus people are willing to forsake the social status systems reflected in this world’s scale of values.

What did Jesus say will make us great in His Kingdom? Not lording it over others, or expecting to be served by others, but the one who serves the most – he will be the greatest.

We have already learned that, in reality, “our time is our life.” In John 15:13 Jesus states that the greatest love is shown when a person lays down his life, in big and little ways, for his friends. Among other things this would involve:

(1) The adjusting of our schedules

None of us have a lot of time and energy left over after caring for our own needs and lifestyle. So, to live a life of service will cut into things we want to do. It will mean saying “I’ll do what I was planning at another time.”

(2) The putting of their interests before our own

Even to helping meet the obligations of those to whom we are committed.

(3) The learning to know and follow their wishes

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II Timothy 3: 1-5 tells us that IN THE LAST DAYS -- Disloyalty and self service will predominate.

IN CONTRAST --

Faithfulness, loyalty and service will be unique signs of the Kingdom of God. These characteristics will be like a light in the darkness which is creeping over our society. They will increasingly distinguish those who are God's children, those who have His genes flowing through them, from the rest of the world.

CONCLUSION:

God's love for us is based on commitment and is expressed in faithfulness, loyalty and service. Only as we experience His love can we, then, express it to others.

Some may say – “Oh, my! This is overwhelming!”

YES, but remember These three things

1. . Some of us may literally have to “go into training” since expressing God's love will undoubtedly alter our lifestyles in many ways.
2. Committed love is a growing thing. God knows that it will take a while for us to develop this lifestyle of commitment to love. For right now He just wants us to realize that love is far more than feelings -- it will involve concrete actions, and often, real sacrifice.
3. We are talking about a supernatural love – a God given love. We don't have it nor can we generate it. God gives it and we receive it. We are the conduit, the hose. God's love flows (squirts forth) from us. (So, it is not us trying to manufacture it, but just releasing it as we receive it.)

So, with His help take some beginning steps as you let your committed love begin to flow. If you'll do this, and keep it up, you can be assured that five years from now you will be able to declare, “walking in committed love is so much more natural for me now. In fact, it has truly become a real part of my lifestyle!”

FULL LIFE IN CHRIST - Group Facilitators Suggestions
EXTEND - “Developing Our Witness” - Session #2

FIRST - Briefly — “Weekly Show-N-Tell”

1. Spend a few minutes reviewing their answers to Question Sheet #4
2. Share any new answers to prayer from their prayer lists.
3. Have any “listened” and received a word from the Lord lately?
4. What was God saying to us through the scripture portion we ate? (Col 3:5-17)

THEN — Discuss

1. How strong is God’s family trait of “faithfulness” exhibited in the group of believers with whom you fellowship?
2. How far should our “serving” of one another go?
3. In our life of service how do we balance the needs of our own family with the needs of the many others outside the family?

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT TIME

—Eat I Cor 13:1-7

—Complete - question sheet for session