

# LESS SELF, MORE SACRIFICE

Part 7 of IMITATE ME. 2 Timothy 3:10-11.

Peter Foxwell. Cornerstone Church. November 5, 2023.

## LOVE IS OUR GREATEST OPPORTUNITY

**We are living in a secular age that is failing.**

- This is the greatest opportunity for evangelization in our lifetime.
- BUT ... we can only represent Christ and his Gospel in a compelling way when we love like Christ loves.

John 13:34-35 (ESV) A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

**Paul wrote to Timothy to remind him to copy eight aspects of spiritual growth and maturity in his life and ministry.**

- Love is the seventh element on our path to spiritual growth.

2 Timothy 3:10-11 (ESV) You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, **my love**, my steadfastness, 11 my persecutions and sufferings that happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, and at Lystra—which persecutions I endured; yet from them all the Lord rescued me.

## JESUS CHRIST IS LOVE’S TEMPLATE

**Jesus is the example of love we should follow.**

- He defined love when he taught his disciples:

John 15:12-13 (ESV) “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

- In that statement, Jesus taught three dimensions of love:

1. Jesus is the model to follow: *“love as I have loved you”*

2. There are degrees of love: “*greater love has no one than this*”

3. Greater love is self-sacrifice for the good of someone who may not deserve it: “*lay down his life for his friends*” (or enemies, persecutors)

### **Jesus intentionally laid down his life for his enemies (us).**

- Later, the apostles interpreted Jesus’ motivations through the lens of love.

Ephesians 5:2 (ESV) And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

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

Romans 5:7-10 (ESV) For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— 8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of

- Jesus sacrificed himself in an act of love that cleanses our guilt, forgives our sins, and restores us to God.
- Distinctly Christian love is freely given, even when undeserved, difficult, or sacrificial.

## **PAUL’S LIFE OF LOVE**

### **Paul followed Christ’s template.**

- He wrote about the influence of Christ’s love on his life and ministry:

2 Corinthians 5:14 (ESV) For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all...

- “Controlled” is also translated as “to hold prisoner” or “to seize.” Paul was gripped so hard by Christ’s love that it fueled his mission to the world:

1 Thessalonians 2:8 (NLT) We loved you so much that we shared with you not only God's Good News but our own lives, too.

- Christ's love compelled Paul to sacrifice his safety and comfort:

2 Corinthians 11:24-28 (ESV) Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; 26 on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; 27 in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

- In light of Paul's sacrifice, I ask myself, is there anything I am willing to sacrifice for love's sake?

## **CREDIBLE CHRISTIANS IN A CHRISTLESS AGE**

### **Credible Christians in a Christless age emulate Jesus and Paul.**

- Our sacrificial love for God and people - especially people in need or people who do not treat us well - is a witness that cannot be refuted.
- And yet, this is extremely difficult or impossible to do. Unless we are gripped by Christ's self-giving love for us.
- We cannot put ourselves first and love like Christ. **We need less self, more sacrifice.** That is the love with which Christ loves us.

1 John 3:16-18 (ESV) By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. 17 But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? 18 Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

- Love is practical, helpful, constructive, beneficial.
- We cannot say we are growing more like Christ unless we love like Christ.

# SMALL GROUPS GUIDE

## GET STARTED

- If you were God, you would ...

## DIVE IN

- Review the study guide. What were Pastor Peter's main ideas, insights, or Bible passages related to loving like Jesus Christ?
- Do you agree with Peter's statement that Christianity is fading in the West because we've lost credibility because we don't love like Christ? Explain your answer.
- Read Romans 12:9-21. Paul describes a loving Christian community in simple short directives that are difficult to remember. Work on grouping similar commands into groups for easier retention.
- Reflect on the greatest love of all by reading Luke 23:26-49. Respond in prayers of thanks and praise. Consider singing a song about Christ's love, for example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tu2uA6U4Fyg> - And Can It Be?

## MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU

- Discuss examples you have seen or received of Christ-like love.
- Read 1 John 3:16-18. Are there people who need you or your group to show them this kind of practical, constructive love? Make a plan.

## PRAY TOGETHER

Pray for the members of the small group, your pastors/elders, the Cornerstone family, and our outreach partners.