

Building a Life of Love
“Loving God and Others”
(Part 2)

Intro: Let’s talk about family resemblance for a moment. Do you look like your mom? Do you look like your dad? Here’s a picture of our family (Show pic). Now, it’s obvious that one daughter looks like me and the other looks like her mother. The family resemblance is unmistakable.

When it comes to the followers of Jesus, our family resemblance is love. It’s not church attendance. It’s not religious activity. It’s not prayer. It’s not even faith. The family resemblance that proves we are children of God is love.

Last week we looked at how amazing God’s love is for us. His love is so unconditional it is difficult to even describe. Yet, as followers of Jesus, we are not just to be recipients of this amazing love, we are to be demonstrators of it as well. Our lives are to be characterized by His kind of love. The greatest family resemblance is to love like He loves.

- Out of all the things I want Foothills to be known for, this is the most important. I want Foothills to be known as the church who loves well. I want this to be our family resemblance.
- For this to happen, we all must have a commitment to God’s great love priorities, which is loving God and loving others. Today, we’re going to understand these two basic commands / expectations more.

What does it look like to love God passionately and love others unconditionally?

1. We Must Have a Passionate Love For God

Mark 12:30 “And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. (NLT)

- Just stop for a moment and consider just how intense this command really is. We’re not supposed to love God just a little bit; we don’t add God to our list of affections; (I love fishing / hunting / shopping and God) we don’t fit Him into our already packed agendas. 4 times the word ALL is mentioned! What does this mean?
 - I want to take each term and explain it. We must understand that all 4 overlap to some degree because all 4 are connected. I also want to get these terms out of the abstract.
 - I think we have a tendency to simply blow off the description and say; “Well, we’re to love God with everything we have.” And leave it at that! We miss the intensity of this command. (The all consuming nature of it.)
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- Love God with all my heart

1. The Bible describes the heart as the decision / control center of a person's being. This is why it's the first term. In fact, I see these as in order...one leading to the other.
 2. Our modern understanding of the heart would be to see it as emotions only. The Bible's description is much broader and more powerful.
 3. To love God with all your heart means He is your first decision / He is the primary controller of your life / He is your #1 affection. Whoever controls your heart controls your life and direction.
 4. To love God with all your heart means you have settled the control issue of your life of who's in charge...who calls the shots...who gets to lead and who gets to follow. Until this issue is settled, the other 3 areas fall apart.
 5. Until God has our heart / our decisions / our affections / our will / We are people with divided loyalties.
- Loving God with all your heart would be seen as you choose to navigate your life by submitting every direction to His will. (An absolute surrendered will)
 - Love God with all my soul?
 1. This is a harder one to understand. The soul represents your entire inner life. Your soul is everything you feel, decide, believe, think, choose, want, dwell on, turn to, and pursue – is about your soul. The soul is about what makes you happy, what fills you with joy, where your sorrow and sadness is, and what gives you peace. **Your soul is the basis of your personality and what makes you, you.**
 2. You're thinking; "Wow, that's pretty comprehensive." That's true. To love God with all your soul is to love God with everything internal. All your emotions / all of your desire / all of your unique personality / all that makes you who you are.
 3. To love God with all your soul means you are allowing Him to transform your soul. You expose your entire inner self to Him. Then, you uniquely express your love to Him from this place.
 - For example: My inner soul is a Type A, highly driven, goal oriented, very passionate individual. My soul likes taking risks, needs adventure, and close friendships to experience this adventure together.
 - I need to be letting God transform this and then love God from my transformed soul. I love God by being passionate for Him; driven by His agenda; taking risks for His Kingdom and enjoying the sweet friendships with other believers.
 - Being the Pastor of Foothills and fulfilling this responsibility out of who God made me to be is how I love God. BUT, also being in nature. Some of my most intimate times with God has been in the outdoors.
 4. Does your inner life love God? Does your personality love God? Do your affections love God? Are you allowing Him to transform your inner self so you can love God from this perspective?
 5. It always amazes me when I see people that I know who are a bit more

demonstrative in their personalities come to church and worship God with their hands in their pockets (explain)

- Love God with all my mind.

1. This one is a little bit easier to understand. Do I utilize my thinking to love God? How do we do this?
2. First, let's look at the issue of frequency. How often during a typical day are we thinking about God? Sometimes, my wife will ask me when I get home; "Did you think of me today?" Why would she ask this? Because it's connected to love.
3. It's easy to simply mentally disengage with God during the day or week. How are we loving God with our minds if we rarely think about our relationship with Him?
4. Secondly, there is the issue of content. How much time during the day are we thinking about things we shouldn't? Materialistic thoughts / angry thoughts / unforgiveness, bitterness, revenge / fear and anxiety / lust / selfishness / pride and arrogance. (I'm in line with you on these folks!)
5. Loving God with all of our minds means that we are going to give intentional attention to letting God transform our lives by transforming our thought life. Rom. 12:2 talks about being transformed by the "renewing of our minds"

- Love God with all my strength

1. If we are loving God with our hearts, our souls, and our minds, then it only makes sense that it is transferred to our physical strength. We love God even with our physical energy.
 2. It takes physical energy to serve / go on mission trips / to love others / to be used by God to make a difference in this life. Takes physical energy to pray / read my bible / worship. Our inner love for God is transferred outwardly into loving actions.
 3. My outward service and devotion is motivated by my love for God.
- This is an all consuming, life altering, type of love Jesus calls us to. This is not simply believing in Jesus to have your sins forgiven so you know you're going to heaven. This is an all consuming, passionate relationship with the God who made you. Jesus calls us to a radical type of love.

2. We Must Have A Love For Our Neighbors

Mark 12:31 "The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these." (NLT) Notice that this command is just as important as loving God! This is not in a hierarchy of importance. Jesus said this is AS IMPORTANT as loving God. That's crazy!

- Who's my neighbor?

A. A neighbor is any needy person we come in contact with

1. When Jesus spoke of this command, someone was quick to ask Jesus who his neighbor was. Jesus told a story to illustrate and teach us who our neighbors are.

They are not just the people we live next door to.

2. Summarize story of Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37)
3. A neighbor is... anyone where I am aware of their need
 - ...anyone I encounter as I go about my daily life (he wasn't looking)
 - ...anyone I encounter who can't help themselves
 - ...anyone that other people have ignored and avoided (the rejects)
4. This command is a tough one because of technology today, we have a global community. It's one thing to come in contact with needy people in Molalla; but now we can come into contact with people in different countries.
5. The world is getting smaller and our responsibility is getting greater!

B. The standard for this type of love is how you love yourself

1. To love your neighbor as yourself is to demonstrate the same level of care / concern / responsibility that you would apply to yourself. If the injured man could have done these things he would have. BUT...he needed someone else to do it.
2. Notice all the specific loving things the Samaritan did...
 - He saw the man and felt compassion (he didn't protect his heart)
 - He stopped to see and altered his agenda (wasn't too busy)
 - He got personally involved by bandaging up the wounds (got his hands dirty)
 - He was personally inconvenienced by putting him on his own animal
 - He was financially committed by paying for the inn where he took him to recover.
 - He demonstrated genuine concern and responsibility because he told the innkeeper he would be back to check on him and pay more if necessary.
3. To demonstrate the crazy love that Jesus talks about is not to always think it's someone else's responsibility to meet needs. To love like Jesus says is to embrace the fact that it is our responsibility. It is to love people with the same love that we would love ourselves by.

3. We Must Have A Love For Each Other

*John 13:34-35 "So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. **Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.** ³⁵Your love for one another **will prove to the world that you are my disciples.**" (NLT)*

A. We must love fellow believers like Jesus loves them

How does Jesus love us? (Remember last week? Hesus and Agape)

1. Jesus loves us unconditionally – He's never leaving – never giving up on you.
2. Jesus loves us sacrificially – He died for us!
3. Jesus loves us consistently (Doesn't love some people / groups more than others ' doesn't love Baptist more / Methodists / Nazarenes / Foothills people more)
4. Jesus loves us by always forgiving us

5. Jesus love us by providing for us (physically / spiritually / emotionally / relationally / He is fully devoted to you.
 - Do we love each other like this? (Go through each one and apply here) The standard for how we love one another is how Jesus loves us. That's a high standard! That's a crazy kind of love.
 - I believe this is one of the primary places Satan attacks churches is in their commitment to love each other. If he can get followers of Christ fighting each other / holding grudges / harboring bitterness / trying to manipulate one another, the church is no different than the world.
 - Jesus did not command us to just get along...just tolerate each other...to simply put up with each other. NO! He told us to love each other like He loves us. WHY? Because there is a direct result of obeying this command.

B. We must love fellow believers to prove to the world Jesus is real

1. It is not our convincing arguments that will prove to the world Jesus is real. It will not be our programs / ministries / our beautiful buildings / or any class we offer. What will prove to the world Jesus is real are the relationships we have.
2. If we want Molalla to believe that Jesus is real and can change people's lives, then Jesus said the proof will be the type of love we demonstrate towards one another. It will be a crazy type of love that looks a lot like Jesus.
- The most mission minded thing you and I can do is to commit to love one another. Not go on a mission trip / not even invite someone to church. It is demonstrating our love for one another in such a tangible way it's observable to others.
 3. I believe one of the greatest problems in the church today is that the focus of so many churches is on strategy and programs instead of a commitment to love each other like Jesus commands.
 4. One of the greatest heresies of the modern church is not doctrinal heresy, but a relational heresy that believes we can effectively follow Jesus without loving one another radically like Jesus said. The bible teaches no such thing!
 5. To follow Jesus is to commit to love like Jesus loves. Anything less than this is not Biblical Christianity. It is time to get back to the simplicity of what Jesus said. It's also time to stop watering down the radical call of Jesus to love like He loves. Just because it looks crazy, doesn't mean it wrong or impossible.

Now, there is no way you nor I can love like this in our own strength. It's humanly impossible. BUT, we can if we depend on God who pours out His love into our hearts.

Rom. 5:5 "...God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us." (NIV)

- The only place we can go to get the ability to love like this is God. Our love will run out...His will never. Our commitment will struggle...His will endure.

- The only way for this is going to work is if we all go to God asking that He would pour out His love into our hearts so we can love in a way that looks crazy to this world.
 - Will you make the commitment to pray for the next 5 weeks that God would help you grow in your ability to love like God calls us to love?
1. Lord, will you help me love you more.
 2. Lord, will you help me love my neighbors more.
 3. Lord, will you help me love my brothers and sisters in Christ more.