

***LOVE ONE ANOTHER, PT. 2***  
***1 JOHN 3:15-24***

The story, an open secret in the crowded nylon city of Mount Everest base camp, trickled out from the high Himalayas: A British mountaineer desperate for oxygen had collapsed along a well-traveled route to the summit.

Dozens of people walked right past him, unwilling to risk their own ascents. Within hours, David Sharp, 34, was dead....

The tale was shocking, an apparent display of preening callousness. Sir Edmund Hillary, who was on the team that first summited Everest in 1953, called it “horrifying” that climbers would leave a dying man.

But in the small world of modern high-altitude mountaineers, there was barely any surprise at all....

“We’ve been seeing things like this for a very long time,” said Thomas Sjogren, a Swedish mountaineer who helps run ExplorersWeb, a Web site widely read by climbers. “The real high-altitude mountaineers, the top people in the world who are doing new peaks and going to mountains you don’t know much about, most of these people have become completely disgusted by Everest.”

The top mountaineers “often help each other,” said Sjogren, who has made many Himalayan climbs. “If you know him or you don’t know him, it doesn’t matter: you try to help him until he’s confirmed dead.”

But many of today’s Everest climbers are on commercial expeditions, some paying tens of thousands of dollars to guides who are under fierce pressure to get their clients to the summit....

“The sheer pressure of numbers and accessibility to these mountains [have] changed the kind of people who go,” said Lydia Bradey, a 44-year-old New Zealander who in 1988 became the first woman to summit Everest without supplemental oxygen.

As a result, Bradey said in a telephone interview, Everest climbers may be forced to decide whether to jeopardize their once-in-a-lifetime investment to help a dying person.

“If you’re going to go to Everest ... I think you have to accept responsibility that you may end up doing something that’s not very ethically nice,” she said. “You have to realize that you’re in a different world.” [ESPN, “As others pass, climber dies alone on Mount Everest” accessed at <http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/news/story?id=2459900> on 1/31/14.]

I’ve read enough accounts about high-altitude climbing to realize that what has been happening on Everest is not unusual. And I’ve lived long enough to realize that this isn’t an Everest or high altitude climbing problem. It’s a human condition problem. People love. But the flesh and the unregenerate man love self first of all and most of all. And that results in many kinds of circumstances where people do “something that’s not very ethically nice,” and make a variety of excuses for it that make it seem more palatable or reasonable.

Jesus came to change that in us.

Jesus came to change us from lovers of self to lovers of Him and lovers of others.

When you take the entire Old Testament, it can be synthesized into two commands, Jesus said — “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength...and love your neighbor as yourself.” Love God and love others.

But evidently such love doesn't come particularly easily. Because the theme of love is repeated over and over and over again — as if we cannot understand and as if we do not obey and we need to be reminded and convinced over and over. Of the 57 “one another” commands in the Epistles, almost 1/3 are “love one another.” And theme of love dominates the book of 1 John. The verb, noun, and adjective forms of the word “love” appear 52x in the book. John is compelled to urge his readers to grow in love — particularly in love for each other.

And John addresses it particularly in chapter 3, devoting more than half the chapter to the topic. His point is that —

*AN ESSENTIAL EVIDENCE OF OUR LIFE IN CHRIST IS OUR LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER.*

What does this kind of love look like and do? John makes six assertions about love in the body of Christ in verses 11-15 — this is what believers can expect to do, what they can expect not to do, and how they can expect to be received by the world. And then he follows that with an example of Biblical love and an application for how to love biblically. And then next week we'll see how he ties all this to assurance of the believer's salvation.

What can we say about loving each other in the body of Christ? We can say —

### **1. Six Assertions About Biblical Love (vv. 11-15)**

- ✓ An Old Command for ALL Christians (vv. 10b-11)
- ✓ What a Loving Christian IS NOT (v. 12)
- ✓ What the WORLD Thinks of Loving Christians (v. 13)
- ✓ What a Loving Christian IS (v. 14a)
- ✓ What a Loving Christian DOES (v. 14b)
- ✓ What a Loving Christian Does NOT DO (v. 15)

### **2. Christ: The Pre-Eminent Example of Biblical Love (v. 16)**

### **3. Giving: One Simple Application of Biblical Love (vv. 17-18)**

## 1. Six Attributes of Biblical Love (vv. 11-15)

- An Old Command for ALL Christians (vv. 10b-11) — This command has always been the command of Christ; it is what He taught throughout His ministry and is inherent even in the gospel (Jn. 15:12ff)
- What a Loving Christian IS NOT (v. 12) — unlike Cain, the believer loves his brothers and is not angry, defiant, bitter, jealous, hostile, and murderous towards his brothers.
- What the WORLD Thinks of Loving Christians (v. 13) — the world hates us when it sees us loving each other because the world hates Christ. The world hates Christ the way Cain hated God.
- What a Loving Christian IS (v. 14a) — he is by nature fundamentally transformed. He is no longer dead, but he is alive.
- What a Loving Christian DOES (v. 14b) — because he is alive, the believer persists in loving others.
- What a Loving Christian Does NOT DO (v. 15)
  - ✓ A believer does not hate.
    - John appears to be answering an objection something like, “Well I may not like — I may even hate — that person but I’ve never killed anyone...” So John asserts that if anyone even/“only” *hates*, he is a murderer. In fact he stresses that *everyone* (all inclusive) who hates *is a murderer*. In other words, someone doesn’t need to kill another person to be put in the some spiritual class as a murderer. Lovelessness = hatred = murder.
    - That doesn’t mean that everyone who hates will physically kill another person; but it does mean that to hate is to give evidence of the heart attitude of a murderer (Mt. 5:21-26, 43-47).
    - One writer has said, “Murder is in the heart before it is in the hand.” So a believer cannot be the kind of person who hates.
  - ✓ This verse sees only two kinds of people: those who love and those who hate. We are one or the other; we have one or we have the other. So we can say this another way: a believer cannot be the kind of person who does not love.
  - ✓ And even worse, John notes that those who hate (and murder) do not have *eternal life abiding in* them. There is presently no spiritual life in one who hates. That’s the condition of a hateful (worldly) person (and John was talking about real people in these churches). Cf. also **2:10-11**.

*“Seneca, writing approximately AD 50...frankly points out how ‘hatred of the human race seizes us’ because of the corruption and foolishness we see on every hand (On Tranquility 15.1). Dishonesty and stupidity could easily foment despair. But Seneca suggests a better strategy: ...contempt. Laugh! Scoff and be cynical! ‘Therefore all things must be derided and borne with a calm mind. It is more manlike to scoff at life than to bewail it.’” [Yarborough, 1-3 John, 202.]*

- ✓ Since v. 14 affirms that love is a sign of spiritual life, then a lack of love is evidence of spiritual death. And that is exactly what John is saying. A lack of love is the evidence of spiritual death. And a believer will not remain in a condition where he intentionally, without repentance does not love others.
  - The person who does not love is living in death (v. 14).
  - The person who hates and murders does not have life in him (v. 15).
  - One who presently lives in an attitude of hatred of God’s people, not repenting of his sin and not fighting against the temptation, is giving evidence that he has no eternal life.
  - C. S. Lewis reminds us that loving is hard, and we *don’t* have to do it...

*“To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness.*

*“But in that casket — safe, dark, motionless, airless — it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The alternative to tragedy, or at least to the risk of tragedy, is damnation. The only place outside heaven where you will be perfectly safe from all dangers and perturbations [agitations] of love is hell.” [The Four Loves]*

- But this is not entirely hopeless. John does not say that there is no possibility of repentance and forgiveness. All sin can be confessed. Paul himself is an example of the availability of forgiveness (1 Tim. 1:12-14; **Acts 26:9-11**; 1 Tim. 1:9-11).
- So if this verse is a description of you, there is hope. And the hope for you is the same hope for all men — Jesus Christ who has satisfied God (2:2). You cannot stand before God without condemnation, but if Christ is your Savior, He has satisfied God for you. So I beg you to confess your sin — your anger and hatred and rebellion — and find God to be a gracious God who will forgive.
- Don’t be like Cain who continued in rebellion when forgiveness was offered...

- So in these verses (11-15), John has asserted that:
  - ✓ Biblical love is Christ's command for all Christians (vv. 10b-11)
  - ✓ A loving Christian is not angry, bitter, and defiant towards his brothers (v. 12)
  - ✓ The world hates Christians who love because it hates Christ (v. 13)
  - ✓ A loving Christian is someone who has been made alive by Christ (v. 14a)
  - ✓ A loving Christian persists in loving (v. 14b)
  - ✓ A loving Christian does not hate (and murder) (v. 15)
- That's a daunting list. How can anyone ever hope to do that? John answers in v. 16 by reminding us of our great example —

## 2. Christ: The Pre-Eminent Example of Biblical Love (v. 16)

- One of the purposes of John's letter is to affirm to his readers the unique work of Christ.
  - ✓ Throughout the book he defends his hypostatic union — his full deity and humanity (2:22-23).
  - ✓ But John also defends the work of Christ, which is what he does here — ***He laid down His life for us*** means that Christ *voluntarily* gave up His life (Jn. 10:11, 15, 17-18; Mk. 10:45; Rom. 5:8; Gal. 1:4; Tt. 2:14; 1 Pt. 3:18). He not only gave up His position in Heaven to take on manhood, but having taken on manhood, He gave up the greatest aspect of that manhood — His life. And He gave up that life ***for us***. That is, He gave Himself as our substitute, taking our sin so that His righteousness could be imputed to us (**Col. 1:18-22**).
  - ✓ But notice John's main point in this verse — ***we know love by this...*** That is, the only way we know a full demonstration and explanation of love is by looking to Christ's actions. Any other definition of love we have is inadequate and incomplete. Christ's actions on the cross are the full explanation of love.
- Christ gave up His life for us as an example (**2:6**; 1 Pt. 2:21-24); when John says ***we ought***, there is a moral obligation and mandate to do for others what He has done for us. Because of the Spirit of God who indwells us, it is possible to do this thing that we have been obligated to do. We *can* love others (even the unlovely). This is not optional.
  - ✓ Because we are morally compelled to love others, Christ's self-sacrifice is not merely to be admired, but it is also to be copied. I love to read books about the cross and the death of Christ, but unless that transforms the way I love others, those books have not finished their purpose.
  - ✓ Are you having trouble loving others? One solution might be, to force yourself to do something loving and kind for someone you are having trouble loving. But John is suggesting that the

reason we have trouble loving others is that we have an inadequate comprehension of Christ's love for us. So to stimulate love for others, we need to contemplate more fully the love of Christ. Until we appreciate what He has done for us, we will not be willing to do that for others.

- ✓ Example (**John 13:5-17**): How could Jesus tell His disciples to serve one another by washing each other's feet and forgiving each other? He washed their feet and forgave them. They had comprehended by that time His unique position and they didn't want Him washing their feet — how could the Lord of the universe do such a thing? But since He did it for them, they could do it for each other.

*“[Someone suggested to] the great nineteenth-century missionary to China, Hudson Taylor...that he had given his life to the Orient because he loved the Chinese. To this he shook his head and answered thoughtfully, ‘No, not because I loved the Chinese, but because I loved God.’” [Hughes, Romans, p. 26.]*

### 3. Giving: One Simple Application of Biblical Love (vv. 17-18)

- John has given us an explanation of what biblical love is — love is an unending (joyful) commitment to meet the needs of fellow believers because of my desire to emulate Christ.
- He has also reminded us of the example of Christ that we are to follow.
- But how will this practically look? What can we do to be loving towards others? John gives one particular application — giving to others in the body who have a need (**whoever sees...**).
- Notice first of all the position of the one who is called to love (**whoever** means anyone in this hypothetical condition must act in this way):
  - ✓ He **has the world's goods**. The word **goods** typically refers to one's livelihood; here it simply means that he has plenty of material possessions. He has no shortage of cash.
  - ✓ He **sees his brother in need**. The image here is vibrant. This individual hasn't just heard a vague rumor about the person in need; he hasn't just seen something that left him with a curious question. He has observed this needy person, probably in multiple situations, so that he has comprehended the circumstance and has been able to develop a comprehensive and accurate theory (the word is θεωρέω) about the situation. He doesn't just *suspect* there is a problem; he *knows* there is a problem that he has definitely seen. He has carefully, contemplatively observed.
  - ✓ Notice also that he sees **his brother** (singular). In verse 16 **brethren** is plural — there are some people out there, but it is vague and impersonal. But this is *his* brother. There is an intimate, personal relationship with this man. The man of means knows this person well. He can't dismiss him as “someone in Africa is going to bed hungry tonight but I can't do anything about it.” He knows *this* man. This isn't humanity in general, but an individual in particular.

- ✓ He doesn't care. Despite having everything he needs and more and despite knowing that his brother has a need, he **closes his heart against him**. The word "heart" is "inner bowels," or "guts." It's the word that usually means "compassion." Like locking a gate in a fence, this man shuts off his compassion and tenderness towards this person. He hardens himself.
- ✓ Financial assistance was a frequent and real need in the early church (Acts 2:45; 4:35; 20:34; Rom. 12:13; Eph. 4:28; Tt. 3:14; 2 Cor. 8:4ff).
- ✓ We do well to remember why it is that God has given us material wealth (2 Cor. 9:6-12). It is not to make us comfortable personally. God gives us material goods to meet our needs and to enable us to be vessels of kindness and grace towards others (Lk. 10:30-37; Phil. 2:30).

God increases our yield so that by giving we can prove that our yield is not our god. God does not prosper a man's business so he can move from a Ford to a Cadillac. God prospers a business so that thousands of unreached peoples can be reached with the gospel. He prospers a business so that 20 percent of the world's population can move a step back from the precipice of starvation...

In Ephesians 4:28, Paul says, "Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need." In other words, there are three levels of how to live with things: (1) you can steal to get; (2) or you can work to get; (3) or you can work to get in order to give.

Too many professing Christians live on level two. Almost all the forces of our culture urge them to live on level two. But the Bible pushes us relentlessly to level three. "God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8). Why does God bless us with abundance? So we can have enough to live on, and then use the rest for all manner of good works that alleviate spiritual and physical misery. Enough for us; abundance for others.

The issue is not how much a person makes. Big industry and big salaries are a fact of our times, and they are not necessarily evil. The evil is in being deceived into thinking a six-digit salary must be accompanied by a six-digit lifestyle. God has made us to be conduits of His grace. The danger is in thinking the conduit should be lined with gold. It shouldn't. Copper will do. [Piper, *Desiring God*]

- Notice also the condition of the one who is to be loved:
  - ✓ He is **in need**. He does not have enough, and apparently does not have an ability to gain enough on his own.
  - ✓ He is a **brother**. He is a part of the body of Christ. He is known in the body; the suggestion is that he is a functioning part of the body, a genuine believer using his gifts to serve Christ.
  - ✓ He is worthy of **compassion**. He is not inherently worthy of compassion, but Christ had compassion on him nonetheless and saved him. And because he has been loved and saved by Christ, he is worthy of our compassion and kindness as well. He can't love back in the same way

as the man of means can love him, but that doesn't make him less a believer. Cf. Js. 1:27; 2:15ff.

- Notice what John's evaluation of that person is: **how does the love of God abide in him?** He doesn't have to answer the question. It is too apparent. It doesn't. This man does not love God and this man is not loved by God. To go back to the principle in vv. 14-15, if he does not love, he is hating and if he is hating, he is a murderer and if he is a murderer, he does not belong to God. Just as "life does not dwell in the murderer, love does not dwell in the miser." [Stott]
- So notice finally what John says about how we are to love (v. 18).
  - ✓ Do **not love with word or with tongue** means "don't just talk about loving someone." It's okay to say, "I love you..." (in fact, we must do that). But it better not just be talk.
  - ✓ Do also love **in deed and truth**. Do something about your statement that you love each other (Heb. 13:16; 1 Tim 6:17-19). You may not have an opportunity to die for each other, but will you and I do the smaller, more mundane things for one another?
  - ✓ These are principles for every believer — John addresses the readers with affection (**beloved**) — reminding them that they do this because they are loved not only by him but by God. And John also places himself in the same category — **let us**. All of us need growth & progress (1 Th. 4:9ff)
  - ✓ One writer has said, "anything that fails here is blasphemous." It disparages Christ's work.
- Now let's be honest. Some of the people that we have to love aren't easy to love. They are difficult. (I'm sure I'm one of those hard to love people for some of you...) But John doesn't say, "love those who are easy to love." He says, **love one another** (v. 11 — that's everyone). And he says, **we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren** (v. 16 — that is, we ought to be willing to give to the point that we willingly die for each other — for everyone in the body of Christ).
  - ✓ Who are the people who are easy to love? Keep loving them.
  - ✓ Who are the people who are hard to love? Work hard at loving them by contemplating Christ's love for you (we must remember that we were less lovely to Christ than anyone else is unlovely to us — the disparity between Christ and us is infinitely greater than any disparity between two of us).

*"We all have 'lepers' in our lives – people we don't want to touch because we're repelled by their personalities, social skills, or emotional problems. Too often, we exclude certain people even from the body of Christ because they don't seem to fit in – another church would be better for them, we think..."*

*"We need to make a clear, unequivocal commitment, as both individuals and churches, to loving the unlovable. And we need to make this commitment before we attempt to become involved with 'social lepers.'"*

*“God doesn’t love us because we are lovable; He loves us because He has chosen to love us. This is the kind of love that transforms us, and it is the kind of love that will transform ‘social lepers.’ In the same way that God loves us, we need to love the [difficult and unlovely] among us, not because they are lovable or because we always feel like loving them, but because we choose to love them.”*

*[John Norman, DJ, “Bringing in the Outcast”]*

- So how are we doing?
  - ✓ I’d like to say, “we are doing magnificently well.” And I do see many signs of ongoing sacrificial, servant-hearted love — people who are willingly giving and “dying” for others.
  - ✓ But I know that we are not perfect in loving each other and that there is room for growth. Recently, someone told me how well-loved his family is here. He said enough that while I did not physically puff up with pride, internally my chest grew at least two sizes. And then not 30 minutes later I had another conversation where someone said, “Y’all just don’t care...” In fact, I’ve had at least two of those conversations in the past two weeks. People who have had genuine needs and reached out to people in the body and in some way were rebuffed and turned away. These kinds of issues are complex and I will not assign blame on either the one who had the need or the one who had the opportunity to supply the need. It is just apparent that there were some who have gone out from here and said, “They don’t love well.” Or, “they don’t love as well as they could.”
  - ✓ I don’t say that to attempt to unnecessarily discourage you, for again, I see multiple signs of strength and growth. On the other hand, I also know that just as the Thessalonians needed to grow in their love, so do we.
  - ✓ How are we doing as a church body? We are growing in maturity. And we can grow still more.
    - Can we work to grow in loving others this year?
    - Can we look for those who have a need? (One way of looking for those who have a need is to look for those whom you haven’t seen in a while.)
    - Can we sacrifice for those who have genuine needs?

**CONCLUSION:** I appreciate what Jon Bloom wrote about loving each other at the end of December:

Let this be the year that we *pursue love*. Let this be the year that we stop talking about love, that we do less regretful moaning about how little we love and how much we need to grow in love and actually be determined to love more the way Jesus loved (John 15:12). Let this be the year we actually put into place some strategies to help us love.

Each person's situation is so unique that we can't craft strategies for each other to grow in love. It's something that we must each do with God, though some feedback and counsel from those who know us best are helpful....

But let's also be clear: making love our aim in 2014 will demand more courage and faith than any other resolution we can make. Nothing exposes the depth of our sin like really seeking to love God with our entire being and loving our neighbors as ourselves (Luke 10:27)....

We can only love because God first loved us (1 John 4:19) and sent his Son to become sin for us so that we could become the righteousness of God in him (2 Corinthians 5:21). Christ has kept the greatest commandments (and the rest) perfectly for us! So we are forgiven of our constant failure to love as we ought and are given grace to grow in the grace of love. And because of Jesus, someday we will love perfectly just as we have been loved.

So let's make our resolution to pursue love this year more than we ever have, knowing that we have been loved with an everlasting love (Psalm 103:17).

As we close, let me reiterate the questions I just asked:

- ✓ Can we work to grow in loving others this year?
- ✓ Can we look for those who have a need? (One way of looking for those who have a need is to look for those whom you haven't seen in a while.)
- ✓ Can we sacrifice for those who have genuine needs?