

SPIRITUAL FORMATION ESSENTIALS¹

Part III – Becoming Like Christ...

Week 16 – Love

Sacrificial love as exemplified in Jesus' voluntary death on the cross is to be reflected in the way Christians relate to each other. This kind of love is so out of step with the world's way that unbelievers will take notice.... The defense to the world of the authenticity of our faith is not right belief, but right behavior.²

If you want me to believe in your redeemer, you have to look a little more redeemed.
-- Friedrich Nietzsche

Becoming more like Christ calls upon his followers to exercise love. But, what does this love look like?

Love that Denies

John 13: 1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus **knowing that His hour had come** that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. 2 During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, *the son of* Simon, to betray Him, 3 *Jesus*, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, 4 *got up from supper, and *laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself. 5 Then He *poured water into the basin, and **began to wash the disciples' feet** and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. 6 So He *came to Simon Peter. He *said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" 7 Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter." 8 Peter *said to Him, "**Never shall You wash my feet!**" Jesus answered him, "**If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.**" 9 Simon Peter *said to Him, "Lord, *then wash* not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." 10 Jesus *said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; **and you are clean, but not all of you.**" 11 For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, "Not all of you are clean."

12 So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined *at the table* again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? 13 "You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. 14 "If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to **wash one another's feet**. 15 "For I gave you an **example** that you also should **do as I did to you**. 16 "Truly, truly, I say to you, **a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him**. 17 "If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. 18 "I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but *it is* that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME.' 19 "From now on I am telling you before *it* comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am *He*. 20 "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me."

21 When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that **one of you will betray Me.**" 22 The disciples *began* looking at one another, at a loss *to know* of which one He was speaking. 23 There was reclining on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. 24 So Simon Peter *gestured to him, and *said to him, "Tell *us* who it is of whom He is speaking." 25 He, leaning back thus on Jesus' bosom, *said to Him, "Lord, who is it?" 26 Jesus then *answered, "That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him." So when He had dipped

¹ This series follows Dr. Greg Ogden's, *Discipleship Essentials* (InterVarsity Press 1998) and incorporates, among other works, Dr. Donald S. Whitney's *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (NavPress 1991).

² Greg Ogden, 147, 149.

the morsel, He *took and *gave it to Judas, *the son* of Simon Iscariot. 27 After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus *said to him, “What you do, do quickly.” 28 Now no one of those reclining *at the table* knew for what purpose He had said this to him. 29 For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, “Buy the things we have need of for the feast”; or else, that he should give something to the poor. 30 So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.

31 Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus *said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; 32 if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately. 33 “Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ 34 “A new commandment I give to you, that you **love one another, even as I have loved you**, that you also love one another. 35 **“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”**

How would you describe the kind of love Jesus demonstrates (and commands for his followers)?

What impact does each of the following aspects of the context bring to this command?

Footwashing (v.5)?³

Debate amongst the disciples regarding who was the greatest between them (Luke 22.24-27)?

Prediction of betrayal (v.21)?

How does foot washing foreshadow the cross?

What does Jesus mean: “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me” (v.8)?

Based on Peter’s reaction (v.9), what is Peter’s understanding of Jesus’ meaning?

What was it about the following that enabled Jesus to assume such a role?

Knowing that his time had come (v.1)?

His relationship with the Father?

Consider Peter’s intense reaction (v.8).

How did Peter’s understanding of value and worth differ from Jesus’ demonstration?

What in Peter did Jesus’ demonstration threaten?⁴

What distinctive does this demonstrate about Jesus that Peter might not like?⁵

What does Jesus mean when he says, “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (v.35)?

³ “In Jewish culture foot washing was such a menial task that it was listed as a duty that a Jewish servant should not perform; foot washing was reserved for Gentile slaves, women and children” (Greg Ogden, 151).

⁴ “Man’s humility does not begin with the giving of service; it begins with the readiness to receive it” (Archbishop William Temple). Ask yourself: is your “need to be needed” an expression of pride or a sense of self-sufficiency?

⁵ “Jesus was not crucified in a Cathedral between two candles, but on a cross between two thieves; on the town garbage heap . . . at the kind of place where cynics talk smut, and thieves curse, and soldiers gamble. . . . [T]hat is where He died. . . . [T]hat is what He died about. And . . . this is where church men should be.” George MacLeod, *Only One Way Left* (Glasgow: Iona, 1956), p. 33.

Love that Unifies

John 17: 20 “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 21 **that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You**, that they also may be in Us, **so that the world may believe** that You sent Me. 22 “The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them and You in Me, that **they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know** that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. 24 “Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

25 “O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; 26 and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

What does Jesus pray about for his followers (v.21)?

What is the basis of his followers' oneness (vv.21-23)?

What does our oneness show to the world (v.23)? How? Why?

What attitudes and values characterize such oneness?

As Christ's followers, what do we allow to divide us from one another?

What are some changes that would need to take place in your life for you to exhibit more . . .

. . . love that unifies?

. . . love that denies?