

Generating Love for Others: Becoming a Person Who Says Three Things

We know we are to love others. The Scriptures could not be clearer. Jesus announced the second greatest commandment was to love our neighbor as ourself. Furthermore, love is not just a command to the believer, it is a characteristic of a believer. That is, love is not just something a Christian does, love is who a Christian is. The apostle John says it concisely, *“Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.”*(1 John 4:7)

The Bible is replete in spelling out what love looks like...both by example and by teaching. Primarily love is embodied in the example of Christ. Time and time again we see Christ in loving interaction with the rich, the poor, the sinner, the elite, the outcast, the downtrodden, the hurting, the suffering, the sick, men, women and children. Furthermore, love is described in the epistles: Love is patient. Love is kind. Love does not boast. Love is not easily provoked. Love does not envy.

I want to love like that, like Jesus, but I am constantly reminded I do not. When my neighbor asks for my time, I inwardly resist. When I get the missionary newsletter in the mail, I may not even read it. When I learn in the news of a celebrity’s hardship, my first reaction is “well, I’m not surprised.” No, I am far from loving people like Jesus loved them.

Fortunately, there is good news for people like me. The good news is love grows. God intends to perfect his love in us. Paul penned it this way, *“And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men...”*(1 Thess 3:12). Peter included love as the culminating virtue that through diligence a believer grows (2 Peter 1:5-7). And how can we miss the transforming work done in the disciple who was known for his temper. For it was John who wanted to call fire down from heaven and consume the Samaritans. Yet, in his old age, he penned his epistles which stand as a masterpiece on love.

The question remains for those of us for whom love does not come easy, what can we do to develop a heart after Christ? Become a person who regularly says...

1. “Thank you.”
2. “Help me understand.”
3. “How can I help you?”

A person who says “thank you” recognizes they are in the debt of others. Humility is generated in this person. A person who says “help me understand” bestows honor on others because they listen and are willing to be shaped by what they learn. Understanding is generated in this person. A person who asks, “how can I help you?” opens the door for participation. Care is generated in this person.

These three phrases are not hard to say. Nor is it hard to find occasion to say them. But by making them common in our lives, we will begin to improve our posture. A posture that turns us from looking inward to that of looking outward. A posture that resembles Christ. Humble, understanding and caring - loving.