

GBC *Connection*

In the month of February, Valentine's Day is universally celebrated. It is an opportunity for us to express our love for others and show our appreciation. However, we would all agree that we can't limit the expression of our love to one day a year, but it's something that we have to practice daily in our relationships in order for them to grow and survive.

How we exercise our love really defines who we are. Jonathan Edwards says that love is the fountain that everything pours out of (Edwards, 14). Our love of someone or something is manifested in our actions. For example, if we love money we will have a zeal directed towards making and possessing money. I think we would all agree that the desires of our heart, those things we love, direct our pursuits in life.

The book of John speaks a great deal about what love should look like. John 14:15 says, "If you love me, you will obey what I command". So we see, and as Pastor Ross explained to us, that our love results in obedience to Jesus' commands. If we truly love God, then the desire of our heart will be to obey Him. In contrast to this, a little further on in the chapter Jesus says, "He who does not love me will not obey my teaching" (Jn.14:24). This is a very serious and challenging question. I ask myself, "Do I practice obedience in my life to God's commands?" ... "Does my life really show that I love God?" If love is the fountain that everything else pours out of, and is foundational to who I am as a person, then it will be a delight to obey God. If my obedience seems burdensome, then can I say that I truly love God more than earthly things? God desires for us to love out of delight, not out of duty. He wants us to experience happiness and joy in the practice of our love for Him. What is a practical way that we can do this?

Making the Connection

Jesus repeatedly tells his disciples in John 13:34; 15:12; 15:17 to "Love one another". Jesus calls us to show our love of Him by loving one another. John Piper puts it like this, "Love is the overflow of joy in God which gladly meets the needs of others" (Piper, 102). Loving others is to be our earthly ministry – it's our mission. Nevertheless, our ministry to love is not exclusively for other Christians, but God

commands us to also love our neighbour (Mk.12:31). Hence, genuine love for God means that we should love others enough to share the message of Christ with them, support them and pray for them. The great commission, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15) is for every Christian, because in Christ we all have a new capacity to love. We don't have to be a gifted evangelist, teacher, or preacher to make connections and share our lives with others.

Happiness and joy will be a result of our obedience to love others because we will be able to experience God working through us. God will stretch us and grow us, and fill our hearts if we are willing to be obedient.

I'd like to borrow Ross's phrase, "Eternity hangs in the balance". We know that in a moment our lives can be changed forever. We don't know how much time we have on this earth, but at the end of our lives do we want to look back and see that we wasted it on our self or the love of earthly things, rather than the love of obedience and love for others?

Taking Action

I am a practical person, and I try not to make things sound easy when I know myself I find them difficult. Loving others is not always easy. It is not always easy to open us up and be vulnerable with people. However, we are commanded to do it -- to love. If you would like to take the challenge to love, here are some things I invite you to consider: 1) Write down the name of an unsaved person/family that you would like to make a "connection" with in the month of March. 2) Write down one way that you can make this connection (i.e. meeting for coffee, taking them a meal, taking extra time to speak to them at work, inviting them out to a function, etc...). 3) Commit this person/family to the Lord in prayer. 4) Act on the command to love and do what you wrote down in #2. 5) Have courage! Jesus tells us that that if we ask anything in his name he will do it (John 14:14).

- Anon

Suggested Reading: John 18

Memorization: John 14:15; 15:4

Edwards, Jonathan. *Religious Affections*. Minneapolis: Bethany Book House Publishers, 1996.
Piper, John. *Desiring God*. Oregon: Multnomah Publishers Inc, 1996.

The purpose of GBC (Graphite Bible Chapel) Connection is for reflection and further personal study to make a deeper connection between the Sunday teaching and our daily lives.

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