

Women's Spring Fellowship 2018

The year was 2008. We had successfully put down roots as an active duty family. We had stayed in one place for 6 consecutive years, quite a feat for an active duty family. This is special because typically we would have to move every two years. Now we had to continue to "be a family" but somewhere else. My "sense of place" would be lost. I was faced with leaving our beloved church home here, our community and, of course, my wonderful Italian family. I was going to miss the love, the traditions and yes, the food! I was facing the daunting task of moving our children (and myself) to a new place, a new church, and the making of new friends. The Navy had packed and shipped our household goods to our next duty station. Our children were at Grandma and Grandpa's as I prepared our house to become a rental property. I had one task left. I was required to close each window in each room before locking up our empty house. As I began, my mind flooded with memories that had taken place over the last 6 years in this one house.

The bathroom window closed and I immediately saw David walking to me as a 1 yr. old baby, taking those first wobbly steps. I closed another window, and I heard Sidney say to me with excitement, "Look Mama! I lost my tooth!" Another window closed and I heard Elyse say, "Bye Mommy! I love you!" as she walked into her kindergarten classroom. Another window and another, each with a cherished memory that had happened in this house! By the end of this task, I was mess of emotion and sadness, sitting alone in my house crying my eyes out like a baby.

We did indeed move for the Navy. We made new friends, became members of 2 different churches and I regained my 'sense of place.' The Lord also gave us two souvenirs from our time in Washington. Their names are Anna and Noah .

A couple months ago, a friend said to me "You have all the pieces, but it takes work to make something beautiful." Back to my window story, I knew what I had to do. I definitely had all of the pieces to make this transition for our family beautiful. But *how*? And with *what*? *What* are the pieces? What was I doing with what I had been given?

I, as a believer in Christ, have been given the *essence* and *quality* of eternal life. (John 10:10 Jesus says to us, "*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly*") and in Psalm 16:11 the psalmist proclaims of Jesus, "*You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*" And from 2 Peter 1:3-4 we are reminded that "*His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desires.*"

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Another piece that we have access to is the fruit of the spirit (WHICH IS OUR THEME FOR TODAY): "But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self – control; against such things there is no law." (Gal.5:22-23) *Today*, we will focus on love.

The theme this year for Tri City Bible Church is "bound together in love" based upon Colossians 3:14 which says "and above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."

There are 2 kinds of love: worldly love and biblical love. Worldly love says "I love you for what you can do for *me*. (Hallmark Card #1), (Hallmark Card #2).

The world says, "give me." It takes and is selfish.

Biblical love says something different. It is a verb, an action. It gives and does not take and it is *unselfish*.

There exists no greater human example of love in the Bible than that of the Apostle John.

The Apostle John was a basic fisherman, hardened by life on the sea.

In Seminary, when beginning Greek students study Greek, they study the book of John because it is a more simple Greek than what Paul used.

One of the "sons of thunder", along with his brother James - name given to them by Jesus (Mark 3:17). They had intense, outspoken personalities:

From Luke 9:54 we learn WHY they earned that nickname:

"When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, 'Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them? But he turned and rebuked them. And they went on to another village.

They had a "let's fight" mentality that does not belong *anywhere* in the Church. *Jesus rebuked them* and gave them the nickname Boanerges (Sons of Thunder). In his book, *Twelve Ordinary Men*, John MacArthur describes the apostle John like this:

Throughout John's Gospel, he never once mentions his own name. The only "John" mentioned by name in the gospel of John is John the Baptist. The apostle John refuses to speak of himself in reference *to* himself. Instead, he speaks of himself in reference to *Jesus*. He never paints himself in the foreground as a hero, but uses every reference to himself to honor Christ. Rather than write his name, which might focus attention on him, he refers to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus

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loved" giving glory to Jesus for having loved such a man. In fact, he seems utterly in awe of the marvel that Christ loved him. (Pp. 110-111). John 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7 & 20

From Jesus, John had learned the characteristics of love: patience, tolerance, mercy, grace, forgiveness, tenderness and compassion.

- Years later, John traveled with Peter through this same region of Samaria (mentioned in Luke 9) preaching the gospel in Samaritan villages. Acts 8:25. Their hearts had become more tender toward the people. No fire from Heaven was needed this time.

This kind of love:

Is patient with difficult friends/family members

Is tolerant and patient with the unbelievers in our lives

Is merciful with a weary husband

Gives grace in hard situations and to difficult children (of *any* age)

Strives to *seek* and also *grant* forgiveness (in every relationship)

Is tender and compassionate when misunderstood.

It is *low* maintenance.

This love is the love with which our Savior loves us, "who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. 2:6-11)

And from 1 John 4:7-12 (written by the apostle John), "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

It is also the love that is described to us in 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 and 13:

This love described here is not just meant for weddings and husbands and wives, but for ALL relationships. It is the love of "one anothers" – it is meant for our personal relationships.

Literally, it is Agape love. **This Greek word for love occurs 320 times in the New Testament**

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alone! This kind of love describes our love for each other and also Jesus' love for us. (same word in John 3:16).

"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient and kind; Love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.... So now faith, hope and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love." LOVE is the greatest!

When we enter Heaven, our *faith* will become sight, our *hope* will be realized, but *love* will continue. It continues in Heaven and for all eternity. Every time we see the Lord's wounds we will love Him even more. They will be a consistent reminder that we are here (in Heaven) because the Lord absorbed the wrath of God and gave us His perfect righteousness. We will worship Him because of this.

The words in this passage that describe love are all verbs: Love is "patient", "kind", "rejoices with the truth", it "bears" "believes" "hopes" and "endures." Also, love is manifested in service to one another, not by lording it over each other.

This kind of love has a target, and it's not us. It is MEANT to be expressed!

This kind of love does not *retaliate*, Jesus being our ultimate example, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth." (Is. 53:7)

And, also from 1 Peter 3, "Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, *bless*, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing."

And Romans 12:17 reminds us to "repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all"

We are daughters of the King and have access to His unending, supernatural resources. We have access to this other worldly kind of love. A love that gives and does not take, a love that acts and does not remain stagnant. A love that forgives and does not become bitter. A love that cherishes and does not throw away. This kind of love flows from a redeemed heart. Romans 5 reminds us, "for while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person – one would dare even to die – but God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

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The apostle John learned this kind of love. His love toward his brethren flowed from a redeemed heart. He was the only apostle not martyred for his faith. He lived a long life well into old age. The Lord used him to fill a unique and patriarchal role in the early church that lasted nearly to the end of the first century and reached deep into Asia Minor. As a young man, he was brash, aggressive, passionate, zealous and personally ambitious. Love was a quality he *learned* from Christ, not something that came naturally to him. After walking a lifetime with the Lord, he became an amazing example of what *should* happen to us as we grow in Christ. Our everyday character should be marked by *this* kind of love.

He died, by most accounts, around AD 98 during the reign of Emperor Trajan. The Roman Catholic scholar Jerome (who lived in the early 4th century) says in his commentary on Galatians that the aged apostle John was so frail in his final days at Ephesus that he had to be carried into the church. One phrase was constantly on his lips: "My little children, love one another." Asked why he always said this, he replied, "It is the Lord's command, and if this alone be done, it is enough."

Is it enough? So, my sisters, how are you doing? How is the love of Christ being manifested in your relationships? What are you doing with what you have been given? This kind of love needs to permeate our every action every, single day. This kind of love should be reflected in the overall pattern of our life and insert itself in every situation. This kind of love should reflect the redeeming grace of God in our lives.

We need to always remember that one cannot have love without forgiveness. Love and Forgiveness go hand in hand. You literally cannot have one without the other.

Scripture plainly commands us to forgive in the same manner as we have received forgiveness. Ephesians 4:32 reminds us to "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ has forgiven you."

A few questions to ask yourself (when you need to forgive someone) are:

1. Do I set aside my selfishness?
2. Do I accept with grace the wrongs others have committed against me?
3. Do I demand what I think is due to me? Do I demand my rights??
4. Do I secretly keep a list of the bad things people have done to me?
5. After "forgiving" someone, do I bring it up again and again?

Recently about 2 weeks ago I had a chance to practice this. One of our neighbors has had his backyard and front yard torn up with constant construction since this past September. The day finally came when they completed the cement work on his driveway. Our little son, Noah asked to go outside to play and was only outside for about 10 minutes. Suddenly Noah burst through our front door in tears. As I was trying to figure out what was wrong, someone started pounding on my front door. It was my

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neighbor and he was NOT happy! He said in a loud voice, "You need to come NOW." I quickly got my shoes on and met him in his front yard – on his driveway. Without warning he ULEASHED on me. Noah rode his little scooter right through the freshly laid cement – which was STILL wet. For about 5 minutes, without taking a breath, this man unloaded months of anger and frustration on me, also blaming Noah "your kid" for what had happened. Every expletive was used in every possible way. Our son, David, was quietly watching from our front yard, just in case this man became violent. Needless to say, it was upsetting! When I returned home I called Alan to come home right away.

How did I handle this? We decided to resolve this as quickly as possible. I immediately prayed and asked the Lord to help me forgive this man – to not become bitter. My mind kept flooding with thoughts of Jesus and what he has done for me – and US.

Alan went to his house about 30 minutes after it happened and assured and Reassured him that we will fix his cement. Neither of us retaliated against him. And the next morning, I made him cookies, which Alan delivered with a note from us. He was immediately disarmed and instantly an opportunity was opened for the gospel and a relationship.

Why do I tell you this story? Galatians 6:10 reminds us, "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and *especially* to those who are of the household of faith." As believers, our entire lives should be marked by service to others, however, our love for fellow believers is the marker of our love for God. This should be our attitude in the Church. If I forgive my neighbor quickly, how am I doing with my relationships in the Church? We should move heaven and earth to make sure we pursue THIS kind of forgiveness in the Church.

*And, by the way, this should always be done in person, not through text or email.

Scripture is very clear that God despises an unforgiving spirit. As God's children, we are to mirror His character.

We are reminded of this in Colossians 3:12-13, "As those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against any one; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you."

Having an unforgiving spirit also tarnishes our witness to a watching world. It is important to remember that forgiveness IS a manifestation of love.

Jesus reminds us in John 13:34-35, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

I would challenge you to not let another day go by without both *seeking* and also *granting* this kind of love and forgiveness to the one who has wronged you or you have wronged.

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We are reminded in Eph. 4 to “Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.”

And from James 1, “let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.”

This is truly what “bound together by love looks like.” It is not just a fancy Bible phrase, but it's a *lifestyle* – a way of life.

My prayer for us today is that BECAUSE we are well acquainted with Jesus' love we are giving it out to each other. And BECAUSE we have tasted his forgiveness we are forgiving people. My prayer for us is that we REDEEM every opportunity for the sake of love and forgiveness.

Withholding love and forgiveness is sin, plain and simple. James 4:17 reminds us that “whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, to him it is sin.” To HER it is sin!

Finally, I will leave you with Jesus' words from John 15:

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you.”

Let's pray.

*Brooke Lenz
Women's Ministry
Tri-City Bible Church*

May 19, 2018