

“Do you love me?”

By Martin Huburn – 21/02/2014

Key Scripture

Jesus asks Peter “Do you love me?”

Objective

To encourage us to demonstrate the agapao of Jesus in our lives.

Good morning my adelphoi, If I were to ask you all to give me your definition of love, I’m sure there would be lots of different opinions of love based on the persons experience and understanding.

As we are about to find out, love is the most important characteristic of a Christian. But before I get into my sermon, I wanted to share with you an article I read recently about a woman and man who had encountered a break up in their engagement. After a couple of months, Marie realised how much her ex fiancé meant to her, here is the letter she wrote: -

Dearest Jimmy,

No words could ever express the great unhappiness I've felt since breaking our engagement. Please say you'll take me back. No one could ever take your place in my heart, so please forgive me. I love you, I love you, I love you! Yours forever, Marie.

P.S., And congratulations on willing the lottery.

So frequently there are conditions or a hidden agenda attached to love. Are we like this?

I wanted us to look at 3 key points today,

- 1) What is your relationship with Jesus like?**
- 2) What about your relationship with your church family?**
- 3) Do you love the world enough to share the gospel with them?**

I think we need to understand what the world thinks love is. The oxford dictionary gives us 2 definitions: -

1) a strong feeling of affection – sexual or platonic.

2) a great interest and pleasure in something.

The 2 definitions here are based on the physical nature of an emotion.

But what about the spiritual?

I’m sure if I ask if we love Jesus, we would all say yes. But what is our relationship with Christ like? Are we walking with Him hand in hand or are we following from a distance?

How is our relationship with Christ?

I want us to look at the conversation between Jesus and Peter after the Lord’s resurrection. But I think we need a dynamic picture first.

Peter had become very confident of his firm friendship with Jesus, unfortunately during the Passover feast, a prideful debate broke out regarding who loves Jesus the most. Peter believed that he Loved Jesus more than the other disciples. In Luke 22: 31 – 34, **Jesus tells Peter that Satan wants to split the disciples up, He mentions Peter is going to desert Him but will return to strengthen Jesus disciples.**

Peter states that he’s ready to follow Jesus to prison. But Jesus brings the eager Peter back to earth, He tells Peter that before the cock crows, he will deny knowing Jesus 3 times.

It’s interesting how much pride had entered the minds of the disciples.

Like Peter, do we get over confident in our relationship with Jesus?

In Luke 22: 54 – 62, Jesus had been seized and He was brought to **the high priest's house and Peter was following at a distance. This is where Peter denied knowing the Lord three times. Luke's gospel tells us that The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times."** ⁶² And he went out and wept bitterly.

It's difficult to demonstrate love when the heat is on. Peter was willing to follow Jesus but only from a safe distance. Peter panicked, I think he thought that had he admitted to being a disciple of Christ he would have faced the same punishment as The Lord.

I don't believe that this would have happened. When John, The Lord's mother -Mary and Mary Magdalene followed Christ all the way to the cross, they were never persecuted. Sometimes we put obstacles in our way that aren't necessarily there. And this is what can happen when we are not walking hand in hand with the Lord, we lose comfort and trust in His protection.

If Peter denied Jesus, did he really love Jesus?

I believe that he loved Jesus in a way we'll never understand. Initially his love had conditions attached but when Peter made eye contact with the Lord, I believe he realised at that point in time, he had just betrayed not just his best friend but his Christ and Messiah.

This is the man that left everything he owned to follow Jesus. He loved Him that much, he drew his sword at Gethsemane to defend Jesus even though there were 100's of people there to arrest Jesus. And at Galilee, Peter was that excited that Jesus was there, the last time He saw The Lord, he had denied Him 3 times and remembered the look he received from the Lord.

I guess what I'm trying to say here is that Peter made a mistake and repented.

Paul tells the church in Philippi in Philippians 3: 12 - 14

¹² Not that I have already obtained *it* or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. ¹³ Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul tells us, when we make mistakes, we can't linger over it we need to repent and press on toward what lies ahead.

Just as Jesus predicted, Peter would come back and be reconciled, and strengthen the flock.

John 21: 4 – 8, the disciples had returned to their boat and had gone fishing, **Just after daybreak, Jesus appeared, but the disciples did not know that it was Him. After the miraculous catch of fish, John realised it was Jesus and said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on some clothes, for he was naked, and jumped into the sea, not even waiting for the boat to moor.**

Then we have this beautiful dialogue between Jesus and Peter in John 21: 15 – 17

¹⁵ When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

**"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."
Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."**

**¹⁶ Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"
He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."**

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

¹⁷The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

Why Did Jesus ask Peter 3 times?

Is it a coincidence that 3 times Peter denied knowing Christ and 3 times Jesus asks Peter if he loved Him. Well I think it needed Jesus to ask 3 times for the message to sink in. In this passage there are 2 Forms of love being referred to.

Peter's replies with the term 'Phileo'.

We have the word Philadelphia, the city, not the cheese, which is known as the city of brotherly love. It's taken from the two Greek words 'Phileo' = love and 'adelphos' = brother. Phileo is the type of love we would demonstrate for our family. It's the affectionate love.

The second term for love is the Greek word 'agapao', which comes from the Greek word 'agape' which means to give alms/charity. To give love without condition.

Ok so let's put this passage into context,

John 21: 15 – 17

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Peter had taken a humble approach, probably recalling the prideful boast of how he claimed he would follow Jesus to prison.

Jesus re-commissions Peter, "Feed my sheep", he was assigned the role of a shepherd.

How is our relationship with our brethren?

It isn't just our relationship with Jesus that needs to be right, we have a responsibility to develop and strengthen our relationships with our church family. What is our relationship like with our brethren?

Are we looking out for their spiritual wellbeing?

What did Jesus mean when He said to Peter – "Take care of my sheep"? and "Feed my sheep"?

Philippians 2: 1 - 4

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish

ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Paul tells the church in Philippi that we have a responsibility to look after the spiritual needs and welfare of the congregation before our own interests.

In Ecclesiastes 4: 9 – 10, Solomon says

⁹Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labour:

¹⁰If either of them falls down, one can help the other up.

But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.

This is why it so important to be around our church family, if we try and do things on our own there is no one there to help us when we fall. If we are surrounded by our brethren we will have someone to help us when we fall.

When I was in my teens a friend of mine asked me, "If we got jumped right now, what would you do?" I said "I'd run like as fast as I could." He said "Well I'm glad I can count on you to look out for me."

The answer he was looking for was stick around and look out for him.

See, if we love one another, we would look out for one another without question, we have a responsibility to look out for their spiritual health and safety.

And unfortunately sometimes this means discipline.

Proverbs 9:8

⁸A scoffer who is rebuked will only hate you;

the wise, when rebuked, will love you.

No one likes to be scolded or told off, but sometimes we need direction. We don't realise what we are doing could be tarnishing the reputation of the church or our salvation may be in danger.

Two battleships assigned to the training squadron had been at sea on manoeuvres in heavy weather for several days. I was serving on the lead battleship and was on watch on the bridge as night fell. The visibility was poor with patchy fog, so the captain remained on the bridge keeping an eye on all activities.

Shortly after dark, the lookout on the wing reported, "Light, bearing on the starboard bow."

"Is it steady or moving astern?" the captain called out.

The lookout replied, "Steady, Captain," which meant we were on a dangerous collision course with that ship.

The captain then called to the signalman, "Signal that ship: 'We are on a collision course, advise you change course twenty degrees.'"

Back came the signal, "Advisable for you to change course twenty degrees."

The captain said, "Send: 'I'm a captain, change course twenty degrees.'"

"I'm a seaman second-class," came the reply. "You had better change course twenty degrees."

By that time the captain was furious. He spat out, "Send: 'I'm a battleship. Change course twenty degrees.'"

Back came the flashing light, "I'm a lighthouse."

We changed course.

And just like this, if a friend truly loves us, they will point out the dangers. And we need to understand that our brothers and sisters are looking out for us because they love us and we don't want to see us fall away from God.

Hebrews 3: 12 – 13

¹²Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. ¹³But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

The Hebrew writer tells us to encourage one another daily so that our hearts don't harden.

We have a responsibility to look out for one another and encourage each other daily to help us to remain faithful.

What are we doing to encourage one another?

Forty thousand fans were on hand in the Oakland stadium when Rickey Henderson tied Lou Brock's career stolen base record. According to *USA Today* Lou, who had left baseball in 1979, had followed Henderson's career and was excited about his success. Realizing that Rickey would set a new record, Brock said, "I'll be there. Do you think I'm going to miss it now? Rickey did in 12 years what took me 19. He's amazing." Even though it was his record being broken he was cheering on his baseball cohort.

We also need to be treating one another equally.

I have a friend in the USA, he was a regular attendee at his local congregation and always tried his best to give of himself to serving the church, but he was always given a hard time because he couldn't do as much as other members, he couldn't put as much in the offering and his family his wasn't very faithful.

He never asked the church for anything but when his father passed away, he turned to the church for help and they said they couldn't help him, yet a friend of his, who always put in the collection plate and his dad was a deacon of the church went to the church for need of something un-necessary, on the same day and the church assisted him.

James warns us about giving preferential treatment in James 2: 1- 5

¹My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. ²Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. ³If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," ⁴ have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

⁵Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?

Just as Jesus said in Luke 6, it's easy to love those that love us. We need to demonstrate love to all people, even people we don't get on with.

I'm not saying we have to be best friends with everyone in the church but we should love them and look out for their physical wellbeing.

James continues in James 2: 14 – 18

¹⁴What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? ¹⁵Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

¹⁸ But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds.

Faith and deeds demonstrate our faith and belief in Christ, and John tells us that and faith and deeds working hand in hand is a demonstration of love.

1 John 3: 16 – 18

¹⁶ We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. ¹⁷ But whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

John tells us that we can say “We love” as much as we want but Sincere love is displayed in our actions.

In Acts 2: 44 – 47, we can see love at work in the early church.

⁴⁴ All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵ they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

See this type of love has no conditions attached, it’s the application of Love. Wanting to do the right thing with no hidden motives or looking to receive anything in return. It’s the demonstration of selflessness. Agape – alms giving without question.

What is our relationship like with non-Christians?

And not just to our brethren, are we demonstrating the Love of Jesus to all people regardless of their background?

There are many people in the world with bad reputations that are difficult to love.

Luke 5: 27 - 31

Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. “Follow me,” Jesus said to him, ²⁸ and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.

²⁹ Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. ³⁰ But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?”

³¹ Jesus answered them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Even though some people are difficult to love, Jesus puts appearance and reputation behind them. Jesus came to save sinners.

See, I was one of these unlovable rogues, but the grace of Jesus saw through my reputation. I was called to repent and turn away from my worldly ways.

Jesus said in John 3: 16

For God so loved the world, He sent His only begotten son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but receive everlasting life.

For God so loved “the world” – not just you and me, this includes everyone; Fat or thin, tall or short, rich or poor. Everyone, which is reinforced in the Great commission

Jesus also tells us in Mark 16: 15 – 16

¹⁵ “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

We need to share the gospel, the story of love with all creation, regardless of their background or where they come from.

Have you seen the film the sixth sense? Where the kid turns round to Bruce Willis and tells him, “I see dead people.”

Look out the window my adelphoi, I see dead people, lost souls, Souls in desperate need of saving. See they don't know the danger that faces them, but we do!

Are we honestly going to let them perish because we couldn't find it within ourselves to love their souls?

Applications

1) Our relationship with Jesus

We have to walk hand in hand with Jesus and not follow from a distance otherwise we lose the trust and protection we find in Him

2) Our relationship with your church family

We have a responsibility to look out for one another.

We need to encourage one another daily

We need to treat one another equally

3) Our relationship with non-Christians

God loves all people and we have the responsibility to share the gospel and show them the way to salvation, regardless of background and reputation.

Newspaper columnist George Crane tells of a wife who came into his office full of hatred toward her husband. "I do not only want to get rid of him, I want to get even. Before I divorce him, I want to hurt him as much as he has me."

Dr. Crane suggested an ingenious plan "Go home and act as if you really love your husband. Tell him how much he means to you. Praise him for every decent trait. Go out of your way to be as kind, considerate, and generous as possible. Spare no efforts to please him, to enjoy him. Make him believe you love him. After you've convinced him of your undying love and that you cannot live without him, then drop the bomb. Tell him that you're getting a divorce. That will really hurt him." With revenge in her eyes, she smiled and exclaimed, "Beautiful, beautiful. Will he ever be surprised!" And she did it with enthusiasm. Acting "as if." For two months she showed love, kindness, listening, giving, reinforcing, sharing. When she didn't return, Crane called. "Are you ready now to go through with the divorce?" "Divorce?" she exclaimed. "Never! I discovered I really do love him." Her actions had changed her feelings. Motion resulted in emotion. The ability to love is established not so much by fervent promise as often repeated deeds.

J. Allan Petersen.

And just like this woman here, we need motion to create emotion, we are never going to love anyone if we don't make an effort to love them. We must share the same mindset as Christ, let us love the whole world. See, Jesus is having an intimate conversation with each of us today and He is asking all of us individually, “Do you love me?”

Let's all demonstrate our love for Jesus to everyone we come in contact with.