

# Value 3 - Cultivating Love For Others - The Church

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     What a privilege we have to break bread together and to stop and think about what it means! and to be reminded through such a simple thing that Jesus, who called himself the bread of life, gave himself so we could have new life. His body was broken so that we could have new life.

And then his blood was shed for us. We have that reminder in the cup. We do that together so we remember, so we won't forget how great a salvation we have. Last week, we talked about cultivating love for God. This is in its essence how we do that.

As we recognize how deeply we've been loved, we then reciprocate back to God and offers love back to Him, which is going to be the topic of our conversation this morning and next week and the following weeks as we continue in the series of our mission and values. So, there's a couple things I want to clarify. First of all, John and Tim and I had a conversation and we made a tweak to our mission statement. We took out a word which makes, we were making it that much easier to memorize.

You're welcome. So, the revised mission statement, it says, we exist to glorify God, walking closely with Him, striving together to become more like Jesus every day. That's what we want to be about. And it was rightly pointed out that when we were saying we exist to glorify God by walking with Him, it seemed like we were narrowing the scope. And so, we wanted to really make it clear that everything we do is to the end of glorifying God, to point to Him and all that He's done for us.

And the bread and the cup remind us why He deserves all that glory. So, that's one clarification. The other thing I want to clarify is from a sermon a couple weeks ago when I was talking about our mission. Hang on one second. John, could you hand me my water? Thank you. I can't go the distance without my bottle, just like my grandson, Jesse. So, a few weeks ago, we talked about the mission. We talked about this statement. And at the end of the sermon, I very strongly made the statement that if we embrace this idea, we're going to see God move. We're going to see God answer prayer. We're going to see God working in us, building us to be more like Christ, and we're going to grow. And several people stopped me over the last couple weeks and said, what are you pastors doing? Are we all of a sudden being about numerical growth? Are we becoming one of those churches where it's all about getting more bodies in the sanctuary? I want to make something really clear. Absolutely, unequivocally, no. As a matter of fact, I think I can boldly speak for Tim and John and myself, all three. We don't care about numbers.

[ 2 : 59 ] We literally don't care how many people are here. What we do care about is that for each one of you to live this out, to walk closely with Jesus through the good and the bad in life, because we have them both, to strive together to become more like Jesus every day. Now, am I backing away from that statement I made two or three weeks ago? No. It's just that what sounded like a goal, we're going to grow, was actually a warning. Because if you take a plant and give it good soil, and it's in the appropriate type of light, and it gets the nutrients it needs, it grows, and it bears fruit. And I believe that as each one of us takes this mission statement seriously, our body is going to grow. We are going to see people come to Christ. But that's not our goal. I want to make that absolutely clear. Our goal is to walk more closely with Jesus ourselves, and together as a body. I hope that difference makes sense. As a side note, I can't tell you how helpful it is for you to come to me or to talk to Pastor Tim or Pastor John or Pastor Jack and say, hey, something was said from the front I just don't understand, or I don't agree with. So we can have an opportunity to clarify what was said.

That does us a great service, does you a great service, and I can tell you from experience, if you have a question, and you exercise a boldness to ask for clarification, there's 10 other people who had the same question. So it's a good opportunity for us to know something that we didn't communicate well.

So you can help the entire body by questioning what we say from the front, okay? So one other order of business, then we're going to get down to God's Word.

When I was a young man years ago, our church out in Colorado had a daycare center that met in the basement. And one of the elders who was gifted in evangelism had this idea of, and he was also a great dad, we're going to offer a parenting class to the parents of these children who were in the daycare center. And he presented to the church in a two-fold way. Number one, parents, don't kid yourselves, you could probably just benefit from a parenting class. And number two, this is an opportunity to develop relationships with the people who come to this daycare center and have no connection with the church, which was essentially every family that was involved at the daycare center.

They didn't come on Sunday mornings. And so fast forward a couple of months, and the two elders that were involved in this parenting class, Doyle and Mike, it went exactly like they expected.

[ 5 : 54 ] They had great reception from the parents at the daycare center, and they were overwhelmed with people asking for more information, not just about parenting, but biblical parenting.

But then the train went off the rails. Nobody from the church went to that parenting class. And it ended up being canceled because the demand was so overwhelming to Doyle and Mike, both of whom had full-time jobs, that they just could not shoulder the burden that came along with that class. And I'll never forget the message that Doyle gave to the church, calling them out for failing an opportunity to have an opportunity to share the gospel gift-wrapped and placed in their lap, and to recognize the need. And also, parents, you can use some coaching, so don't kid yourselves.

But he was really angry because the church missed an opportunity. Now, I'm not saying that about us. What I want to do, though, is get ahead of that possibility. This community garden is not just about us making more efficient use, more effective use of the property that God has entrusted to us.

It's not giving Joe and Jim and others who have a gardening ability an opportunity to grab more dirt. Because one thing I know about gardeners, they always want more, more ground to till. It's weird.

Kara just loves dirt under her fingernails. I think there's something wrong there. But you all know gardeners. That's not what this is about. As Joe and I talked, we ran into each other yesterday at a restaurant. As we have opportunity to talk, there are people in the city government, in the county government, in the state government, downtown that are doing community gardens, none of whom know the Lord that want to be involved and help us do it. Because they see the value of taking acres of grass that contribute nothing and transforming that into gardens that yield fruit.

[ 8 : 01 ] And that teaches people how to draw fruit out of the soil. And it's an opportunity for us, brothers and sisters, to plant seeds in the soils of people's hearts.

To show them tangibly what it means to follow Jesus. There is no better illustration of life than a garden. And I want to challenge you to get involved. Even if you're like me, and almost nothing about gardening is appealing except eating the fresh fruit that somebody else has grown.

Get involved. But get involved not just for gardening sake. Look for opportunities for relationship.

Cultivate those opportunities and see what happens. We're going to talk more about that next week. But I want to plant that seed in your mind. That this is an opportunity to cultivate people and introduce them to Jesus. Not just to cultivate soil and produce tomatoes and green beans and flowers.

That make sense? Let's pray together and then we're going to get into God's word. Lord, thank you that we have your word. That you are the living word. The word became flesh.

[ 9 : 18 ] It lived among us. You showed us how to live as a human being in the world. And God, I pray that as we talk about this very, very important topic of cultivating love for others, that we would own it. That we would recognize this is the primary means that you use to bring glory to yourself as we live out our lives, shoulder to shoulder, just going through the mess and the blessings of life.

God, help us to take to heart this message. I pray, Holy Spirit, that you would speak into our lives, to open our eyes to the needs around us and the opportunities to share the love of Christ with the people around us. God, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

So, Martha, if you could go back to the title slide, I want to point something out to you. So, behind the words is a picture of a basin and a cloth. We're going to be spending some time, and you can turn there while I'm talking. We're going to be spending time this morning in John 13.

John 13 opens with Jesus washing the disciples' feet, and that's what this is a reminder of. Jesus, at the beginning of what's called the upper room discourse, John chapters 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17, John opens that. Jesus opened that long conversation and dinner. He instituted the Lord's Supper during that dinner. He opens with this process of foot washing. And you're going to see this morning, that's critically important to our understanding of what it means for us to relate within the body of Christ and understand each other. So, as we've been talking about mission, we talked about that, our values. We want to be people who follow Christ. We have chosen to put ourselves as apprentices to Jesus. We want to cultivate love for God because He is worth loving. And we learned last week that's the part of everything that we do. We want to see that love grow. We want to see it expand. And we do that how? By recognizing how deeply we have been loved by God Himself. And the more we enter into that love that He's giving to us, we can't help but love Him in return. He actually made us to reciprocate and give back what's poured into us. So, we want to be cultivating that love for God. And the key word that has to do with cultivating love is intimacy. It's this bonding between us and God. And now we're going to see in the next two weeks of cultivating love for others is building bonds of relational closeness between us, which for some of you feels really scary. But that's what we're being called to are into. So, we're cultivating love for God. This morning, we're going to be talking about cultivating love for others. I've been thinking a lot about, well, actually, John 13, 34, and 35 is one of a few passages in the Bible that shaped who I am as a Christian. Way back in 1983, I was going into my senior year of high school. I was challenged by a guy who was mentoring me to start a Bible study at our high school. And I took the challenge, very skeptical that it would work, very aware of my own shortcomings. And my brother Joe and I sat down and we talked over, what do we want this group to look like? And John 13, 34, and 35 came to the front. You're turned there in your Bibles. Let's read that real quick. John 13, 34, and 35, a new commandment I give to you that you love one another, even as I have loved you that you also love one another. By this, all men will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another. And we took that passage and that became our marching orders as this group of people. There were six of us that met in my basement that first time.

And God did miracles as a bunch of loud, obnoxious high school students decided that we're going to show people what love really looks like and we're going to own it. And I continued, this has always shaped my thinking. But in the last couple of years, a few words stuck out in my mind in verse 34, a new commandment I give to you. I thought, but this isn't a new commandment. Because just a few days earlier, actually earlier that day, Jesus was in the temple courtyard and a Pharisee came to him and said, what is the greatest commandment? We studied this last week. And Jesus said the greatest commandment in the law is love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

[ 14 : 09 ] And the second most important is love your neighbor as yourself. Upon these two hang all the law and the prophets. So how is this a new command? Well, it's a new command in three ways. First of all, you know, it's great when I move ahead in my notes. Here it is. How is there a new command?

First of all, the standard has changed. In Leviticus 19, love your neighbor as yourself, it's I look at myself, what makes me feel loved? What makes me feel valued? And I use that as kind of the standard of how I love you. What makes me feel loved? Do that. But Jesus said, as I have loved you. So it's a higher standard of expectation. But I thought, but that's not really revolutionary to call it new. That sounds more like a refinement. But then I noticed he changed the audience.

Love your neighbor as yourself. Do you remember in another scene, similar dialogue, the Pharisee says back to Jesus, well, who's my neighbor? And essentially what Jesus said was, everybody's your neighbor. Because we heard the story, you know this parable, the story of the Samaritan, the good Samaritan, who cared for somebody who should have been their enemy. And he went out of his way, paid out of his own pocket to care for that man. But Jesus says, love one another. Well, who's the one another? It's the guys in the room. It's the people who have chosen to follow Jesus. The audience shrinks in John 13, 34, and 35. And then the other way it changes is, what does that love look like? How is it practiced?

So it's all, it's a fundamental shift in what it means to love. Now, does that invalidate love your neighbor as yourself? Absolutely not. We're going to spend all of our time next week on that command. But what I think happens is Jesus is actually teaching over the course of the three and a half years of ministry that there are two tiers of people that we're obligated to.

The first tier is the body of Christ. We are to love one another. And then the second tier is everybody else. And make no mistake, the bar is set very, very high for both.

[ 17 : 00 ] But we love most of all here. And what's the outcome? By this, all men will know that you are my disciples. This is the fundamental identifier of our identity, is how we love one another.

That's the test, is how do we love one another? And that's what we're going to spend the rest of our time talking about this morning, is how do we love one another? How do we demonstrate that? So, another mistake I made over the years of looking at this verse is I looked at it from the perspective of somebody who is on the far side of the cross. So, for me, the cross was in the past. So, when Jesus said, love as I have loved you, I interpreted that through the lens of 1 John 3.16. Turn there in your Bibles real quick. And I've got a slide here if you don't want to take the time. 1 John 3.16 says, by this we know what love is. Actually, I better turn there rather than try to quote it. Bear with me a second.

1 John 3.16. We know love by this that He, Jesus, laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. For who? For the brethren. There's a higher standard in the body of Christ. So, my mistake was I would read Jesus' words in the Upper Room Discourse the day before the crucifixion, but interpret it and assume that the disciples interpreted it with the perspective of what John wrote years after the crucifixion, we know what love is by Jesus' death on the cross. But there's a problem. What did we beat to death is one of the themes of our Mark series. The disciples didn't get it. Remember that? They didn't understand what... First of all, they didn't accept that Jesus was going to die. They didn't understand that Jesus was going to die for them, and they still didn't yet understand it. So, when Jesus said to them in the Upper Room the day before His death, love as I have loved you, what would they be thinking about? I'm glad you asked. Back to John 13.

We're going to read the first 17 verses of John 13. 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. During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him, 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, got up from supper, and laid aside His garments, and taking a towel, He girded Himself. Quick note, in my Bible, I underline the word knowing. John highlights that. Jesus knew His time had come. Jesus knew that the Father had given all things into His hands. Jesus' understanding of His own identity empowered His action that's about to come next. Your identity in Christ, who you are in Jesus as a follower of the

Son of God, as a follower of the one who died on the cross for you, as a follower of the one who said, all authority has been given to me in heaven and earth. Go, therefore. Know that. Own it. Allow it to sink into your brain, because that's what gives you authority to do really scary things I'm going to talk about this week and next week.

[ 21 : 06 ] Things that feel scary, but you have authority to go forward. Know your identity, just as Jesus did. So, Jesus lays aside His clothes, puts an apron on, and the disciples are going, what are you doing? It doesn't say that in the Bible, but I'm pretty sure it's a safe assumption.

Then He poured water into the basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with a towel with which He was girded. There's no lower place. Jesus was stooping and washing their feet. So, they're above Him. Jesus is below them. This is the activity of a servant.

And probably in the pecking order of servants, the lowest of the low servants was the one who stood to wash the guest's feet. The chief steward, no, no, no, I don't do that. You do that.

And so, Jesus took that position. So, He came to Simon Peter, this is verse 6. He said to him, Lord, do you wash my feet? What are you doing? Jesus answered and said to him, what I do is, you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter. You'll understand later. Peter said to Him, never shall you wash my feet, because Peter thinks he's exalting the Lord by refusing to be served. Jesus answered him, if I do not wash you, you have no part with me. Wow. If you don't let, this is what Jesus was saying to Peter, if you don't let me serve you, you're not one of mine.

Think about that. That's a strong rebuke. Peter's like a specialist in getting smashed in the head. That's a strong rebuke. If you don't let me wash your feet, there's the door. Let me serve you.

[ 23 : 12 ] Simon Peter, being a master of overcompensating, said to Him, Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head. Of course, Peter's saying, Lord, I really love you, so just baptize me.

Jesus said to him, he who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean. You are clean, but not all of you. Of course, He's referring to Judas. For He knew the one who was betraying Him, for this reason He said, not all of you are clean. 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?

You call me teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. I'm your teacher, I'm your master, you're my apprentices. If I then, the Lord and the teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I give you an example that you also should do as I did to you. 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. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. We're to wash one another's feet. We're to stoop and serve. We studied that during the Mark series. The greatest among you will be your servant. We should be stumbling over ourselves to look for ways to serve each other.

That's what Jesus was saying, and that's what the disciples would have been thinking about when Jesus said at the end of the chapter, of course, this wouldn't be written for something like 80 years, but you get my point, a new commandment, I give to you that you love one another even as I have loved you. They immediately go, oh, He washed my feet. We think of the cross, 1 John 3.16.

The disciples would have looked just maybe an hour, if even that long back, Jesus washed my feet. That's what love looks like. And then from there, perhaps, they would have thought back to Matthew 4.19. Remember the scene? Jesus was being crowded at the beach, and so He said to Peter, hey, can I use your boat? He got in the boat. Peter probably rode back a little bit away from the shore so that Jesus could speak to the whole crowd without being pressed. And then after the sermon was given, Jesus repaid Peter by saying, you know what? How was your fishing last night? Peter said, oh, it was terrible. Didn't get anything. Nothing was biting. All right, go out into the water.

[ 25 : 54 ] And then, of course, Jesus gives him this bumper crop of fish that instead of going to bed like fish normally do, we're waiting to be caught and eaten because God provided. So, Peter would have thought back to that. And what did Jesus say next? Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. We talked about that last week or two weeks ago. Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And so, Peter would be thinking, oh, that's what it means to love like Jesus loved, to be brought into an apprenticeship, to follow, to invite people to follow me as I follow Jesus, which, by the way, is what Paul told the Philippian church. Follow my example as I follow Christ. And frankly, that's my challenge to you. Follow my example. Follow Pastor Tim's example, Pastor John, Pastor Jack, and others in our community that have been walking with Jesus for a long time. Follow our example as we follow Christ.

So, that's a way of seeing the love of God. But wait, there's more as they're thinking back. Jesus walked with them all over Judea. We looked at the maps. I mean, two and a half weeks was the hike from the Mount of Transfiguration down to the temple. So, Jesus could give them concentrated time, which was another way He showed love. He talked to them. He challenged them. He got them thinking. He revealed Himself to them. Peter would have thought, oh, so that's it too.

That's what this love looks like, is to follow in Jesus' footsteps, to enter into relationship with people that I'm supposed to be loving in the body of Christ. He trained them. In a few weeks, we're going to be talking about making disciples. The challenge I'm going to give you, give you a little foretaste, is I don't care where you are in your relationship with Jesus.

How long you've been with God, how skilled you are in the Bible, or how confident you are, how you feel about prayer. There's somebody who knows a little bit less than you. Take them as your disciple. Because that's the ultimate expression of love, is to train them, give them what you've received. And as you get more, give more. As you get more, give more.

That's what Jesus was doing. So, Peter's thinking, oh, this is love. He corrected them, kind of harshly. Get behind me, Satan.

[ 28 : 28 ] Sometimes we give harsh words in love. That's speaking the truth in love, which is in our core passage, Ephesians chapter 4. He fed them. He put them in challenging spots. I love it in John chapter 6.

One of the episodes where Jesus feeds the crowd, Jesus says to the disciples, hey, these people are hungry. You need to feed them. Now, John puts an editorial comment after Jesus' words. Hey, you guys need to feed them. Jesus, knowing what he was about to do, Jesus was setting them up to see how he could provide and how God could work.

That's how we grow. We step into harder spots. As we're meeting together, we should be challenging each other to push further into our relationship with Christ, to experience the challenge of knowing God, and to discover that everything we learn about God is more than we could have imagined.

And so, we can look back and say, wow, I know more than I did yesterday, but we can look forward knowing, but there's more. There's always more. And as we enter into love with each other, that's what we should be doing. That's what Jesus did with the disciples. So, all this stuff is mixed in with loving as Jesus loved. He modeled for them. He cared for them. He just loved them every step of the way. He gave them affection. He had a nickname for James and John, the Sons of Thunder. I'm sure they were loud and boisterous guys. But a nickname says, I love you. I see you. That's the relationship that Peter would have been thinking about when he heard Jesus say, as I have loved you, so love one another. That's the picture that would have been in his mind. So, what I want to submit to you is that John 13, 34 and 35 tells us what we should do. It gives us an idea of different ways that we can love one another. We love each other with the substance of what we have, our money, our time, our energy, our gifts. And we should do it freely, which is 1 John 3, 16.

1 John 3, 16, being on the other side of the cross, now John is writing as someone who knows what that means. Love as I have loved you. Looking back to the cross gives us a whole new understanding.

[ 31 : 14 ] And I think what we see there is the scope, how big, how great a sacrifice we should be willing to make for one another. What did John say? Let's go back there. 1 John 3, 16. I should have put a bookmark there. We know love by this. So, this is the definitive answer to the question, what is love?

We know love by this that he, Jesus, laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. Brothers and sisters, we have got to face the implications of what this says, of what this means. To lay down our lives for one another. What does that mean? And how do we do that?

When we were in Seattle, Kara and I led a small group that was, it was an interesting group because everybody in that group was neck deep, at least, in ministry. With this older couple that were literally driving around the country, connecting with Eddie's family to share the gospel one by one by one by one. Because Eddie had been a kind of a harsh guy when he was younger. And he recognized that that's not the way to win people to Christ. So, he was seeking out people from all the way back to high school. He's 85 years old. Going back to high school, cousins, second cousins. Eddie was an evangelist.

His wife, Karen, right there along with him, loving the Lord. And we had a couple of students from Kenya that were studying. She was getting her second doctorate.

Amazing woman. Second doctorate in global health to be able to go back to Kenya and minister to people there. Godly couple who loved the Lord. And we had a young woman, Alyssa, who was running an intervarsity chapter at University of Washington. And Alyssa is a focal point of the story I'm telling you.

[ 33 : 33 ] Alyssa had someone in her Bible study group that was what we like to call an EGR, extra grace required. We try not to be that person. It's okay to be that person. But Alyssa was drowning because she could not. This girl was seeking her out in class, between classes, in meals, middle of the night.

Just need, need, need, need, need. And Alyssa was overwhelmed. And I was actually teaching on this. And she burst into tears and said, I can't do it. This woman is pulling more out of me than I've got to give.

How am I going to do that? Well, the answer is, we don't pull back from people who are extra grace required, because they have needs.

And someday, the truth is, we may be that person. The solution to the problem is that we are a community of saints.

It's not somebody who's on staff at the church or someone who's been anointed as a pastor or a deacon to do these responsibilities.

[ 34 : 44 ] If you're in Christ, you're part of the team. As a matter of fact, you're the front lines of the team. And for Alyssa, our group of veteran servants said to her, you need to have people who are walking with you, who are helping you love this girl.

You need to offload some of that responsibility, even if she's reluctant, and make it a community effort to love her. That's what we've got to do. Because it can be overwhelming, but it doesn't change the fact.

The bar is the cross. That's the way we love one another. As we love one another in that way, people will see and go, I want some of that.

I want to be a part of a body of people who loves each other that well. It goes back to that song I played, or I read the lyrics to you weeks ago, months ago, the theme song from Cheers.

That we're a place where everybody knows your name. Everybody's glad you came. But we see that all of our problems are the same. And we miss each other when we're not here. We need to be that.

[ 35 : 54 ] We need to be a small town, which is not an American way of doing things. We need to be in each other's business, brothers and sisters. And I don't know about you, but I'm not too cool with that.

I don't want you to know my dirty laundry. We have to be that vulnerable. We have to. If we're going to love each other well. Carol and I attended a church where the elders had this misunderstanding that they had to model what it meant to be truly trusting Jesus.

And essentially what they inadvertently taught us was, if you're in Jesus, you're always walking with a smile and every day is awesome. So you know what that taught the church?

Well, if I've got a problem, something's wrong with me. That's not healthy. As a matter of fact, that church suffered some really major sin problems because of people cracking under the pressure of trying to live a lie.

This has to be a safe place. Where we can be vulnerable. Where we can say life is hard. Where we can say I'm really angry with God.

[ 37 : 07 ] Or we can say I'm hurting. Or I'm confused. We've got to be able to do that for each other. To give each other the grace to live that out.

Because we know. John talked about him this morning. We have people that are in that vulnerable spot. We have got to be supporting each other.

Praying for each other. Aggressively. Asking how can I serve you. I'll tell you a little secret. The unspoken prayer request that John mentioned.

The couple with the son who was struggling. That's Kara and I. Early this afternoon, I'm headed to Chicago to fly to Colorado to spend some time with my son who's really in a dark place.

But you know what I know? I've got a body that loves me. And I want you to see that too. That you've got a body who loves you.

[ 38 : 12 ] I get stopped every week. By people asking me how they can pray for us. For Kayla and Manny. The Blasens.

The prayers for them. For Dorian and Harold and their family. Big stuff. But there's also little stuff. We have got to have that type of vulnerability.

To love each other. To step into it. Now I want to tell you the other side of it. And we're going to close with this. We have to be vulnerable in the sense that we need to be willing to let people see where we're hurting.

So we can be served. But we need to be bold to ask people where we can serve them. And where we can help them. Another stupid American idiosyncrasy.

Is we feel that we're intruding. If we step up to somebody and say. You know what? You look down. Are you okay? Is everything alright? I loved it.

[ 39 : 09 ] About a month ago. Harold stopped me and said. You know what? You looked really worn out last week. You doing alright? We got to know each other well enough. That we can see that contrast.

You look down. Oh man. You are obviously excited about something. What's going on? And be courageous enough. To ask that question. We rejoice with those who rejoice.

We weep with those who weep. It says that in Romans 12. Are you doing that? That's where the rubber meets the road. In this relationship with Christ. Christ. That's loving as Jesus loved.

Both John 13, 34 and 35. And 1 John 3, 16. And we need to cultivate that love. And I'll tell you what's going to happen. As we do that. It's really interesting.

So I've been talking the last few weeks about. Paul's prayer in Colossians 1, 9. To be filled with the knowledge of the will of God. There are six or seven different outcomes. In the verses that follow.

[ 40 : 11 ] When we're following the will of God. We walk worthy of His calling. We get God's approval. When we live that way.

We bear fruit in every good work. And here's the best part in my mind. We get to know God better. As you serve this body. There is a spiritual transaction that's going on.

That is truly miraculous. When you serve somebody. You are literally the hands of Jesus to them. Did you know that? God working through you to bless them.

You are the hands of Jesus. But you know what else is true of that transaction? You're serving Jesus. That's what Jesus said.

When He was telling about the judgment day. When did we feed you? When did we clothe you? When did we visit you in prison? When you did it to the least of one of these. You did it to me. We are serving Jesus.

[ 41 : 13 ] When we serve each other. And in the process of being Jesus. And serving Jesus. We get to know Him better. We get to understand more fully.

What it means to love and be loved. Isn't that what we want? And when we do that. God is glorified. We're walking closely with Him.

Together. We're becoming more like Him. Every single day. But it's got to be cultivated. We have to work at it. It's not easy. We're busy. Got a lot of stuff going on in our lives.

But this body. You may think. Oh. Seriously? We're going to spend eternity together. So we might as well set a good foundation now.

Make sense? Let's pray. Lord it absolutely stuns me.

[ 42 : 13 ] That. I get to be your hand. Your voice. Your voice. Speaking into people's lives. And Lord.

It's equally stunning that when I serve. The least of these. That I'm serving you. God help us have that mindset. Help us to cultivate love for you.

And then let us just give complete freedom. To let that love that we have for you. Become expressed outward. Into love for the people around us. God we pray this in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen.