

Loving Others

-Ron Stullenbarger -

As we develop a deeper relationship with our heavenly Father, our hearts will naturally burn to love people as He has loved us. Loving people was never a chore for Jesus. He loved those around Him, and God calls you and me to do the same. *"Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart"* (1 Peter 1:22 – ESV)

1 John 4:9-12 says, *"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. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us."* God's love, perfected in us, will be demonstrated in the way we love others. Allow that fact to rest in your heart for a minute. Allow Scripture to establish in you the core value of selfless love.

I used to think that one of the highest forms of Christian spirituality would be surrendering all forms of pleasure in order to devote my entire life to a relationship with God. But Scripture is clear that God desires to produce in us a passionate pursuit and love for everyone around us. We demonstrate the depth of our love for Him through the depth of our love for others. Christianity is not a religion of cliques, comfort zones, or isolation. Rather, it is a personal relationship with a God who loves people and longs to fill us with His love for others.

Our heavenly Father knows that we are incapable of consistently and selflessly loving others in our own strength. He knows that apart from Him we are selfish, prideful, fearful, and inconsistent. But our God is fully capable of remarkable transformation if we will open the doors of our hearts to His love and allow Him to change us for the better. If we will allow Him to satisfy us and heal our wounds, we will receive a flood of genuine love for others that casts out all fear, selfishness, and pride in light of God's glorious grace.

Jesus said in John 15:12-14, *"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."* What is holding you back from loving others selflessly?

Allow the Holy Spirit to fill you with His heart for those around you who desperately need someone to reveal God's love to them. *"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us"* (Romans 5:1-5).