

- At Hope Chapel we say it this way: "People are invited to come as they are and be changed."
 - We have been going through what forms our identity, because almost all problems we run into in our lives are connected to getting our identity from the wrong places.
 - When our identity is secure in Jesus (accepted, secure and significant) we are free to grow and mature and he uses us to make a difference in his kingdom.
 - There are three ways our identity in Jesus is expressed. Three evidences, three categories, of how we grow in change. We grow in how KNOW Jesus, how we CONNECT because of Jesus and how we IMPACT the world with Jesus.
 - Last week we looked at how if we want to KNOW Jesus, we must love Jesus. This week we will be looking at CONNECTing because of Jesus. These means loving others.
 - Who is the greatest disciple of love in the New Testament? How many of you think it's John because he talked about love so much? How many of you think it's Paul because he wrote the love chapter in 1 Corinthians 13? But in fact it was Peter. After all, he asked Jesus to pray for his mother-in-law.
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- In a supermarket, Kurtis the stock boy, was busily working when a new voice came over the intercom asking for a carry out at checkout register 4. Kurt was almost finished, and wanted to get some fresh air, and decided to answer the call. As he approached the check-out stand a distant smile caught his eye, the new check out girl was beautiful. She was an older woman (maybe 26, and he was only 22) and he fell in love.
 - He found out her name was Brenda. Next day, he waited outside as she left the supermarket, and offered her a ride home. When he dropped her off, he asked if maybe he could see her again, outside of work. She simply said it wasn't possible. He pressed and she explained she had two children and she couldn't afford a baby-sitter, so he offered to pay for the baby-sitter. Reluctantly she accepted his offer for a date for the following Saturday.
 - That Saturday night he arrived at her door only to have her tell him that she was unable to go with him. The baby-sitter had called and canceled. To which Kurtis simply said, "Well, lets take the kids with us." She tried to explain that taking the children was not an option, but again not taking no for an answer, he pressed.
 - Finally Brenda, brought him inside to meet her children. She had a older daughter who was just as cute as a bug, Kurt thought, then Brenda brought out her son, in a wheelchair. He was born a paraplegic with down syndrome. Kurt asked Brenda, "I still don't understand why the kids can't come with us?" Brenda was amazed. Most men would run away from a woman with two kids, especially if one had disabilities. Just like her first husband and father of her children did. That evening Kurt and Brenda loaded up the kids, went to dinner and the movies. When her son needed anything Kurtis would take care of him. When he needed to use the rest room, he picked him up out of his chair, took him, brought him back. The kids loved Kurtis. At the end of the evening, Brenda knew this was the man she was going to marry and spend the rest of her life with. A year later, they were married and Kurt adopted both of her children. Since then they have added two more kids.
 - So what happened to the stock boy and check out girl? Well, Mr. & Mrs. Kurt Warner, moved to St. Louis where he ended up playing for the St. Louis Rams becoming MVP and Super Bowl champion.
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- We love stories of love and sacrifice. They inspire us. We imagine being that kind of person.
 - Yet when it comes right down loving others that way, how many of us think, "I'm just not like that." "You don't know what they did to me." "I could never do that."

- I want to go back to the same statement that we looked at last week.
- The Pharisees were going to try and get Jesus to trip up. To make a mistake. To say something that would turn the people against him. They continually failed at this endeavor. *Matthew 22:34 Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. 35 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 36 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"*
- As I have mentioned before, this was a softball kind of question. It was taught to all the Jews. If they had gone to Sunday School, they knew this. It was considered the highest law. *37 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." 38 This is the first and greatest commandment.*
- Jesus reply was right in line with expectations.
- I can picture the expert of the law getting ready to move into the question that was going to cause Jesus to stumble, but Jesus wasn't finished. *39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."*
- This is what was so shocking. Jesus was adding a second command. And not a secondary command. It is not that loving God was first priority and loving people second. (second in sequence, not priority).
- Essentially, Jesus was telling them that loving God and loving your neighbor are inseparable commands.
- You cannot separate how you love God and how you love others.

I. How we love God is connected to how we love others.

- How we love others demonstrates how we love God.
- He took it to a whole new level by telling them how to love others.
- As you would love yourself.
- We all love ourselves. Even those who at times look at ourselves and get disgusted by what we've done or how we act or frustrated with ourselves – still love themselves. We take care of ourselves. We consider our own desires and likes. We make decisions based on those desires. We pamper ourselves. We do things because we want to enjoy them.
- All those considerations that we unconsciously do for ourselves, we are to use the same criteria when loving others. When Jesus says to love someone as you love yourself, he is not saying to necessarily do the same things you want done for you (example, if a great expression to love me is to take me to a hockey game, then loving my wife the way I love myself is not to take her to a hockey game).
- It means considering them first. What would they want? Not how you define it, not how the law defines it, not even how the bible defines it. Consider them. Put yourself in their shoes. Take the effort to sacrifice for them.
- Jesus makes a remarkable statement, that all the law and prophet hang on these two commands. What does he mean?
- The Pharisees and other religious leaders had gotten good at observing the law. Doing all the commands. Everything written in the law (Ex-Dt) and all of what was in the prophetic books. They had additional laws and traditions that had accumulated. You were a good Jew if you followed all these laws. They even manipulated these laws to their own advantage.
- They missed the point of all those laws.
- Everything God had been teaching the nation of Israel was about loving God and loving others. Their interpretation of the law should have been through the filter of "Love God, love others."

- Consider this: if you want to “be changed”, to grow towards maturity, then grow in your love for those around you. Love people around you more today than you did yesterday.
- The disciples watched Jesus live this way while they traveled with him. They saw how he put others first. They watched him live differently than those around him.
- They heard him teach about loving others. And then, while they were having dinner the night before he was to die, he changed everything again.
- They were having the Passover dinner. He had just finishing washing their feet and so things were still a little uncomfortable in the room. The picture of Jesus doing this for all twelve of them was still fresh in their minds.
- Then Jesus began talking again.

John 13:33 “My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come. 34 “A new command I give you:

- Whoa. A new command. No one had the authority to do this. This was the area of God. It was blasphemy to say this. But they thought he might be the Messiah, so they gave him the benefit of the doubt.
- They all leaned in. Jesus says:

Love one another.

- Hold on. That’s not knew. We’ve heard that before. In fact, we remember when you told us that the entire law hung on loving God and loving others as yourself. We got it. A couple of us even wrote it down.
- Jesus said, “Hold on, I’m not finished.

As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

- What does that mean?
- Mathew, remember how we met. You an outcast, family hated you. You had few friends. Remember what we did. Went to your house. That I did not accuse or condemn your behavior. That’s how I want you to treat everyone that you encounter.
- Nathaniel, remember how we met. When you dissed my entire family and hometown. Remember how I invited you in to my life. Treat everyone you meet that way.
- He could have gone around the table for all twelve of them.
- And here’s the thing – you guys ain’t seen nothing yet.
- He finished his statement by telling them:

35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

II. Loving others is how the kingdom is advanced.

- How you love is what marks you.
- It’s how the world will know that we are different.
- The world knows how to love at a basic level. (SELF)
- They love when it is reciprocated. They love because of what they get from it. They are loved and love in return.
- The world around us sometimes even knows how to love altruistically. (OTHERS) They put others first. They help others. They try to serve and put their friends or spouses first.
- This is unusual but not the exclusive domain of Christ-followers.
- What advances the kingdom is third level love. (GOD)
- We are supposed to love others the way God, through Christ, loved me.
- When I was a mess and had no thought for God, he loved me.
- When I acted in rebellion towards him, he died for me.
- When I was indifferent towards him, he sacrificed everything for me.
- When I sin and make mistakes, he loves me.

- When I get angry and fight against him, he walks alongside me.
- When we love others that way, it changes EVERYTHING!
- You have never heard of someone leaving the church because “they loved me too much.”
- What would be different in our marriages if we loved them how Christ loved us?
- How would our relationships with our children change because of this?
- How we treat our parents would look different.
- What would people say at work if we loved those we work for, or those who work for us, the way Jesus did?
- What would happen if loved those who had a different faith, different race, different sexual orientation, different political viewpoint like God through Christ loved us?
- What would happen if we loved those who were our dead-on enemies the way Christ loved us?
- The kingdom of God would explode.
- *“Love talked about can be easily turned aside, but love demonstrated is irresistible.”* (W. Stanley Mooneyham)
- Let’s go back to our original idea. We want to be a church where people can come as they and be changed. To live from an identity based on Jesus. Secure, accepted and significant. We desire to grow in Jesus. If you want to grow, love others.

III. We grow and mature when we love others as Jesus did.

- When we begin to love others the way that God in Jesus loved us, we will be changed. We have to. It does certain things that cannot happen any other way.
- Loving others not only helps us love God and advance the kingdom, it always leads to personal growth.
- *“Do not waste your time bothering whether you ‘love’ your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this, we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him. If you injure someone you dislike, you will find yourself disliking him more. If you do him a good turn, you will find yourself disliking him less.”* (C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity)
- How to love the way Jesus loved us? Do recall what we said earlier? All the law and prophets hang on Jesus two commands. Love God. Love others. The entire NT is a record of how to do this, of what it looks like.
- Be at peace with one another (Mk 9:50)
- Live humbly in unity with one another (Ro 12:16, 12:16, 15:5)
- Accept one another (Ro 15:7)
- Gently, patiently tolerate one another (Ep 4:2)
- Be kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving to one another (Ep 4:32)
- Bear with and forgive one another (Co 3:13)
- Seek good for one another, and don’t repay evil for evil (1 Th 5:15)
- Don’t complain against one another (Jas 4:11, 5:9)
- Confess sins to one another (Jas 5:16)
- Through love, serve one another (Ga 5:13)
- Tolerate one another in love (Ep 4:2)
- Be devoted to one another in love (Ro 12:10)
- Give preference to one another in honor (Ro 12:10)
- Regard one another as more important than yourselves (Php 2:3)
- Serve one another (Ga 5:13)

- Be subject to one another (Ep 5:21)
- Don't put a stumbling block in a brother's way (Ro 14:13)
- Bear one another's burdens (Ga 6:2)
- Speak truth to one another (Ep 4:25)
- Don't lie to one another (Co 3:9)
- Comfort one another (1 Th 4:18)
- Encourage and build up one another (1 Th 5:11)
- Spur one another on to love and good deeds (He 10:24)
- Pray for one another (Jas 5:16)
- Be hospitable to one another (1 Pe 4:9)
- If you are at all like me, just reading this can be exhausting. Really. All that? Are you kidding? You don't know my family? My boss?
- Jesus said to love each other the way God in Christ loved us. These are all descriptors of what this looks like.

A. It lowers relational anxiety.

- We are forced to trust God for the results of our relationships.
- We have to trust his justice.
- We have to believe that he has a plan.

1 John 4:16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. 17 This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. 18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

- When we do this, we worry less. We relax more.
- Read an article this week that says forgiveness

B. It gives us freedom to risk relationally.

- When we love the way Jesus loved, we are loving people the way God does who sees what they really need.

There was a man who came to Jesus and wanted to follow him. He was rich but he genuinely wanted to be a disciple. Jesus listened to him and his response is telling.

Mark 10:21 Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." 22 At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

- Jesus loved him! The thing this man needed was this challenge.
- Did you ever consider that when Jesus rebuked the Pharisees it was motivated by love?
- When we truly love people the way Jesus loved, it frees us to jump into it.

LOVE OTHERS THE WAY GOD IN JESUS LOVED ME.

- Not because we can – because he can through us. Just don't wait to "feel like it."
- Most issues would be resolved if we did this right.
- Abortion, Politics, Racism, Poverty, Immigration.
- Marriage problems. Church conflict. Family issues.
- Daily questions
- 1) How can I love _____ the way God through Christ loved me?
- 2) How will my words or actions demonstrated the love of God through Christ to them?