

NOW & NEXT: STEPPING INTO GOD'S FUTURE TOGETHER | WEEK 05

Loved

Primary Text: 1 John 3:16-18 | Michael Stambaugh

Our Mission

We lead lost people to center their lives on Jesus.

Our Vision

*Over the next 5 years, we will become a church where you are **known, loved, and sent** to live out your kingdom purpose. With the hope of Jesus, we will****Guide** people to discover their spiritual gifts & calling.****Train** people to meet spiritual and practical needs.****Empower** people to multiply their kingdom impact.*

What is the difference between caring for someone because they're useful and caring for them because they're loved? And when a need shows up in front of you, will you know what to do?

The apostle John wrote the letter we call 1 John late in his life for churches where some taught that individual spiritual knowledge and feelings mattered. They ignored the importance of what you did with your body or your physical possessions, possibly even denying that Jesus was a human. In 1 John 3:16-18, John defines love, gives it a test, and describes its form.

The Definition

We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. 1 John 3:16

John doesn't define love as a feeling. Instead, he points to the cross. Real love is defined by an event: a Person, a price, and a day in history when Jesus gave up everything for people who had given him nothing. Real love always has a price tag. Jesus didn't love us because we were useful to him. We had nothing to offer. His love wasn't a strategy. It was a gift. Love doesn't expect love in return. Jesus loved while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8).

Most of us will never be asked to die for someone. But every week we're asked to give up a piece of our life for someone: an evening, a paycheck, a Saturday, our comfort, our right to be left alone. Real love isn't "I'll take care of you as long as you're useful to me." Real love is "I'll give up something of mine because you're worth it to God."

The Test

If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person? 1 John 3:17

Notice the verbs in this verse; they reveal steps of love.

1. "Has enough money to live well..." This describes most of us.
2. "Sees a brother or sister in need..." You cannot meet a need you never see. Some of us need our eyes opened to the needs around us in the church and community.
3. "Shows no compassion." The contrast between God's love in Jesus and the lack of love in someone who doesn't act to show compassion.

We don't earn God's love by helping people. But if God's love is really in you, it doesn't stay in. The test isn't how you feel about people in need. It's what you do in the moment you see one. Many of us fail John's test not because we don't care, but because we don't know how to act.

The Form

Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions. 1 John 3:18

Love has a form, and the form is action: a meal on the porch, a ride to the appointment, an hour at a kitchen table going through a stack of bills, a prayer prayed *with* someone instead of just *for* them. Actions aren't a bonus on top of true love. They're the evidence that it's true.

Love is a skill you can develop. Nobody is born knowing how to sit with a grieving widow, pray with a hurting friend, or sit with someone in the mess of life. Jesus trained his disciples the same way by providing an example to follow (John 13:15). When Jesus told his disciples how the world would know they belonged to him, he picked one thing: their love for each other (John 13:34-35). Not their doctrine, their buildings, or their programs.

Love that stays a feeling is not love yet. Christian love is a trainable skill with a price tag, and Jesus said it is the one proof the world will accept.

TAKE THE SURVEY

NextStep Church Survey



NEW HERE?

Connection Card



STAY UP TO DATE

Digital Bulletin

