

“A Picture is Worth...One Word”



“Love”

*“The fruit of the Spirit is **love**, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”*

Galatians 5:22-23

The well-known phrase, *“A picture is worth a thousand words”* emerged in the early 20th Century in an article written by Frederick Barnard. He claimed a picture tells a story just as well as, if not better than, a lot of written words. This image of Doctor Jared Burks of Jonesboro, Arkansas speaks volumes about one word... love.

Doctor Jared Burks’ compassionate touch with his son has gone viral. He is one of many healthcare workers separating from their families to keep them safe from COVID-19. He had been away from his family for two weeks and did not want to miss seeing his one-year-old son crawl for the first time. On a break from his shift in the ICU, he reached out to his wife and son through the glass. This article contains 661 words and one picture—take your pick.

Like this image of Dr. Burks and his son, several powerful images of everyday life during the Coronavirus Pandemic on the screens of our phones tablets and television sets will be with us for many years. Many of these images have gone viral and are touching millions of people around the world. In many ways, these powerful images not only speak to us, they actually speak for us.

We identify with this deep expression of gratitude and love Dr. Burks feels for his son. The image also portrays the selfless love our God has for us. The foundation of all Christ-centered relationships is love. The Bible uses three different words to describe, “Love”. *Eros: physical or*

sexual love; Philos: warm affection or friendship; Agape: Christ-like sacrificial, unconditional love of God. In I Corinthians 13, the Apostle Paul gives the best definition of *agape* love ever recorded,

“Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” (I Corinthians 13:4-7)

The Apostle Paul concludes I Corinthians 13 by underscoring the eternal nature of God’s love for us, *“These three things remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” (I Corinthians 13:13)*. Without even realizing it, Dr. Burks is giving the world a picture of God’s sacrificial, unconditional love for humanity. God stooped down to our level and loved us.

This Coronavirus is changing us...for the better. First responders are receiving applause and recognition from around the world. Last week, a friend of mine sent a check to his barber for the price of his regular haircut. The barber was shocked. Our next-door neighbors paid their housecleaner her regular fee and then cleaned their own home. I was inspired to put an envelope on our mailbox for the mail carrier with the words, “Thank You” with a twenty-dollar bill and a note inside. These troubling times provide a great opportunity for the church to demonstrate the love of God to a wounded world. COVID-19 is bringing out the best in people.

In Galatians 5:22-23, the Apostle Paul gives to the church the nine *“Fruits of the Spirit”* that characterize the life of Christ and serve as an example of how his followers should live. Paul describes each these fruits by a single word,

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”
(Galatians 5:22-23)

Each week for the next nine weeks, I will be highlighting one of the many powerful COVID-19 images of everyday life that speak volumes about God’s Spirit shining forth from the lives of ordinary people in these troubling times. Frederick Barnard was right. A picture is worth more than a thousand words. The hidden heroes of our time are giving to us all single images worth more than a thousand words about love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.