

10. the Supremacy of Love

by Chuck Smith

The supremacy of love is seen in its ability to break down defenses, open doors for ministry, and bear fruit in the lives of others.

Scripture: Ezekiel 3:15, John 13:34-35, John 14:21, John 15:8-9, John 15:16, 1 Corinthians 13:1, 1 Timothy 4:12, 1 John 3:17, 1 John 4:20

Topics: "Compassion in Ministry", "The Supremacy of Love"

Description

Chuck Smith emphasizes the supremacy of love in the life of a believer, asserting that without love, even the most impressive spiritual gifts and doctrinal knowledge are meaningless. He highlights that true discipleship is evidenced by love for one another, as commanded by Jesus, and that understanding and compassion are essential for effective ministry. Smith encourages believers to prioritize their attitudes over their answers, advocating for a loving approach in all interactions. He illustrates the importance of compassion through personal anecdotes, urging the congregation to seek understanding in their relationships. Ultimately, he concludes that love is the fruit of the Spirit and the key to glorifying God.

Transcript

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

John 13:35

Without love all the gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit are meaningless and worthless. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." (1 Corinthians 13:1). Paul says that there are those who place a heavy emphasis on speaking in tongues, and who look at that gift as the primary evidence of the infilling or baptism of the Spirit. But if those same people don't have love, speaking in tongues is no more meaningful than a noise made by hitting a cymbal or triangle. It's just a noise. It's not proof or evidence of anything. It may be held up as a primary evidence of the presence of the Spirit, but it doesn't evidence anything if there's no love. It's the same as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. It's just a noise, but not real proof.

All our doctrinal orthodoxy and understanding of the Scriptures are of no value without love. Though I understand the great mysteries, things like the mystery of the Godhead, the sovereignty of God, or the responsibility of man, if I don't have love, they're worthless. If I'm just getting in people's faces and working to make them see and believe my side, my doctrinal purity profits me nothing. It's all worthless without

love.

I've come to the conclusion that it's more important that I have the right attitude than that I have the right answers. If my answers are wrong, God can change them in a moment by the revelation of His truth. But often times it takes a whole lifetime to change an attitude. Better that we have the right attitude and the wrong answers, than the right answers and the wrong attitude. Remember that the next time you get into an argument with someone over some doctrinal position or issue.

God's supreme desire for us is that we experience His love and then share that love with others. Jesus said, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." (John 13:34). That's a big order. He then said, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." (John 14:21). John said, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (I John 4:20). And he questions, "How dwelleth the love of God in him?" (I John 3:17).

John speaks quite a bit about keeping God's commandments in his first epistle. But what is the commandment that we have heard of Him? It's that we should love one another.

As we minister to a fellowship or a group, whether it's a home Bible study or a church of ten thousand people, we need to make certain that one of our major themes is love. That love needs to be demonstrated by our own actions, attitudes, and life. May everyone see the love of Christ manifested in us. As Paul said to Timothy. "Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." (I Timothy 4:12). Constantly seek to be understanding and compassionate, seeing people in and through the compassion of Jesus Christ.

I've found that the key to compassion is understanding. Ezekiel once said, "I sat where they sat," (Ezekiel 3:15). I believe that's a very good thing to try to do, at least in your own mind. Put yourself in the other man's shoes. Put yourself in his life situation. Sit where he's sitting. See it from his side. We're always seeing things only from our side, but try and look at it from his side.

Sometimes there are people who irritate us because of their mannerisms or because of certain characteristics that are distasteful to us. I heard Dr. James Dobson once say that there was a fellow in school that he absolutely hated, and that this guy also hated him. All through school they just couldn't stand each other. Some time later Dr. Dobson met the fellow at a convention, and he knew he was going to have to face him. So, he wrote down the things that irritated him and that he disliked about the guy. Then when he met the guy he said, "You know I have to confess to you that all through school I hated you, and these are the reasons why." Then he started reading off all the reasons why he hated the guy. The fellow responded by saying, "Well, I hated you, too, and for the very same reasons!" Dr. Dobson said that he looked at his reasons again and realized he was looking in a mirror. I find this to be very true, and yet quite amusing.

Those traits we dislike about ourselves are the same ones that we absolutely abhor in others. We've come to tolerate and live with them in ourselves, but when we see them in others, we can't stand them. They're irritating and they upset us. Understanding is such an important component of compassion.

For years I would spend my vacations directing youth camps. It's one of my favorite experiences in life. They were the most glorious times I could ever hope for. My family would go, too, and they would have the

opportunity of being able to enjoy the glorious countryside. Kay used to say, "But, honey, you didn't get a vacation." And I would say, "Oh, yes I did."

Now in directing youth camps you'll find there are those irritable little guys that if you say, "Sit down," they will stand up. If you say, "Stand up," they'll stay seated. If you say, "Now we don't throw rocks at trees. It can nick the bark, and the beetles can get in, so we don't throw rocks at trees," you'll invariably catch these types throwing rocks at trees. They are always in rebellion. I have had counselors come to me and say, "Chuck, you better move this kid to another counselor because I won't be responsible for what I do to him. I am going to kill him. I can't stand him."

So I would say, "Send him to me." Of course, they'd grab the kid by the nape of the neck and march him in and say, "This is the one I was telling you about." I would sit him down and give him one of my smiles, and I'd say, "What do you want to drink, coke, seven-up, orange soda, or what?" I would go over to the snack shop and get him a drink and his favorite candy bar. When he's first sitting there, he's in rebellion thinking he isn't going to tell me anything. So I start breaking down his defenses. It's amazing how a candy bar and the sugar in his system will break down his defenses. I start to break down that wall that he has built up and I begin to show interest in him. The dialogue usually went a little bit like this:

"Well, where are you from?"

"Black Canyon."

"Where is Black Canyon? Is that by the Verde River?"

"Yeah."

"Great. Are you in school?"

"Yeah."

"Well, tell me a little bit about your family. Where is your dad?"

"I don't have a dad."

"Oh, what happened?"

"I don't know. I've never had a dad."

"Hmm, that must be hard."

As you begin to dig, you find out that his mom works in a bar and has a different man home every night, and the kid is left on his own. The men that come home are not friendly to him, and he's learned to just stay out of the way. His mom really isn't interested in him, either. As the story begins to unfold, your heart just goes out in compassion. This poor little kid doesn't have a chance. He's built up all of this resentment and all of this hatred against the world that he has to live in. He's learned to build up these walls. He doesn't dare let anybody get close to him. He has to protect himself. He's the only one looking out for himself. Now you have understanding. You realize why he's responding and reacting the way he is.

Then I would go back to the counselor, sit down with him, and share what's going on in this little kid's life. I wanted to give the counselor an understanding so that he'd have compassion. I would often advise the

counselor to make him his helper and keep the boy close to him, to give him some responsibilities and show him loads of attention, and to give him a lot of support. It's amazing the changes that can develop in just a week's time with compassion.

As a pastor, you're going to have people in your congregation that you'll feel the same way about. You'd like to kill them. But you need to have understanding. Get to know them. Get to understand where the thorn is, what's irritating them. If you seek to understand them, then as you have compassion, you can truly minister to them. You can't truly minister to anyone you don't feel compassion toward. How many times do you read in the Scriptures, "And Jesus was moved with compassion," when He saw the needs of the people? He understood the need. He didn't need someone to testify to Him because He knew what was in man. It was because He had compassion. So, seek to understand.

Jesus said to His disciples, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain:" (John 15:16). The fruit of the Spirit is love. He has chosen you to bring forth this fruit. In John 13:34, right after He told the disciples to love one another even as He has loved us, He goes on to say, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love." (John 15:8-9). So we can vividly see the supremacy of love.

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