

The More Excellent Way

by Jake Lapp

The more excellent way is to walk in the character of God, which includes love, joy, peace, and patience, and to trust Him to work in our lives.

Duration: 55:16

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:1

Topics: "Godly Love", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of love as the more excellent way, highlighting the need for character over abilities, the significance of occupying with character while taking ground with gifts, and the necessity of aligning with God's character and ability. It delves into the power of love to transform and dismantle walls in our hearts, the need for a vision beyond healing, and the impact of love in all aspects of life. The sermon also explores the fruit of the Spirit, the importance of walking in the spirit, and the transformation that occurs when we align with God's love and truth.

Transcript

Amen. Who wants to know the more excellent way? Okay, there's gifts, but there's a more excellent way. My question is, okay, we keep hearing this question, who are you? Who are we? And the answer is we are created in God's image, right? So what is God's image? God is love, but there's more to His image than just love.

Image means, okay, there's two elements to image. I actually want to, there's character and there's ability. Ability is what you do, character is who you are.

So the more excellent way, he was talking about gifts, that's ability, that's what you do. You get a gift and then you do that. The more excellent way is the character.

So what is the character of God? Fruit of the Spirit. There's a fruit of the Spirit, there's a gift of the Spirit, and there's entire denominations around these things. There's people that focus on character, character, character, character, and there's people that focus on gifts, gifts, gifts, gifts.

And too often the people that focus on gifts lack in character, and the people that focus on character lack in gifts. And so if the enemy can separate these out, it's called divide and conquer. If the enemy can divide these things out, then he can conquer us.

And there's another element, there's two elements of church. There's taking ground and there's occupying what you got. And there's a lot of arguments in the church, a lot of arguments around these issues.

Do we take more ground from the enemy or do we occupy what we have? There's denominations that focus on occupying, occupying, occupying and occupying until the enemy's in their midst and they're still occupying, and in the end of it they're keeping God out. There's others that are focused on taking ground and taking ground and taking ground and taking ground. As fast as they take ground, the enemy just closes in behind them with seven worse.

So what if the gifts are what we do, and that's take ground back from the enemy, but we occupy with our character. So we need to know the difference and we need to know what is God's character and what is God's ability so we know what is our character, what is our ability. You know, there's people walking through life that they're just kind of fake and they're hiding behind a bunch of walls and stuff to protect themselves.

And then they decide, you know what, I'm going to get real, and they start cursing and carrying on because that's how I feel right now, I'm being real. And you know what, they're not real either because that's also not them, that's a demon. And so if you go through life and you feel kind of down or discouraged, what do you do with your face? Is it fake to smile when you don't feel like it? The truth is, when we're in Christ, we smile because that's what Christ does.

Not feeling like it is the part that's not real. But then there's something about a fake smile, we're not wanting to connect with Jesus, we're just wanting to self-protect ourselves. So we can put on a fake smile, and I think we all probably experience that, maybe giving it and receiving it from others.

But if we realize what the character and the ability of God is, and we're created in that image, then we can start acting that way and everything that doesn't agree with it leaves in Jesus' name. So Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, He said that God is His spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Spirit and truth.

Spirit and truth. It has to go together. We can't pick one out and not the other.

We have to have them both. Being and doing. Being and doing.

When we receive Jesus Christ, we get saved because that's who He made us. That's a position. If I get hired at a business as a manager, when did I become a manager? I'm in position, right? Okay, now if I don't know how to manage, what do I do? Learn.

Be teachable. Because we have to learn to be and act. We need to learn to act who we already are.

I get a bunch of, are we with me? There's a position, but then there's a process. If the process doesn't agree with the position you line it up to the position. You process it out through the soul, through the body, and you express it to the world.

But if, see our challenge is not to get Jesus into our heart. The challenge is to work Him out. To work out our salvation.

A lot of people hear this Bible verse, work out your salvation in fear and trembling, and they think they have to strive to get Jesus into their heart. But that's not what it's saying. It's saying work it out with fear

and trembling.

That means He's already in, but work Him out. Work Him out through your soul into your physical body so that you're alive and people want what you have. You can't impress anybody if it looks like you sucked on a dill pickle.

Jesus is Lord. Jesus is good. Yeah.

I'm happy. Can't you tell I'm happy? If you're happy, show it. If you're happy, show it.

And then there's knowledge and there's experience. We need both. We need an experience with God.

And then we need to learn about how God works and who He is. But if we just get knowledge, we can know about God in our head and never experience it in our heart, and it doesn't make sense, period. Makes no sense whatsoever.

So, but if we have experience without knowledge, we don't have foundation because knowledge is foundation. Experience is a feeling. Knowledge is foundation.

It holds, it anchors it. Knowledge is an anchor. If you have knowledge without experience, it doesn't make sense.

You just know about God, but you pretty much believe that you know much more about, that you could do a better job than God can. Figure God out. You think you got Him figured out.

Then He throws a curveball. Then He's not good. You don't really like Him because He didn't do it your way.

But if you just experience and experience and experience, and you don't learn about God, then when the Holy Spirit leaves, you just cook something up. You drum something up. You make it happen.

And the next thing you know, divination comes in. There's other spirits that come in and start helping you compromise. John 17 talks about that the world may know that we are, that God sent Jesus by our love and with unity of the spirit, working together in the spirit.

That means we meet together in Jesus Christ. When we meet each other, we see Jesus in each other. Can we see Jesus in each other when we meet each other? Or do we see our differences and we just don't connect because of that period? Are we willing to find Jesus in each other? So the character of God, Galatians 5.20, start at 16.

This I say then, walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. Walk in the spirit means that we connect with Jesus Christ, seated with him in the heavenly realm, far above the principalities and powers. When we're connected with Jesus, when we give our life to Jesus, we're in position in the heavenly realm with Jesus Christ.

Something comes against us, we look down at it from God's point of view. We ask Jesus for his opinion and we see it from God's point of view. If we're walking in the flesh, if we're walking in carnality, we look like this at the problems.

It's like when Goliath was challenging the armies of God and David came on the scene and David could not understand what is these people's problem. What was the difference? Why did David see it different than the other people? They were comparing me to Goliath, me to my problem. When David came on the scene, he compared God to Goliath and he's like, this guy is no match for God.

So if you can see from the heavenly realm, you look at a problem, you're like this problem has no match for God. There's a solution. I just need to find it.

It's not a question. I mean, if there's ever a problem that comes against you that is bigger than God, then you're in trouble. That's where we start building walls.

We build walls because we believe that this problem is too big for God. So I don't trust God. I'm going to trust this wall.

I'm going to hide away. Everybody that struggles with walls, this is why it happens. Because somewhere you believe that a problem is bigger than God.

But if you're seated in the heavenly realm with Jesus higher than all the principalities and powers, you look down on your problems and you ask God, what do I do with this? You get the solution from God and you pick it, you throw a stone or whatever and you hit that giant. You know, everybody else had swords and shields and whatever. He brought a slingshot, completely different weapon.

And when he went out against this giant, this giant thought they were mocking him. And he got extremely frustrated and he started saying all kinds of things that he's going to do to David. David said, you come to me with a sword and a spear and all kinds of stuff.

I come to you in the name of the Lord. And this is what I'm going to do to you. Not only did he come to him in the name of the Lord, he prophesied what he's going to do.

I'm going to cut off your head. I'm going to do all kinds of things against you. And you know, there's no problem, not even one that God doesn't know what to do with.

The issue is not that God can't handle that problem. The issue is, will we trust him or will we trust our wall that we built years ago to protect us because we believe God didn't know what he was doing. Galatians 5, 16.

This I say then, walk in the spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. If we walk in the spirit, we look down on our problem. We're seated with Christ.

We're above everything. We're more than conquerors. We already won.

We're walking as a victor, victorious. 17. For the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh.

And these are contrary the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would. These fight against each other. The law of the spirit and the law of the flesh.

We are, when we get born again, we're translated into the spirit realm in a position. Now, the body that we're in, the fight is to get this body to act the way God wants it to. We're supposed to walk here on earth, getting directions from heaven, seated with Christ in the heavenly realm.

If we don't, then we listen to the flesh. We're listening to the devil. The devil has a plan for our life and God has a plan for our life.

The question is, which one will influence, which one will we walk with? Will we walk with the one that, speaking from the heavenly realm, are we going to walk from the earth realm where the problems are dominant? Walking after the flesh means that we believe there's problems that are bigger than God. Walking after the spirit means it doesn't matter what comes against you, God got this covered. Verse 18, but if ye be led of the spirit, you are not under the law.

That doesn't mean that when we get born again, we can sin because we're no longer under the law. If we sin, we're already under the law. It means that we have a chance to be in position above all the principalities and powers and we do not walk under the law, we walk above it and we bring God's law to the principalities and powers.

So now we're walking above the law. Now we are more accountable than we were before, not less. Verse 19, now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these? This is how they manifest in our in our natural walk.

Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders. Murders is way down there. Envyings is before murders.

Drunkenness, revelings and such like, of which I tell you before, as I also told you in time past, they that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. So what's the kingdom of God? We better know what's happening here.

The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. These things shut off righteousness, peace and joy. But verse 22, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

Against such there is no law. That does not help to try to fabricate love. It only works if we agree with our position.

When we come into position with Christ, then that connection is love. And then the fruit will come out of us as love. If we refuse to accept and to be in the position that He gave us, we can try to fabricate love and it will not work.

Fabricated love means, you see it in the world right now, the world's trying to then you would not talk against sin. If you talk against sin, you must be a hater. And I will charge you with hate crimes.

That's the mentality, joy. The world's version of joy is actually happiness or, but it's completely dependent on emotions. If something goes my way, I am joyful.

If something doesn't go my way, oh, poor pity me. You wouldn't believe what's happening to me right now. But you know that the joy of the Lord is our strength and you can have joy in the midst of a storm.

Some people have joy in the midst of a storm. Some people have a storm in the midst of joy. There can be a joyful time when people are having a storm.

There can be a tough time when people are experiencing joy. It's because it comes from God. It does not come from circumstances.

It comes from this realm above all the principalities and powers. Joy comes from that realm to us. It does not come based on what these, what the soul realm or the demonic realm decides to do to you.

Peace is the same way. Peace that passes all understanding. There's a peace that will go beyond your understanding.

It's not hard to be peaceful when everything goes your way. It's hard to be peaceful when things do not go our way. And it comes from an intimacy with God.

It does not come from a works. It does not come from a performance. It does not, like for instance, how many people have been loved in their life because of who God made them? And how many people have experienced acceptance and love if they perform right? We've been conditioned and trained that if you perform right, then you will receive what you need to survive.

If you don't perform right, you won't. I want to declare and decree that you have permission to receive love because of who you be and not because of what you do. You receive love because of who you be, who God created you to be.

And then because you receive that love, all at once you do love. And when you do love and other people do love, all at once you receive love from them too, which is awesome. So who wants to receive the love that, that the perfect love that casts out all fear? The love that we have the right to as children of God because we are his children.

Who wants to receive the joy that's going to explode behind every wall in your heart? That can be dangerous. But you know, if you have that joy, it is stronger than every storm. These things are really not that hard if you put it in the right perspective, but in the middle of the storm it's hard to get it right sometimes.

We have to remember our position and then process from this position. Do not leave your position when it looks like God doesn't know what he's doing. Do not leave this position.

If, if we do not stay in position when the storms come, then the most dysfunctional part of you will be in charge then. How many people have a business and they have a habit of when things go right, they're in charge and when things go wrong, they put the most dysfunctional employee in charge. Why would you even do that? But we walk through our spiritual life doing this very exact same thing.

You know, character is an interesting thing because you really don't know exactly what somebody's character is like until things don't go their way. Do they stay in charge when things don't go their way or do they put the most dysfunctional part of their heart in charge at that point? Long-suffering patience. Patience is a fruit of the spirit, a fruit.

It's not something that you drum up. It's not something you create. It's something that is different, given to you as a fruit by your tenacity to go to God when things go wrong.

When we can connect to God, then we can have the fruit of patience from that realm, not this one. Patience is one of those things that we were taught that you have to work for. If we believe we have to work for patience, we will have a tougher time in our storms than if we can run to God and ask him for some gentleness.

We can all be gentle when things go right. Are we gentle when things go wrong? Goodness, faith. When things go wrong, we really need to exercise our faith, not lose it.

Faith means we trust God. It is easy to trust God when things go away. Our challenge is not that God doesn't have this under control.

Our challenge is, do we agree with God when things look out of control or not? Or do we then quickly agree with the enemy because God must not be who he says he is? Meekness, temperance, against such there is no law. They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with affections and lusts. Crucified the flesh.

Do you know what crucified means? We hear this, but do we think about it? What does crucified the flesh and lusts mean? Crucified means a slow, painful, torturous death. Are we willing to die a slow, painful, torturous death in our flesh? Or are we trying all the ways we can find to heal that flesh? Are we wanting somebody to care for that flesh? Are we willing to let the old man die and pick up the new man? I believe there is a trap in inner healing that gets people trapped into trying to heal the old man instead of helping to kill the old man. It does not work to constantly focus and have your vision for healing.

We have to have a vision beyond healing because the question comes up, if God would heal you then what? And there's people that say, well I'm not sure what after that. If they say they're not sure after that, then they will never be healed. Because where there is no vision my people perish and if there is no vision beyond healing, people will not be healed.

We had people come to us for prayer. Actually there was one guy that came and he is obviously hurt. And we asked him, do you want us to pray for you for healing? And he said no.

And it was the first time that it occurred to us that some people might not want to be healed. And so we asked him, why not? He said, I'm on disability and if I get healed my checks will stop. So he had faith that he would be healed if we pray.

He did not want to take that chance. But that's the mentality of the United States of America right now. It's a focus on me and mine and I'm entitled to this and they'd better pay up.

And you know what? That's completely backwards. There is no entitlement for any handout. A handout is a privilege.

A handout is a gift. If it becomes an entitlement, it is off track. Because you cannot make a gift an entitlement and survive.

The gifts of the Spirit that God gives to people that have a vision and people that want to mature are privileges. They are not entitlements. The reason that the government programs do not work as far as welfare and those kind of things is because it becomes a right instead of a privilege because it's not centered in Jesus Christ.

There has to be a vision beyond just feeding people or beyond helping people. There has to come, there has to be aligning, an alignment with God and an accountability or it'll never work. And as far as United States of America right now, what I see happening is they're going down in the foundations and they're knocking out props right now.

And they keep knocking out a prop and then saying, see, I told you we didn't need that prop because the building still stands. And they're knocking out fairly large beams right now. And they're making the same statement, see, we didn't need that beam because look at the building, it's still standing.

But you know and I know that when the storm comes and the rains come and the winds and whatever, this building is not going to be as strong as it was before. But I do believe that God knew this was coming. I don't believe that that we're at the end times.

I believe that we're in a time where God is taking us through a purging for a bigger thing. I believe it's a time for the church to rise up. I believe that he raises up for such a time as this.

Why are you even here? Why are you on earth? Are you a part of the problem or are you a solution? Is Jesus Christ the solution? Is Jesus Christ living in you? So why would Jesus want to live in you? So that you're a solution. So if Jesus made you a solution and he's living in you, you have everything within you that you need for abundant life and to overcome problems. Everything you need is within you.

So if everything that you need is within you, then start digging for it and open yourself up to others. Say, hey, what do you see in me? If you would actually tell me what you see in me, what would you actually say? And then make it safe for them to talk. It's interesting what happens when people do that.

Interesting what happens. Even if husbands do that for their wives and wives do it to their husbands. Interesting things happen.

Because you know what? We've learned to adapt. We've learned where each other's hot buttons are. If you dare hit mine, I'll hit yours.

We know how to survive this thing. And we practice and practice and practice. And you know what? We just know which areas to not talk about.

To just kind of skirt around. Because if I talk about that, I know exactly what she's going to say. She's going to hit me over here.

And it always knocks me off. My feet. So why would I open myself up and say, tell me whatever you're seeing? This is more real than it would seem like.

But it is. But we know how to maneuver. And we need to dismantle that stuff.

Because it is from the enemy. It's a divide and conquer strategy. You know what could it hurt? If you ask your spouse to give their opinion of what they see in you.

And then shut up and listen. Maybe write it down or something. Or have them write it down.

If they're wrong, it's their opinion. Take it to the Lord. If they're right, then you can take it to the Lord and make it right.

It's really not that hard. More excellent way. That's where we started, didn't we? Okay, so he's talking about a more excellent way.

But that doesn't mean that the other way wasn't excellent. The gifts of the Spirit are excellent. But the more excellent way is if we use the gifts and we have the character to sustain it.

Love builds character. Love builds trust. Love opens the heart.

But love does not make anybody free. Truth will make us free. Truth will make us free.

But if we don't trust the person bringing the truth, we'll just block them off. We know how to do that. That's how we survived.

You know, in the amazing grace, second verse I believe it says, "'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear.'" So grace taught my heart to fear for what reason? Before I was saved, I needed fear to survive. "'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear.'" And then when I received Jesus and when I decided I want to mature into who Jesus is, grace my fears relieved. Grace, the same grace that taught our heart to fear, now also helps us dismantle that because we put up these walls.

We know how to take them down. We can go to a counselor and that counselor can try his best to take down your walls but he will not be able to do that unless you cooperate. And, you know, that's actually a form of control.

It actually makes somebody feel pretty powerful. And a lot of these people go to counselors. If they go long enough, they play games with the counselors and then they talk in other settings saying, there was no counselor that could get to the bottom of mine.

We've heard that many times, many times. And so if somebody comes to a counselor with the intent to see if they can outsmart this counselor, they're there for the wrong reason. They need a shocker back to the more excellent way.

Verse 31 of 1 Corinthians 12 31, but covet earnestly the best gifts. Covet earnestly. Earnestly would be put some power into it, the best gifts, yet show you a more excellent way.

And the word charity means love. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity or have not love, I am become as a sounding brass or a tinkling symbol. That means even if we're as smart as angels and we speak out a lot of truth, but there's no love with it, it's like an annoying sound.

If we would do this for days, it would get annoying, wouldn't it? This is how somebody sounds when they have a lot of head knowledge, but there's no love to it. They get annoying. Does anybody know what I mean? It gets extremely annoying, but that's what it sounds like to God.

Ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding, ding. And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, that's a lot, all mysteries and all knowledge, and I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, all knowledge, all faith, and all mysteries, understanding all mysteries, and have not charity, I am nothing. That's zero.

So we need to pay attention here because that word charity, that word perfect love, that word love is so powerful that we can be doing all the other things, and if we're not in love, it helps nothing. So we have to keep that in mind. Verse three, and though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

It doesn't even say it's not as much or whatever. It says nothing, and I think the other versions of the Bible say the same thing. I think nothing means actually nothing.

Steve just looked it up, and nothing actually means nothing. I mean, these people are doing all kinds of things here. Verse four, charity suffereth long and is kind.

Charity envieth not. So if we find envy in our hearts, it profiteth us not much, nothing. Is it not much or nothing? Nothing.

So we have to get rid of that stuff so that it starts profiting us. Charity envieth not. Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, does not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil.

The more I read, the more, the more what? Convicted I become. It's like, okay, this path is getting narrower and narrower here. And it's like, okay, so if I read on, it'll probably even get worse.

Verse six, rejoices not in the iniquity, but rejoices in the truth. Beareth all things, and the last time I checked all the men, everything, all of it, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, and endureth all things. Charity never faileth.

If something failed, it wasn't charity, it wasn't love. If we believe love failed, then we're going to build walls. If we believe charity never faileth, love never faileth, we're going to tear down walls.

We're going to get rid of those walls. Because we're going to start opening our hearts and opening our minds that there might be another thing going on that we had overlooked. There might be some different things going on in our hearts than what we thought.

And if we can stay teachable and realize that it's not God that is the problem, it's not love that is the problem, then we'll start looking for the real problem. If we can just blame God, then we can stay stuck. I'm not sure if I want to trust him or not.

Well, hello. If you're not sure you can trust God or not, you're stuck. And until you figure out that you can trust God, you will stay stuck.

Verse 8. Charity never faileth, but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail. Whether there be tongues, they shall cease. Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

For we know in part and we prophesy in part. We know in part, we prophesy in part. That's why it's more powerful to have people around you, because together we get bigger pictures.

Because we know in part, we prophesy in part. But if there's others around us, we get bigger and bigger and bigger pictures. Because we're part of the body of Christ, we're not the body of Christ.

Verse 10. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child.

When I became a man, I put away childish things. That doesn't mean that we shouldn't return to innocence, because that's the only way to heal, is to return to the original innocence that God had put in us. And if somebody doesn't become as a little child, they shall not enter the kingdom of God.

Childish things means, I understood, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child. There's many, many people are stuck by the mindsets that they had as a very young child. And there were things put in place in our life, usually before the age of six years old, the brain develops up to the age of six.

At a certain stage of our life, it develops up to that age. And as it's developing, whatever our circumstances are, the brain develops that into what is known as the truth to that person. A child formulates truth and somewhere it says, no weapon formed against you shall prosper.

So the weapons formed against us, I believe, are mindsets formed as little children. Here it says, we spoke as a child, we understood as a child, thought as a child, but we need to put away those thoughts and those understandings and those ways of speaking. Because there's many people that if they don't get healing from what happened or change their mindset, what happened when they were little children, they will as adults, it doesn't matter how old they are, they will speak like a child, they will act like a child and they will understand like a child.

And so the only way to really heal is to bring this thing down to very, very, very simple phrases. If children don't understand what you're talking about, the adults don't either. You can exchange intellectual knowledge, but if the children don't understand it, the adults don't either.

If we can simplify this to the point where children understand it, the adults will get it too. Because the adults need to change their way of thinking on a child level. For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face, now I know in part, but then shall I know even as I am also known.

Now about is faith, hope and charity. These three, but the greatest of these is charity. My time's up, but I would like to sing a song.

Is Timothy here? Timothy, do you want to come up here? No? Okay, he has a favorite song and we want to sing it right now. He's still working on me to make me what I ought to be. It took him just a week to make the moon and the stars, the sun and the earth and Jupiter and Mars.

How loving and patient he must be, he's still working on me. There really ought to be a sign upon my heart, don't judge me yet, there's an unfinished part. That I may be perfect just according to his plan, fashioned by the master's loving hand.

He's still working on me to make me what I ought to be. It took him just a week to make the moon and the stars, the sun and the earth and Jupiter and Mars. How loving and patient he must be, he's still working on me.

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