

Greg Laurie: Why Aren't Christians Operating in a World-Changing Love?

We live in a time when our society is becoming increasingly disjointed and divided. Rather than celebrating what we have in common, it seems nowadays that we emphasize the things that separate us. In fact, I don't know of a time, at least in my life, when our culture has been more divided in the United States, perhaps with the exception of the tumultuous 1960s.

The result is that people are looking for a place where they can belong; a community where they can feel safe; a family they can be part of; and somewhere they can genuinely love and be loved in return.

And that is exactly what the church is.

I know the church isn't perfect. I know the church is made up of imperfect people. But foibles and all, it's the only organization Jesus Christ Himself ever started, and it's still going strong.

Any attempt to eradicate the church that Jesus established and maintains will meet with failure, because Jesus said of His church, "the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18, NKJV).

The first-century church, the church Jesus began, turned their world upside down and dramatically impacted the culture. But as I've said before, it seems today as though the opposite is true.

In the New Testament book of Acts, we find four principles that guided those first believers: They were a learning church; they were a worshiping church; they were an

evangelistic church; and they were a loving church.

“Called Out Ones”

There is nothing in the world quite like Christian fellowship. We know the early believers stuck together. They helped and cared for each other. In short, they loved one another. And God has a unique purpose and place for the church in the world today.

The apostle Paul tells us in the book of Romans that Christians are “the called of Jesus Christ” (1:6). This means God’s people have been called out. In the New Testament, the Greek word for “church” is *ekklesia*, which means “called out ones.”

In other words, God has called His people out of a world system that is hostile to the teachings of Scripture. However, this doesn’t mean that we are to isolate ourselves, because Jesus also said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

When there are hurting people in the world, we don’t see atheists leading the charge to reach out to them. Nor do we see hedonists leading the charge or Hollywood leading the charge. Instead, we can find God’s people going into these places to help, trying to show His love in a tangible way.

Love is the glue that holds us all together, and 1 Corinthians 13 is basically the Bible’s definitive chapter on love. In fact, it’s the most comprehensive description of love in all of Scripture. Here, the apostle Paul shines love through a prism, so to speak, where we see its colors and hues.

Paul doesn’t focus so much on what love is; rather, he focuses on what love does and doesn’t do. God’s love that we are to demonstrate to each other is not something that’s a mere feeling or an emotion. It isn’t abstract or passive: It is

active, it engages, it works and it moves.

What Love Does

God's love doesn't merely feel patient; it *is* patient. God's love doesn't simply have kind feelings; it *does* kind things. Love is fully love only when it acts.

And in 1 Corinthians 13, Paul's purpose isn't to give us a technical analysis of love but to instead break it into bite-sized pieces so we can more easily understand it and apply it in a practical way.

This is what God wants us to strive for. This is the kind of love that should work its way into our lives: "Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance" (1 Cor. 13:4–7, NLT).

This is the same kind of love Jesus spoke of that turns the other cheek; the kind of love that has as its primary concern, not its own welfare but the welfare of others.

In Philippians 2, Paul wrote, "Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too" (verses 3–4).

A World-Changing Love

Can you imagine what kind of world we would live in if people operated by that principle? Can you imagine what kind of churches, even, that we would have?

However, we live in a culture that says, "Forget about others. Think only of yourself. Other people are out for themselves, and if you lower your guard, they will rip you off. They'll

take advantage of you. You have to look out for number one. That's all that matters."

We exalt vengeance as a virtue and scoff, even laugh, at people who forgive or turn the other cheek. If someone offends us, then we sue them. Revenge is the operative word.

But don't let this world squeeze you into its mold. Don't let secular thinking find its way into your mind and heart, where you start believing the entire planet revolves around you.

Maybe you're thinking, "Oh, please. How could we ever live up to these standards? It's impossible!"

Yes, it is. But this is what we should aim toward. The Bible says, "The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 5:5, NKJV), and "the fruit of the Spirit is love" (Gal. 5:22).

This fruit will be the result of abiding in Christ and seeking to be more like Him every day. And notice that Paul said, "Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance" (1 Cor. 13:7, NLT).

Let that be said of us as the church and as individuals. May our lives be characterized by this love. {eoa}

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