

# Walking in God's Love: A Heart for the Homeless

God's Word says that He is love, (1 John 4:8 and 4:16). If He is love and we are to be like Him, then we should be love.

It isn't always easy for us to be love to strangers, the homeless and people who are not like us. However, God's word says to be love.

Love. The Bible instructs, in 1 Cor. 13:13, "And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." The greatest of these is love. The Bible instructs us to love, but how do we abide in love to those we don't know and can't relate? We need to "put on" love. There are times loving doesn't come naturally and we simply need to put on Christ's character and His character was one of love.

The Bible tells us to put on the armor of God. "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil," (Eph. 6:11). For years pastors have taught us about girding up and putting on the different pieces of the armor. The Bible and our leaders have instructed us to put on the shoes of peace, the helmet of salvation and the breastplate of righteousness and the other pieces of the armor. Why should love be any different?

We have agape love, (Strong's No. 26). This is the love of the will, where we love all men and women with the love of Christ. It is not a love of the emotion that we are attached to the person or circumstance.

Agape love is great, but it is not all. We also have phileo love, (Strong's No. 5368). Phileo love cares for affectionately, takes pleasure in and has personal attachment.

I believe as we grow in our walk with Christ and love with our heavenly Father that we should be walking in both agape and phileo love. But what about the people we don't know such as the homeless and strangers? Should we love them with agape love or phileo love? I believe as we grow in the love of God we will be able to love those we don't know with both agape and phileo love.

As we begin to understand the depths of God's love and how Jesus had compassion and passion for people on earth, shouldn't we learn to put on love and love as Jesus did with both agape and phileo love? Jesus was compassionate toward others. We too have compassion for people and that compassion turns into passion.

We end up serving in an area we are compassionate and passionate about. What happens when God calls us to an area of ministry and we don't have a passion for it? What is missing? Love is missing. When we know God's love, truly know God's love how can we not be compassionate for His people; all His people, including the strangers, homeless and those unlike us.

If we are so full of God's love, that love both agape and phileo should be expanding to reach every person we know. If we truly know the love of God how can we not love all people with the love of the emotions with phileo love.

I remember God calling us to the streets of Ferguson and St. Louis, Missouri to help in breaking down the walls of racism and bringing healing to the region. As an ice-breaker and a way of ministering to the people we brought protein bars to distribute on the streets, because the conflict was in the streets.

During our time here we saw many homeless people in the park. The first day we would simply hand them a protein bar and move on, no conversation, perhaps a simple God loves you, can we pray for you? Over the course of 3 days, each time we went out

God grew our love for His people. We started asking them, "What is your story." We would talk to them and love on them. What happened?

Not only did we reach out with God's agape love, the love of the will, but it ignited that phileo love inside of us. The love of the emotion activated! We were given Jesus's heart and compassion for the homeless! We got to know these people by name and went back two more times to visit with them, pray with them and provide for them.

When we acted out in obedience to God's agape love it activated the phileo love within us. But so many people don't think that's their ministry or feel out of their comfort zone. When we have the heart of Jesus shouldn't every ministry be one we are called?

Shouldn't we be called out of our comfort zone to reach people for the Kingdom? Should there be anything we cannot do with God's love? We need to look at everyone we come in contact with as a son or daughter of God because they are. He created them in His image and we should love them as a brother or sister in Christ.

As I looked at the homeless over the course of time, I have noticed one common thing. They all have a story and all of them aren't so different than a lot of us. The difference I find is that when most of us had a hard time in our life we had parents, family or a friend who took us in and took care of us. I know there are many different stories and many homeless make choices for themselves.

However, I also know there are many of us that could be homeless if we didn't have someone to help us out. They unfortunately didn't have someone to give us the same chance we had.

Instead of being afraid, thinking it's not your ministry, or judging their circumstances, decisions and choices of what got

them there; why don't you ask God to give you His heart for His people and try reaching out to someone you don't think you can relate.

Who knows? You may be just like our teams now. We can't go by a homeless person or a person in need without stopping, offering assistance, hearing their story and offering up a prayer, after all doing that is being love, God's love, and we are all called to be love.

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