



October 3, 2011

## Next Steps

### Watering Others

[John 13.34-35 :: Listen to Sermon](#)

“He loves me. He loves me not.” Oh, the eternal enigma of love. What is it? How do we show it? How do we know when we possess and are possessed by it? Love is a many splendid thing, and yet sometimes we are left asking, “What has love got to do with it?” Love is slippery and yet essential. Elusive and yet core. We are all drawn to love like a moth to a flame, and yet all of us, to one degree or another, struggle with it. We wrestle with what to make of it and how to incorporate it into our lives.

So what is the nature of love, really? According to Jesus it is everything. Love is the beginning and the end. Love forms the bedrock of what God is doing in the world and what His people are continuing to do in His name. Love is to be the mark of who are and the North Star that guides where we are going as God’s people, because this is who Jesus was. When I consider the life of Jesus, there are many words that come to mind. Perhaps the one that best describes his life and ministry is the word “love.” Love poured out of Jesus. It is hard to miss his love in the things he did and said. His love knew no limits as he loved even the unlovable. He is an awesome example of real love, God’s love, and we expect him to be. He is God after all. Here’s where it gets sticky for me. As Jesus was preparing for the cross he made one simple request of those who would follow him. He asked that we love as he loved.

Come again!?! Jesus wants us to love as he loved. That’s a pretty tall order. To be honest, I don’t feel like loving most of the time. The very fiber of my being does not ooze love. After interacting with me, a good number of people probably wonder if I love them or if I love them not. I’m not a constant crankesaurus. I am just inconsistent in my love. I think I am beginning to understand why. I think the first thing I trip up on is the faulty idea that love is a feeling. This thought runs something to the effect that my love must be rooted in associated feelings of love. Ain’t got that lovin’ feeling? You ain’t getting any lovin’ action. The second idea I get tripped up on is the thought that love really is about me, about what I can get. Love is supposed to be reciprocal. We love those that love us in return. I love you. You love me. Then we’re a happy family.

When I consider the life of Jesus, I see that this isn’t how he loved. Jesus loved by action not by feeling. Did he feel? We know he did, but it is hard to miss how Jesus’ loved by choice pushing feelings aside when he washed the feet of his disciples, including the one that was about to betray

him. For Jesus, it didn't matter whether he had that lovin' feeling or not. Love was a choice of devotion for him. I also see that for Jesus, love was not about what he got but about what he gave. He willingly lay down his life for those who rejected him. Jesus' mantra was, "I love you even when you don't love me. I want you to be part of my family." He calls us to love in this way.

When I try to love like Jesus I fail. Horribly. I don't have it in me, but then again, maybe the loving as Jesus loved isn't something I have to try to do. The reality of the life of faith is that Jesus is actually in us. He has not left us as orphans but has taken up residence inside us. If Jesus is inside us then we can allow him to love through us. We can turn our lives over to him in ever-increasing surrender, and in so doing begin to see our lives ooze his love. His love and devotion begin to be our own so that more and more we look like him, and then all people know that truly we are his disciples.

A fellow traveler,

Blake  
Spiritual Formation Pastor

## My Next Step

**We encourage you to consider doing the following as a way of handing off faith to your family. . .**

- **Watch *The Princess Bride*:** Love for others begins as we make room for Christ to love others through us. This week, watch *The Princess Bride* with your family. Talk about how Wesley loved Buttercup with the simple saying "As you wish." As a family, seek to make room for Christ to love others through you by seeking to put one another first with the statement, "As you wish."

**We encourage you to consider taking the following next step on your faith journey. . .**

- **Day of selflessness:** We can make room for Christ to love others through us as we take the attention off of ourselves and place it on others (Eph. 5.21). One day this week, seek to practice selflessness. Selflessness is an attitude that shows no concern for self so that one might express concern and devotion to others. Begin your day of selflessness before you retire for the evening. Spend some time in prayer devoting yourself to God, asking for His grace to devote yourself to others. When you rise, spend time in prayer once more devoting yourself to God. You might consider praying through a passage of Scripture such as Philippians 2.5-11. As you go through the day put your full attention on others rather than yourself. Avoid saying or doing things that draw attention to yourself or your needs. Rather, seek to lavish your attention and praise on others. Look for opportunities to listen to and show interest in others. If feelings of self-interest arise, commit these to God in prayer. At the end of the day talk to God about how the day went and how you feel. You might consider journaling your conversation with God as a record for later reflection.