

Called Out to be Called Up

#3 How a Christ-follower Should Love

1 Corinthians 16:14-24

Introduction

A little boy was standing on the side of the road when a man came up, stopped, and rolled down his window: "Son, do you know how to get to town?" The little boy said, "I don't know."

The man asked, "Well, do you know how to get to Route 20?" Again, the little boy replied, "I don't know." The man then asked, "Where does this road go?" The little boy, as before, said, "I don't know." The man asked, "Do you know the name of this road?" No, "I don't know." The frustrated man looked at the kid and said, "Son, you don't know anything do you?" The little boy replied, "I know I ain't lost."

Can you say with blessed assurance today, "I once was lost, but now I'm found, Hallelujah."

Most of us have attended more than one church in our lifetime. I grew up going to a Methodist church, during teen years attended a non-denominational church that met in my Jr. High school. I met Nancy there. After we got married and moved to Del Rio, Texas we checked out a Presbyterian church, but ended up in a small old-fashioned Assemblies of God church. When we moved to Goldsboro, we searched out the AG church and stayed there for 16 years.

Some of you, like me, have been to big churches, small churches, holiness churches, contemporary churches, traditional churches, or liturgical churches.

I've seen cowboy churches, biker churches, I've heard there are even clown churches. **But no matter the style, doctrine, facilities, service structure, or government... there are some churches that have, "IT" and some that don't.** "IT" is that unmistakable, underlying perception that sets them apart.

People arrive early with a sense of expectation and leave with a sense of direction. "IT" cannot be manufactured or faked. "IT" cannot be mass produced. People must want "IT", but only GOD can give "IT".

There are big churches with good music, good preaching, that don't have IT, and there are small churches with mediocre music and average preaching that DO have IT. How does a church get IT? It is the result of what we allow the Holy Spirit to do **for us, in us, and through us.**

The apostle Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to the church of Corinth. Corinth was a Greek city under Roman power. Paul wrote this letter after he had already established the church. He wrote it because this community of believers had lost "IT".

Paul ends this letter like he has one more shot, one more chance to unveil their greatest problem and reveal their quickest cure. **Let's read 1 Corinthians 16:14-24, and find out what "IT" is.**

14 "Do everything in love.

15 You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the Lord's people. I urge you, brothers, and sisters, 16 to submit to such people and to everyone who joins in the work and labors at it. 17 I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived, because they have supplied what was lacking from you. 18 For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition.

19 The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house. 20 All the brothers and sisters here send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

21, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. 22 If anyone does not love the Lord, let that person be cursed! Come, Lord! 23 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. 24 My love to all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen.'

Let's PRAY

This is the final message in our 3-part, New Year's Series, Called Out to be Called Up.

The first message was: **How a Christ-follower should LIVE.**

Last week's message was: **How a Christ-follower should GIVE.**

Today is the final and most important message: **How a Christ-follower should LOVE.**

Look again at verse 14, '*Do everything in love.*'

This verse is just another way of rephrasing and repeating what Jesus said was **the Greatest Commandment**; "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.*"

Then Jesus gave us some bonus knowledge when He said, "**The second greatest commandment is 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'**"

Jesus makes it plain that the most noticeable feature and characteristic of **God's people is LOVE.** Love God with everything you are... and love your neighbor as yourself.

At your funeral people may not know how good you were at your job, or how much money you gave to the church, or how terrific you were at helping others. They may not know a whole lot about you, but the one thing they should be able to say if they knew you at all: That man or that woman knew how to love.

Now, what do you think was the one characteristic that was missing in the Corinthian Church? **Love.** They had lost IT. Their lack of love for God and for one another was the root issue of all their problems.

I can say: "I love God," "I love my wife and kids," and "I love baseball, apple pie and Chevrolet," and it all means the same. **The biblical idea of love is also** multifaceted, but--unlike in the English language where we have just the one word, there were different Greek words to express the different kinds of love:

1. **Eros** refers to romantic love.
2. **Philia** refers to feelings one has towards close friends "brotherly love."

3. **Storge** refers to the love we have for our parents, siblings, our children, and other members of our family.
4. **Agape** is Christ-like love. Agape is the unconditional love of God which the indwelling Holy Spirit empowers us to give back to God and toward others. This is the kind of love Paul is talking about at the end of his first letter to the Corinthians when he says: ***“Do everything in love” in V14.***

What does 'do everything in love' mean? It means do everything in love.

The lack of love among the Corinthian church had led all kinds of problems, such as...

Church division. 1 Cor. 1:11-13, ***“My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. 12What I mean is this: One of you says, “I follow Paul”; another, “I follow Apollos”; another, “I follow Cephas”; still another, “I follow Christ.” 13Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (NIV)***

Sexual perversion 1 Cor. 5:1, ***“It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate: A man is sleeping with his father’s wife.”***

Sexual sin (pre-marital, extra marital) is simply the fruit of a root problem which is a lack of godly love.

Public confrontation. 1 Cor. 6:5-6, ***“I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? 6But instead, one brother takes another to court—and this in front of unbelievers!”***

Their willingness to damage their witness and the work of the Gospel in their community to get more stuff was a product of their lack of love for Christ and for His people.

Marital dissatisfaction. 1 Cor. 7:4-5a, ***“The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. 5Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time,***

...so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control."

Their lack of love caused them to elevate their own needs and desires over their husband or wife.

Unnecessary temptation. 1 Cor. 8:9-12, *"Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak. 10For if someone with a weak conscience sees you, with all your knowledge, eating in an idol's temple, won't that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols? 11So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. 12When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ."*

Economic exploitation. 1 Cor. 11:20-22, *"So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, 21for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry, and another gets drunk. 22Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter!"*

On Communion celebration days, the rich wouldn't wait for the poor who had to work late. So, the rich were fat and happy, and the poor got little to nothing.

Do you see the pattern Paul is pointing out that is at the very core of the Corinthian church's problems?

Their lack of love for God, their fellow believers, and their community led to every single issue and problem they were having. In essence, Paul says all your problems will be fixed if you fix your biggest problem. **Solve your love problem and all your other problems will be solved.**

How exactly are we supposed to do that? What does it mean to 'Do everything in love?' Let's look at those first two words a little closer.

Notice the first word '**Do**'. It's an action word. It's a verb. Love isn't a feeling, it's an action. Feelings happen to you. You don't choose your feelings.

The bible never tells you how to feel. Those happen to you. But your actions don't happen to you. You're in charge of those. Actions are what you choose.

That's why God can command us to love despite our feelings. You can be loving even when you don't feel loving. Sometimes people give the excuse that they don't do loving things because they don't feel like it. **The truth is if you do what love is supposed to do, you will feel what love is supposed to feel.**

Don't wait on your feelings because feelings are fickle. Do what you know to be right and loving, and the feelings will follow.

Notice the second word **'Everything'**. Do everything in love. Love is action, and it is also all encompassing. Everything in your life is to be an expression of love. Every aspect of our life would change if we funneled every thought, every attitude, inclination, and action through this verse; do everything in LOVE.

Paul details what love is in chapter 13, which is often read at weddings but has **an application for every day of our life:** ***“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8Love never fails.”*** (Vs 4-8, NIV).

Paul makes the crucial point that it's pointless and harmful to do even good **things without love:** ***“If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.”*** (1 Cor. 13:1-3, NIV)

Elsewhere, Paul says: ***“The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love”*** (Galatians 5:16 NIV).

You say, 'everything' seems so big and so inclusive I can't get my head around it.' Well, good news. **Paul finishes this letter by giving some examples of what love in action looks like for a Christ-follower.**

First, Love in Action involves...

1. EVANGELISM.

V15a, ***"You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia..."***. In 1 Corinthians, chapter 1, Paul said he had shared the Gospel of Jesus with them, and they believed and were saved and baptized. Why would he give his life traveling everywhere to share the Gospel with everyone? **LOVE.**

The love of Christ and the love for Christ consumed him. **2 Cor. 5:14, "For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died."**

This isn't love you can generate. The Spirit of God produces this. You walk in the Spirit, He produces love, and you direct that love to the lost.

Have you ever heard the parable of the pit?

A traveler fell into a deep pit and couldn't get out. Several people came along and saw him struggling in the pit. The sensitive person said, "I feel for you down there." The reflective person said, "It's logical that someone would fall into the pit." The interior designer said, "I can give you ideas on how to decorate your pit." The judgmental person said, "Serves you right to fall into that pit." The curious person said, "Tell me how you fell into the pit." The legalist said, "I believe you deserve your pit." The IRS agent said, "Are you paying taxes on this pit?" The self-pitying person said, "You should have seen my pit." The optimist said, "Cheer up! Your pit could be deeper." But Jesus, seeing the man, took him by the hand and lifted him out of the miserable pit.

The point is—it doesn't do any good to talk about love and compassion without demonstrating it. God demonstrated and proved His love for us.

Paul was overwhelmed by the love Christ had displayed by sacrificing Himself for the sins of His people. And His love for Christ fueled his love for people to be saved.

In Romans 9:2-3, he says, ***"My heart is filled with bitter sorrow and unending grief for my people, my Jewish brothers, and sisters. I would be willing to be forever cursed-cut off from Christ-if that would save them."***

What Paul was saying was that he had such a deep burden and unconditional love for people he'd do anything for them to be saved. Paul wept in prayer for these people to know Christ and be saved.

D.L. Moody said that **"Winners of souls must first be weepers of souls."**

That burden for souls is born out of love. When Christ's love for you is combined with your love for Him it leads to a love for people to know Christ.

Do you know the number one reason Christians give for not sharing the Gospel with family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers? Fear. They're afraid they won't say the right thing. They're afraid of what other people might think. They're afraid it will ruin a relationship or get them in trouble.

1 John 4:18 says, ***'There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.'***

We don't overcome fear with courage. We overcome fear with love.

Second, Love in Action involves...

2. DEVOTION.

V15, ***'You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the Lord's people.'***

That word service in the Greek is *diakoneo*. We get our word deacon from it. It means ministry or service. Stephanas and his family demonstrated their love for Christ and for people by devoting themselves to ministry. There are a couple of interesting things here.

First, it says ***'they devoted themselves'***. It literally says, 'they themselves devoted themselves to ministry'. In other words, they weren't guilted, or coerced, or begged to minister and serve people. Nor were they saying, 'You know we'd love to do something if we were asked. No. They refused to be sanctified spectators.

They were motivated by love and felt appointed by love to serve. Love drove them to devotion. You couldn't keep them from serving if you tried. They were devoted to ministering and serving the body of Christ.

Paul said in Gal. 5:13, ***'For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers, and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love.***

A second thing that is interesting about this verse is the word 'devoted'. It's the word 'tasso', and the root of that word means 'addicted'.

Literally, it means they have addicted themselves to the ministry and service of God's people. They were addicted to finding needs and meeting them. We are **all created to be addicted to God and His service.** Unfortunately, many people get addicted to the wrong things. Love in action looks like evangelism. Love in action looks like a devotion to serving God's people in any way you can.

Third, Love in Action involves...

3. SUBMISSION.

V15-16, 'I urge you, brothers and sisters, to submit to such people and to everyone who joins in the work and labors at it.'

He points to these servants on steroids filled with love and says submit yourself to people like that. Get under the authority and direction of people like that.

The people of God who are filled with the love of God who are devoted to serving the people of God are to set the pace for the church. Part of the lifeblood of every Christian includes submission.

Everybody is to be submitted to somebody, right? Wives are to be submitted to their husbands. Husbands are to be submitted to Christ and His Church. Children are to be submitted to their parents. Younger men are to be submitted to older men, younger women to the older women.

Everybody is to be submitted to somebody. Why? Submission is a mark of a true, Spirit-filled Christian.

Eph. 5:18, 21, "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit...submitting to one another in the fear of God."

Submission is part of how the Holy Spirit keeps people humble and united.

Anyone who wants to be their own person and refuses to have any authority over them is refusing the work of the Spirit in their life. The church isn't to be a bunch of people trying to climb over other people; we're a bunch of people trying to get under the right people to serve them or lift them up.

The church isn't a power play. It's not a struggle for control. It's a group of people who understand they need good models and examples and leaders, and they get under those people, and let those people disciple them, guide them, teach them, and lead them.

Fourth, Love in Action involves...

4. COMMUNITY.

V17-18, 'I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived, because they supplied what was lacking from you. For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition.'

Paul loved the Corinthians, missed the Corinthians, and wanted to be with them but couldn't. So instead of Paul coming to them, these guys went to Paul.

Paul says, 'What I lacked from being with you I got from them coming to me. They befriended me. They refreshed me.'

That word 'refreshed' is the same one Jesus used when He said, "Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." I will refresh you. Paul needed rest and refreshment from his anxiety for them. Their presence comforted him, encouraged him, and it made him feel at ease.

Love in action looks like concerned companionship, and loving, life-giving community.

I love the pre-service time, and the between service time, and the after-service time here at EAG. If I could, I'd require every one of you to stay until we all got a chance to talk with each other. I see every Sunday like a family reunion. We get refreshed by each other's love, support, and encouragement.

Listen, if you are one of those who slip in as late as possible and get out as quick as possible you are not only missing a huge part of what it means to be a part of a church family, you're missing what it means to put **your** love in action.

You say, 'No one ever refreshes me.' Well, be a refresher. Focus on others, and God will make sure someone focuses and refreshes you. I guarantee it. Who are you refreshing with the love of God?

Lastly, Love in Action involves...

5. AFFECTION.

V19-20, *“The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house. **20**All the brothers and sisters here send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.”*

Kissing in the bible is quite a study. This kissing, of course, was warm but not romantic or sexual. It was touching cheeks on both sides. In bible days, men greeted other men and women greeted other women with a holy kiss. Men kissed men and women kissed women. It came to be abused by some and misunderstood by unbelievers and was dropped. [Example -JD]

A holy kiss would be the equivalent today of a warm, friendly handshake, or an arm around the shoulder, or a friendly hug. There is holy power in an appropriate, God honoring physical touch. **Love in Action involves Affection.**

As a fruit of the indwelling Holy Spirit, LOVE is something that God grows in such a way that it leads to supernatural motivation and power to our everyday actions and interactions.

To do everything in love means to be patient, to be kind, to not envy or boast. To do everything in love means that we do not dishonor others, brag, or become easily angered. To do everything in love means to rejoice in the truth of God, reject evil, and trust and hope in Him. Doing everything in love results in believers choosing righteousness and leaving behind sinfulness.

We let love guide our thoughts, actions, and words. To do everything in love means making choices each day that reflect obedience to Jesus and following His ways rather than our own.

At times, doing everything in love means we may have to do hard or undesirable things for the good of others or to further the Gospel.

Now, look how Paul ends the book in V21-24, *‘I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. If anyone does not LOVE the Lord, let that person be cursed! Come, Lord! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My LOVE to all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen.’*

Paul's love is always Christ-centered. When you love Jesus, you want others to know him. And when you love Jesus, you are anxious for His return.

CONCLUSION:

STORY: In Ernest Gordon's true account of life in a World War II Japanese prison camp, *Through the Valley of the Kwai*, there is a story about a man who through giving it all away literally transformed a whole camp of soldiers. The man's name was Angus McGillivray.

Angus was a Scottish prisoner in one of the camps filled with Americans, Australians, and Britons who had helped build the infamous Bridge over the River Kwai. The camp had become an ugly situation. Allies would literally steal from each other and cheat each other; Survival was everything. The law of the jungle prevailed...until the news of Angus McGillivray's death spread throughout the camp.

No one could believe big, STRONG Angus had succumbed; they had expected him to be the last to die. It wasn't the fact of his death that shocked the men, but the reason he died. They pieced together the true story of what happened.

The Scottish soldiers took their buddy system very seriously. Their buddy was called their "mucker," and they believed that it was literally up to each of them to make sure their "mucker" survived. Angus's mucker was dying, and everyone had given up on him, except Angus. He had made up his mind that his friend would not die.

Someone had stolen his blanket, so Angus gave him his own. Every mealtime, Angus would get his rations and take them to his friend, stand over him and force him to eat them. Angus was going to do anything and everything to see that his buddy got what he needed to recover.

But as Angus's friend began to recover, Angus collapsed and died. They discovered that he had died of starvation complicated by exhaustion. He had been giving of his own food and shelter. He had given everything he had—even his very life.

The ramifications of his acts of love and unselfishness had a startling impact on the compound. ***"Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends"*** (John 15:12). As word circulated of the reason for Angus McGillivray's death, the feel of the camp began to change. Men began to focus on their mates, their friends, and of giving oneself away.

They began to pool their talents—one was a violinmaker, another was an orchestra leader, another a cabinetmaker, and someone else a professor. Soon the camp had an orchestra full of homemade instruments and a church called the ***“Church without Walls”*** that was so powerful, so compelling, that even the Japanese guards attended. The men began a university, a hospital, and a library system. The place was transformed; because one man named Angus gave all he had for his friend. [Holy Sweat, Tim Hansel, 1987, Word Books Publisher, pp. 146-147]

Are you thinking differently? Are you living differently? Are you loving differently? Are you serving differently? Are you worshipping differently? Are you giving differently? Are you understanding the church and its mission differently? Are you loving like a Christ-follower. These are important questions because we're not to be merely hearers of the Word, but doers of the Word.

Doing everything in love is not a suggestion, it is what God requires of Christ-followers. Let's make sure we have "IT." It will motivate our hearts, and activate our lives, so we can change our world through His love.