

Totally Transforming

Week 3 - Authentically Connecting - Do I live out the Law of Love?

We exist to lead people into a transforming relationship with Jesus Christ.

Series- Bible calls those who have come to Christ, “new creations.” Something dramatic happens- new eyes, ears, heart, perspective on the world, etc. It’s called Transformation.

Bapto vs’ Baptidzo – Ancient Greek Pickle Recipe where both words are used..

Bapto – the **cucumber** is immersed (bapto) in water to wash it’s outside.

Baptidzo – Baptized, the cucumber is immersed into the brine solution and emerges as a **pickle**. It is changed, transformed into a pickle.

“Believe and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins” – believe and be transformed, not just dunked under water.

So, are you a cucumber or a pickle? How would you know?
How do we know if we are being transformed? We are looking at 6 indicators of measurements.

Week #1 – Confidently **Trusting**. Am I walking securely in Christ?

Week #2 – Independently **Growing**. Am I a self-feeder?

Week #3 – Authentically **Connecting**. Am I living out the law of **love**?

Christians connecting with one another is a strong theme in the NT. In fact there are 29 specific “one another” passages in the NT. This is where the Christian life is challenged and built. It’s where we practice Christian living. In practicing the One another-s, we are exhorted to forgive one another, confess to, encourage, serve, give preference to, edify, be devoted, etc. 29 “one another-s.” To

Authentically Connect in the Christian sense includes all these and more. But one “one another” stands out from all the rest. It’s the call to love one another. In fact this one is the foundation on which all the others are built. Without it, the rest of them just fall into a heap of rubble. So I want to focus today on love as the way to Authentically Connect with one another.

Let’s remind ourselves what Jesus said about love-

“**YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.**”

38 “This is the great and foremost commandment.

39 “The second is like it, ‘**YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.**’

40 “On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.” Matt. 22:37-39.

This is the law of love. Keep this one and all the others fall into place.

Hebrews 10:19-21...

v. 19-21- Since we believe in Jesus as our Savior. We believe He died as our sacrifice and rose to pay for our sins. Since we believe we are forgiven and accepted and loved by God. He is for us... Then, there are three things that should follow from this. In other words, our Creed should determine our Conduct. Belief begets behavior.

If you don’t yet believe, these things may not be true of you yet, but let them be marks of true Christian living for you. There are a lot of knock offs out there, but this is the real deal.

So, the writer is saying, if you are a believer in Christ, then let us do 3 things:

1. “let us draw near”, v. 22... “Independently Growing” – read God’s Word, Memorize Scripture, Pray.

2. “Let us hold fast”, v.23... “**Confidently Trusting**” – Knowing God is for us and actually choosing to lean on Him in life’s situations.

3. “Let us ... stimulate/encourage”, v.24... “**Authentically Connecting.**” “Consider how you might stimulate one another to love and good deeds.”

This passage reveals what Authentic Connecting is. What it’s to produce and what it’s to look like. It’s to produce and look like love. It is “to stimulate one another to love and good deeds.”

It goes on with another (implied) “let us” in the negative in v.25- what not to do: (Let us not forsake)

“not forsaking (neglecting) the assembling (gathering) of ourselves together” (private or public gatherings)

“...as is the habit of some,” (some were avoiding the gatherings in those early days of the church not wanting to be identified with such a persecuted or dubious group).

“...but encouraging one another;” (another way to put stimulating one another)

“and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” The predicted day of great hardship - could refer to 70 AD great overthrow of Jerusalem by the Romans or the actual return of Christ to receive His Church and judge the world.

But in our day, as we see increased marginalization of Christians in our society, increased persecution around the world, increased inhumanity and moral degradation, we realize all the more how we need one another. I listen to the news, I see what gong on in my city, in my neighborhood. I interact with those who have no faith and no hope and I realize more and more how much I need the Body of Christ. I need to be around my brothers and sisters. I need your encouragement. I need to be “stimulated.”

I remember in **biology**. We dissected a frog. Laid out his legs on a board and got a battery with a couple of probes connected. We

grounded one probe as I recall. We located the femoral nerve and touched it with the other probe and what happened? Well, the leg that was touched sprang to life. That dead leg was stimulated to action.

In some congregations you’d think the reason people come together is to dissect others. But no. According to this passage we are to come together in order to stimulate one another to action. To bring one another to life! Wake up!

“**Stimulate:**” to provoke, prod, excite one another. We might say to motivate one another to love (agape) and good deeds (works).

It is loving one another, caring for each other, performing deeds of kindness and helpfulness for one another.

This is Authentically Connecting is “Stimulating” one another to love and good deeds.

This is the Authentic Connecting we’re saying is one of the signs or measures of a truly Transformed person.

Not that phony, Christian-y, plastic interaction that is always concerned about presenting the perfect outward picture. But open, transparent, honest interaction with one another that reaches out to encourage and to be encouraged in the day-to-day reality of life’s struggles and joys.

This is what we’re calling Authentically Connecting. Are you experiencing it?

“I get together with other Christians.” Just getting together to complain or compete for attention, or to share the latest news about someone else is not the connecting this passage is talking about. That’s not the love and good deeds the writer to the Hebrews is talking about.

No, we're talking about the new creature, the new creation, the new commandment.

Here's how Jesus put it-

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

34 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another," John 13:34-35.

You will know you are His disciple, that you have been transformed into that new creature, if you are keeping this new commandment and you have love for one another. It's a measure of your transformation as a believer in Christ.

It's what we're calling Jesus law of love. Am I living it out? Is it demonstrable in my life? Well I don't know unless we first define it. What is it? What does it look like?

First what it is not- This "love" in our passage and the "love" that Jesus is talking about is not the "brotherly" type of love (phileo) you might guess it is. He could have used that term- "have brotherly love for one another." In other words, "Be kind, courteous, helpful, as best you can in your human ability." That's all good, but this love goes beyond that.

What it is- This is "agape." Self-sacrificial love, life-giving, unconditional love. "God so loved... that He gave..." "... while yet sinners Christ died for us." We are to love one another like that.

I Cor 13:4-7 describes it well...

⁴ Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud ⁵ or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. ⁶ It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. ⁷ Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

This is a description of Jesus if you think about it. Put His name in the place of "love." Is it also a description of you? Place your name there...

Do I display this kind of love to those around me? Do you to your wife? Husband? Sister? Brother? Neighbor? Boss? Employee? Work associates?

Or this,

"Be devoted to one another in love, honor one another above yourselves." Romans 12:10.

Being devoted to one another in love means that we honor others above ourselves. It puts others first and ourselves last. I think of Diane every time I see this verse. I have her name in the margin next to this verse to remind me of her example. She stimulates me to love and good deeds just by her example.

"Stimulate one another to love AND GOOD DEEDS." Good deeds are the way we express love. Because love is not just something we feel, it is something we do.

Jesus said,

"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

13 "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends," John 15:12-13.

Is loving one another like this really possible?

Jesus commanded it- therefore, it must be possible. In fact,

Jesus always empowers what He commands.

And here's what He's done to empower us to Connect with one another and love like this. He's given us the Holy Spirit. It's His Spirit that lives and works inside of us and through us. How can we make this work? We choose to walk in it- It's our choice. "Love" is a produce, a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

It's not something we work at producing ourselves. It's a fruit of His Spirit living in us.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit," Gal 5:22.

This Love is not something we produce. Rather we are to accept it from Him. He produces agape love. It's a gift from Him, and we walk in it. It IS POSSIBLE to love like Jesus. Just let Him love others thru you. He's living His life through those He indwells. He's still here, living in you and me.

The first time I caught the actual reality of this truth, I was praying in our upstairs apartment at my mother's house in Tahoe...
"That was Me hugging you."

Listen. If I'm kind to you, that's not really me (not the natural me anyway), it's Jesus in me. If I am patient, that's Jesus. If I'm serving you and putting you first, before myself, that isn't me. It's Jesus. If I'm rude to you, that's me.

Husbands are commanded to "love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her." Wives are commanded to love their husbands by showing them respect and submitting to their leadership. Children are told to love their parents by respecting them and obeying them. Is this possible? To have a

home where there is this self-sacrificial, unconditional, showing preference to one another kind of love going on?

Yes possible, desirable, commendable, doable! Love one another with the love of Jesus. Let Him love them through you. Get out of His way, choose to let go of your will and obey His.

Our problem with loving one another is not that it's not possible, or that we don't know how, or that we don't have the capability within us. Rather, our problem is that we just don't want to do it. We don't want to love one another. Not a matter of the intellect, but of the will. It's an issue of obedience.

We may think we just can't do it, that it is impossible for us to love like that, but I'll give you the key. Here's your tattoo for the day...

Obedience leads to Empowerment.

Obedience is the key. Faith is a matter of do and acquire, not acquire and do. When, in faith, we obey the commands of God, in spite of how we feel about the command, God will release His power into our lives to complete that act of obedience. Jesus said, "This I command you, that you love one another, just as I have loved you" (John 15:12). The command to love one another has nothing to do with how we feel about it. Rather, it is a call to obedience. A second tattoo for you body artists...

When all else fails, Love by Faith!

Jesus has commanded that we love one another. He didn't add, "If you feel like it." Or, when it suits you," or, "when they deserve it." No, just do it in faith that it is the right thing to do and that He will empower you to do it.

If you will choose to love, you'll be able to love. Have faith. Trust God. Choose to obey and see what happens. God will give you the ability.

CHOOSE LOVE!

If you'll give Him the "will-ability," He'll give you the "do-ability!"

We were designed to *thrive* in relationships where we are truly *loved* and *accepted* by others.

In dealing with matters of the will, C.S. Lewis said,

“Every time you make a choice you are turning the central part of you, the part of you that chooses (your will), into something a little different than it was before. And taking your life as a whole, with all your innumerable choices, all your life long you are slowly turning this central thing (your will), either into a heavenly creature or into a hellish one. Each of us at each moment is progressing to the one state or the other.” –C.S. Lewis

So, what would it be like in your home if you were to Choose Love over anger? If you were to choose to love your spouse rather than ridicule? If you were to choose to love by supporting, rather than by criticizing? What would it be like in your home if you could set the example and teach your children how to choose love rather than arguing with one another? “Go to your room and come out when you can tell me what you will do to show the love of Jesus to your sister.” Etc...

This is connecting with others with the authentic love of Jesus.

Prayer:

Lord you have given me Your H.S. You have said that if I pray anything according to your will that you will hear and give me the requests I have made of You. It’s your will that I be filled and controlled by Your Holy Spirit. So I ask You to fill me now. Take control of my life, my will, my attitudes. Get me out of the way and love my family through me. Love my brother and my sister through me. Neighbor... Work associate... Classmate... Help me to learn to CHOOSE LOVE. To be an encouragement to others. I choose to walk in Your Spirit today. I choose to walk in Love. In Jesus name, amen.

Want to give this Authentic Connecting a try?

Practice this at home, Practice this in your Connect Group.

Authentic Connecting works better in circles than in rows.