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# Chameleon

Week Four - Imitate Christ

The only imitation we should be striving for in our life is to imitate Jesus.

It means we look like Him in how He loved others.

This love was unbelievable to those on the receiving end.

This love was unconditional and not based on performance.

This love was self-sacrificial and not selfish.

The only urge we should give into is the urge to be more like Jesus.

**Prayer** - “God, help us to understand the love that you have for us and the rest of your people. And once we understand it, allow us to learn how to show it to those around ourselves by the ways we act and speak.”

**Scripture** - Ephesians 5:1-2, John 3:16, John 13:35, John 15:13

### Introduction

As we draw this series to a close, we’re going to be talking about one of the most powerful forces, if not the most powerful force in the universe; **Love.**

As believers and followers of Christ we are called to stand out and stand up for Christ and His mission, we are chosen for His mission and we are to be ambassadors of His Kingdom. To preach, to teach and to be an example of the love of the Father as expressed through our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. The Savior of a lost and broken world!

We are further called to imitate Christ...and this includes learning to love like Christ loved.

As a reminder of the expressed love of Jesus, Let’s watch this short video.

**Show Amazed video to remind us of the lord’s love and how He expressed it.**

**It truly is the greatest story ever told!**

**That is the story we are called to relate to all who will hear!**

That is what we were chosen to do as His ambassadors. Again, stand out from the crowd with His mission to tell the story of God’s love as expressed through Jesus! To imitate our Lord’s love for all not just those we choose. Remember God is no respecter of men. His love is universal. The forgiveness that He offers through the cross of Christ is meant for all of mankind.

Oscar Wilde said, “Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery that mediocrity can pay to greatness.” You have probably heard before when someone says something like, ***imitation is the highest form of admiration or flattery.***

In any event, who better to imitate than Christ?

Who better to model your life around,

pattern your day after,

and conform your image into?

Christ is our most precious example of righteous living.

And the truth is, standing out for Christ MUST INCLUDE the most important aspect of His ministry: LOVE!

Love is the reason Jesus came (John 3:16)

***“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”***

***John*** *15:13...***Love was the reason Jesus traded His life for ours.**

**Ephesians 5:1-2**

If you have a Bible with you, please turn with me to Ephesians chapter 5. We are going to look at two simple verses this morning. This is once again the Apostle Paul writing, and here is what he has to say:

***“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”***

**Paul calls us to “imitate God” by the way that we** **love.** This sounds simple, and it is. But the reality is, we tend to get in our own way sometimes in this process, because we seem to distort what God’s love actually looks like in action.

We tend to mold it into what the world defines as love (which is a far cry from God’s working definition).

So today, as we close out this series about standing up and standing out for Christ, let’s look at three key aspects of God’s love that must not be missed, and must be implemented and imitated in our lives.

**God’s Love is Unconditional.**

John 3:16 is arguably the most well-known and oft-quoted verse in the bible. And for good reason. It’s an amazingly concise explanation of the gospel:

***“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”***

There wasn’t anything we did to earn the love and favor of God. In fact, based upon the previous centuries of human history God knew that to send His most precious gift, Jesus, would be rejected. However, that’s exactly what He did and His motivation was love.

Not just any love, but *agape* - the highest form of love referenced in the New Testament. *“Agape is one of several Greek words for love.*

*It has been said that when the word agape is used in the Bible, it refers to a pure, willful, sacrificial love that intentionally desires another’s highest good.”*

**God’s love is intentional, sacrificial, and powerful.**

The topic of love reminds me of this short story:

“A man walked into a photography studio with a framed picture of his girlfriend. He wanted the picture duplicated. This involved removing it from the frame. In doing this, the studio owner noticed the inscription on the back of the photograph:

“My dearest Tom, I love you with all my heart. I love you more and more each day. I will love you forever and ever. I am yours for all eternity.”

It was signed "Helen,” and it contained a P.S.:

“If we ever break up, I want this picture back.”

“Helen” was obviously dealing in conditional love. It comes with strings attached, and it changes based upon feelings, outcomes, or maybe even weather patterns, or anything else disrupting.

***But this is not God’s way!***

His love and commitment never change.

**This is why we can trust His love… We know it will be the same tomorrow and next week and next year.**

It’s the unconditional nature of God’s love that draws many to Him. As we seek to imitate the love of God in our lives, how can we best love others, without condition?

Without addendums,

without revisions,

and without provisions.

As you think about that question let me ask another:

When have you felt unconditional love in your life?

As you think about those moments or relationships, how do you think you could extend that kind of love to others?

**How can you love even those who seem impossible to love?**

**How can you get a little, *unconventional,* as you imitate Christ?**

**God’s Love is Unconventional.**

When Jesus ministered on Earth, He was constantly extending compassion, mercy, and love to those whom others passed over. Jesus loved those whom culture had deemed unlovable, unclean, and undeserving.

How do we stack up to that? Are we being imitators of Christ, or just imitators of the world?

The woman at the well.

Zacchaeus the tax collector.

The woman with the flow of blood.

The invalid at the pool of Bethsaida.

The thief hanging next to him on the cross.

The Jews who crucified Him.

We see Jesus’ compassion, mercy, and love in all these stories and countless others throughout the gospels. And these are just the ones recorded. There must’ve been countless others who received the unconventional and unconditional love of Christ because He was always willing to step outside of social and cultural norms to reach someone.

In order to love unconventionally we are going to have to think outside the box. And at times, that may be not only hard but look odd or even unbelievable to others.

But, Jesus looked odd and different than the norm to others for talking to the woman at the well and the Pharisees thought it was appalling for Jesus to be healing people on the Sabbath. Peter, Paul, Stephen, and all the other early disciples lived sold out and completely committed to the gospel - which in the eyes of their contemporaries was ludicrous.

The point being, if we are going to truly imitate the love of Christ, we are going to stand out. It is going to look odd to those close to you.

But the kicker is this. **The unconditional and unconventional love of Christ produces unbelievable results. It is so foreign, so refreshing, and so jaw droppingly - stop in your tracks astounding that you simply cannot ignore it.**

**God's Love to man’s way of thinking and treating others is Unbelievable.**

***It is unbelievable to those who choose to just fit in. To just stay in their comfortable box. To those who are resistant to change. To those who put tradition ahead of the Gospel of Jesus!***

***What the love of God can do in a person's life is redemption, reconciliation, and renewal. It is other-worldly. It is not of this earth, it is from God! And it is our mission!***

Truth be told, if you have been a follower of Christ for long enough you have definitely heard or read the almost unbelievable testimony of someone responding to the love of God. As one example, did you know that many who convert to Christianity from other religions identify **the *love* of God, through** **Christ**, as the reason for their conversion.

Think about it, for a person who has spent their entire life working harder and harder to **earn** the favor - the conditional love - of whatever god or religion they are following...for that person to hear they are **unconditionally** loved is amazing**. It is astounding - shocking - world rocking.**

And then, the beautiful twist of Christianity is this: in response to the amazing love of God, we are called to place our belief in the one who traded His life for ours.

We are called to believe in the sacrificial love of Christ. The same Christ who said, ***“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” John 15:13***

**Do you have people in mind who *need* to receive the amazing almost unbelievable love of God?**

**Would you be willing to be an ambassador who represents this Kingdom of love?**

**Are you willing to imitate Christ? To stand out instead of fit in?**

### **Conclusion**

John 13:35 says**, *“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."***

Loving others is such a shock to the world and by doing so, people will know you are a disciple of Christ. Or at the very least, they will know you ascribe to the principles and characteristics of a different kingdom.

Another way to look at this is to say, *If you love others, you will stand out.*

And I would add, if you love others unconditionally and unconventionally like Jesus did...If you imitate the way Christ loved...You will see people move into a relationship with Christ. Because, this kind of capital “L” Love is amazing and a transformation, redemption, and reconciliation happens in its midst.

Who do you know that needs to experience this kind of love?

What can you do this week to love more like Christ loves?

Are there areas of conditional love that you need to repent and ask forgiveness for?

Maybe you simply feel the need to immerse yourself in the gospels and read or reread about all the ways and all the people that Jesus loved.

Whatever it is - wherever you are feeling called today - commit to it.

Stand out rather than fit in.

More like Christ and less like you.

In our first sermon we covered being different by standing out and up for Christ. In our second we covered how God has chosen us for His mission to the world around us. In our third we covered that our mission is that of ambassadors of God’s message. And in this our final sermon in this series, be imitators of Christ!

Let’s pray together.

Our God and Father, we are truly humbled before Your love for us. That You love us in spite of ourselves. Father, we admit that we are weak and ask for Your strength to be true followers of You. To stand out and stand up for the Gospel message and proclaim without fear what Jesus sacrificed for all of Your creation. We are also humbled that You have chosen us to carry that message and to live that message. That we are ambassadors of Your Kingdom. Help us in our frailties to be imitators of Your Son and our Redeemer Jesus!

Amen. **Call to the front before song**