

Sunday, October 21, 2018
Sermon Series: UNSELFIE- Serving in a Selfie World
“Love Like Me”
I Corinthians 13:1-8a

Each of the messages in this series (Unselfie: Serving in a Selfie World) represent God’s response when a person says to Him, “Here I am, send me... Use me in your service however you see fit.”

Usually we want to know what that is and what we’ll be doing. Will God expect me to serve Him in a way that I’m not ready or not gifted? What if I fail?

In I Corinthians, God gives us chapters about what our ministry for the Lord can look like. That ministry is typically associated with our Spiritual gifts. We’ll be spending several weeks learning about those. But today, regardless of what your Spiritual gift(s) might be, and regardless of how God is asking you to serve Him, there’s an underlining foundation that must thrive in you, and me and any who serve the Lord. It must be done in Love.

In fact, God’s message for us, His servants today is this: Love Like Me. (like the Lord Jesus)

God’s demonstration of Love toward us is so rich, so profound. His outworking of Love is so stunning and magnificent. God’s act of love goes beyond reason and logic. It is really incredibly hard to comprehend. Yet God’s love impacts us all.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

Romans 5:8 But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Ephesians 3:17-19 Paul prays... that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith – that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fulness of God.

I John 4:9 In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Friends, in these awesome verses, and in many others, God, who defines love, sends this message: Love Like Me!

God loves in the deepest and purest way possible. Any measure of love that we might demonstrate will always fall far short of what God has shown us. But we are still called to **love like He loves.**

In I Corinthians 13, the Bible presents several amazing examples of things people have done in serving God. But the point of it all is not about those specific things (those acts of service), the point is to examine the underlying motive behind the service or ministry.

I Corinthians 13:1-4

These important verses shed light on a dark reality lurking behind many ministry efforts. There is a top layer – a surface level of ministry that is often outwardly seen that looks great and impressive based on what is readily visible. Too many ministry efforts are motivated by selfish motives. It's common for people to serve so that others will notice, see their efforts and be impressed with them. It's common for people to serve so that they feel good about themselves. These are selfie motives for serving. We need to unselfie and learn to serve like Jesus in a selfie world. **The Bible shows that if we don't serve like Jesus serves... by loving like He loves,** our ministry will be little more than a momentary noise in the air... a splash on the surface... it'll be like cotton candy or soap bubbles – all appearance and no substance or depth. This will produce an empty product of our ministry.

I. **We must Serve God from a Pure Heart of Love.**

- We don't serve just to produce results.
- We don't serve because of how good it makes us feel.
- We don't serve so that we don't feel guilty for not serving.
- We don't serve so that we'll be noticed or recognized.

In these verses, the Bible gives many impressive ministry examples:

- **Speaking in tongues** vs1 (a miraculous event of a person speaking a known human language that the speaker did not ever learn)
- **Speaking in angelic language** vs 2 (apparently they communicate in a superior way than people can)
- **Possessing prophetic powers** vs 2 (ability to literally speak God's word – like a mouthpiece of God)
- **Understand all mysteries and all knowledge** vs 2 (which no one actually can do – even those gifted with discernment and knowledge)
- **Having the deepest level of faith possible** vs 2
- **Giving away all one has, and even giving up one's life to be burned** vs 3 – (what more can one give?)

These are all extreme and impressive examples of ministry – of serving God.

Paul's point: Name the greatest act of ministry and service to God you can think of – even if you have that– *but do not have love* – it's just noise.

It's empty. It is nothing. To borrow from last week's message – without a pure motive of love, your ministry is fruitless and empty.

So the question we must all ask ourselves, is *do I love like God loves?* (*don't be too quick to answer*)

What characterizes that kind of love? What does it practically look like?

When each of our 4 boys was a baby, I can remember there being long nights where the baby would not sleep. LaVonna and I would try to share those nighttime responsibilities of trying to get the baby to go to sleep. That is the not-so-glamorous side of parenting little ones: The agonizing, long hours of giving up yourself- and your sleep to care for this little, helpless human. The baby doesn't

know that you are sacrificing for him for the 100th time. The baby doesn't care if you have a big day tomorrow or if you don't feel well yourself. The baby doesn't thank you or reward you for your 3 AM sleep-deprived labor of love. For me, on my shift, God was teaching me how to patiently and sincerely pour my love into that little one – again and again. That's what ministry can be like. It is a calling. Serving is a selfless act of love for God and people. He has called us to unselfie and serve in a selfie world.

I Corinthians 13:4-8a

True Love is an Unselfie Pursuit

II. Love voluntarily gives up of self for someone else

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. **This is an unselfie kind of love.**

This is different from how we naturally use the word love. Our society tries to push its definition of love on us which has everything to do with the way something/someone makes you feel. Society always seems to base love from the perspective of the receiver. Speaking of receivers, I love the Browns. I wish they had a few more good receivers. (I don't ever go to their games -b/c I can't), I don't reach out to them to try to help them do their thing. When they lose, I turn my tv off and go about my life. When they win, I turn the tv off and go about my life. (And I wear a tie the next Sunday to commemorate the rare victory). My love for them really is a Selfie kind of love. I love them, but it really is about how they make me feel.

But true love, God's love is different than that. It is a deep love for another person, not just a love for how another might make you feel. Love is a selfless commitment towards another. It is a commitment, not just a feeling. It is an investment into another, not a withdrawal from them. *You see, love that is based on received feelings alone is often impatient, self-seeking, irritable, and temporary.*

According to I Corinthians 13, **A Serving Kind of Love is...**

1. Patient – waiting on due process – opposite of instant gratification. If you are driven by instant gratification, then you're not patient, and therefore you're not loving. A guy who pressures his girlfriend into sex acts and says, "if you love me you will..." is not loving. Her response should be, If you love me you'll wait. Love is patient... it's not driven by selfish instant gratification. Parents who love their children learn to be patient with them as they are being taught life skills. They're not going to do everything just right. Sure, you could just do it yourself... or you could patiently teach them how to do it because you love them.

2. Kind – words and actions that demonstrate a love and appreciation for another person. It's easy to be kind to kind people. But the truly kind person stands out as he/she is known for open kindness even in the face of disagreements and mistreatment. The kind person is careful to avoid a big negative reaction when another person does them wrong.

3. Does not Envy or Boast – Avoids drawing attention to the possession or desired accomplishment that someone else may have that you want so badly yourself. Avoids drawing attention (bragging/boasting) to what one already has. People often come across these ways because it makes them feel important in the sight of others. Love is not like that. It is a desire to serve even if there is no reward or recognition.

4. Not Arrogant or Rude – These might initially look like a person who flaunts self – but that is more of a boastful person. But actual arrogance/rudeness manifests itself in a way that puts others down. It is bullying. It is racism. It is sexism and gender supremacy. These all have sadly been done – even in the name of Jesus. If we are doing our ministry in a spirit of arrogancy or rudeness – where others are put down or demeaned, then we are not loving – and whatever we do is empty.

5. Flexible – vs 5 – *it does not insist on its own way*. That means a loving person listens and thinks about other perspectives. He/she does not come across as a know-it-all or in a bossy manner. Someone who insists on his/her own way is very hard to get along with. It's because they're always critical – looking for what is wrong in others. There is no love in a selfish driven "my way or the highway" approach to ministry. A loving person realizes that not every hill is worth

defending to the death. They're flexible enough to work with others and to give in when needed. A loving person is willing to say, *You are right and I was wrong.*

6. Not irritable or resentful – It does not hold wrongdoings over another person. It releases a person from their shortcomings and guilt. Resentful and irritable people tend to retaliate and dish it right on back when something happens. They tend to hang onto whatever happened and stand on guard whenever they're around "that person." But a person of love gets over it and values treating all people well. For them, winning/being right is not as valuable as caring for people.

7. Does not Rejoice with Wrongdoing – vs 6 quite the opposite is true of a loving person. Somehow our society thinks that in order to love someone that you have to affirm their beliefs and behaviors. Sinful beliefs and actions/behaviors (according to Scripture) should grieve us and bother us. While this never means that we hate a wrongful person, A loving person does not condone it, affirm it or support it. But it is possible to disagree in a loving, kind compassionate manner. It usually shocks the world when a Christlike person treats a person very well and respectfully – even when there might be strong disagreements with them.

8. Rejoices with the Truth – We live in a world that rejoices in *subjective truth* – that there can be many truths and many ways – and we should apparently embrace and celebrate them all. But Godly, loving people sees things differently. They know The Truth – as defined by God in the Scriptures. They don't allow the world to define truth for them. They rejoice in God's truth. Firmly. Unashamedly. Kindly. They avoid shoving truth down someone's throat or beating them to death with their Bible. But they're willing to speak the truth – at the right time and way – and they speak it in love.

9. Bears Others' Burdens vs 7 (bears all things) Loving people come alongside others who are struggling and hurting. They don't have all the answers, they can't fix the problem, but they send an important message to the hurting person that they are not alone and that they are deeply cared for during this struggle.

10. Believes God can do the Impossible (believes all things) – one way to love and honor God is to always believe that He is at work. And He is accomplishing more than what you can see at the moment.

11. Will stay Optimistic – (hopes all things) and chooses to see the good even when life is hard. Therefore a serving kind of love doesn't give up when the road is hard or the results aren't immediate.

12. Steps Up – it is willing to endure all things... to go down tough roads and work through what may come there. If a need exists, a person of love steps up and does something. That may mean enduring the toils of hard work and commitment. It might mean bringing up tough conversations if needed. It's even willing to say no to helping when extending help actually enables a person to continue a dysfunctional life. They are willing to endure the pain of saying no when needed.

13. Never Ends It's kind of like the concept of eternal life. Once it is there, it cannot be removed – otherwise it was never eternal. It's intended to be permanent. Love, once it is embraced and chosen – will continue indefinitely and unconditionally. True love never ends even when there is hurt and disappointment. Even when there is bitterness and betrayal. True love does not burn bridges. True love looks for new opportunities to be shown and new doors to go through. It is never done. True love never ends.

People often want to share in ministry because it makes them feel good. We like to serve in ways that make us happy. But we should be driven out of a love for God and love for people and to do it for them. To love like Jesus loves. Many ministries in our church need people like you. We'll be talking more about them – but for today, evaluate... are you serving with a genuine heart of Christ-like love?

Angel tree... Kathy Mohr.