

DO YOU SHOW—OR JUST TELL JESUS THAT YOU LOVE HIM?

INTRO

This coming Wednesday is February 14th—Valentine’s Day! Retail experts suggest that nearly 20 BILLION dollars may be spent this year in conjunction with Valentine’s Day.

Twenty billion is nothing, however, compared to the \$680 billion spent at Christmas time! We buy gifts for loved ones on these particular holidays as a demonstration of our love. Is spending money the only way to demonstrate our love? Not hardly; in fact, it’s not even the “best” indicator of our love. The reality is that the “best” indicator of love varies from person to person and is what Gary Chapman calls a “love language.” A “love language,” writes Chapman, is the way a person demonstrates they love someone—and *perceives* they are being loved by someone else. In addition to “gift giving,” the other four “love languages” are: words of affirmation, quality time, acts of service, and physical touch. The challenge in marriage, suggests Chapman, is to discover the love language of your spouse and “speak” the language they “understand.”

I’ll use my wife and I as an example to illustrate. Although there is some overlap in the love languages—no one uses **only one** and is intolerant of the others—my primary love language is “acts of service.” What that means is that I demonstrate that I love my wife by doing things for her—and I feel loved when she does things for me. I will often do the dishes, make supper, and start a fire before she gets home to demonstrate that I love her and have been thinking about her. After dinner, I then head for my den to read or work on sermons.

That is all well and fine—IF her love language is also acts of service. The “problem,” however—if I can use that word—is that “acts of service” is not how she **feels** loved. She feels loved when she gets “quality time” with me and “words of affirmation”—something that can’t really happen when I’m in my den! See how that works? In **my** mind, I’m showing her that I love her because of the things I already did for her, but in **her** mind, I am demonstrating that I **don’t** love her! The key, of course, is to “speak” your SPOUSE’S love language—which may not necessarily be your primary and the one you prefer. This also works for children, by the way, and I would encourage the parents here to learn the love language of their children and “speak” it.

This may come as a surprise to you, but I believe that I can make a pretty strong argument that even Jesus has a “love language”—and tells us what it is in the Bible! Please turn to John 21 and follow along as I **read** verses 15 through 22. What is Jesus’ primary “love language”? *Acts of service*! His entire life on earth was focused on serving God and others—and His desire now is that He be served. The Title of my message this morning:

Do You Show—or Just Tell Jesus That You Love Him?

PRAY

1. First, there is ***A Commitment Wanted.***

The reason Jesus asked questions was to force people to consider why they were doing what they were doing—or to get a commitment from them. Jesus is obviously looking for a commitment from Peter; He wants Peter to demonstrate his love for Jesus in a certain way.

A. It is a question of devotion: Verse 15 “lovest thou me more than **these**?”

What is the “these” that Jesus is asking about?

--“Lovest thou me more than these;” more than the boats, nets, and life on the sea...OR

--“Lovest thou me more than these;” more than the other disciples like you said you did before you denied Me?

B. It is also a question of humility:

--In Mt 26:32, Jesus had warned the disciples that they would scatter from Him after He was arrested. What was Peter's response? In Mt 26:33-35 we see Peter declaring that even if all the others were offended, he would not be. In fact, Peter claimed he was willing to die for Jesus!

Was Peter still arrogant and self-confident? It's hard to tell at first glance because Jesus seems to ask the same question 3 times and Peter seems to answer it the same way each time. There is an interesting difference in this "question and answer" that we don't see in our English Bibles, however, that is easy to see in the Greek.

Agape is the highest and noblest form of love in the Greek language. It is God's love; an unconditional kind of love that continues even when the one loved is unresponsive, unkind, unlovable, and unworthy. Peter claimed to have an *agape* kind of love for Christ when he said he would die for Him.

Phileo is a love that responds to kindness, appreciation, or love. It is an affection or fondness; what we might call "liking" as opposed to "loving." It is NOT unconditional and may fail at times. Instead of having an *agape* kind of love for Christ, Peter really had a *phileo* kind of love and consequently denied Him.

In verse 15, Jesus asks Peter if he has an agape love. Peter responds by saying he has a phileo love for Jesus. "I like you Lord, but I'm not going to claim I have a self-denying kind of love." In other words, arrogant self-confident Peter was not as confident as he had once been.

In verse 16, Jesus again asks Peter if he has *agape* love and Peter again responds that he has *phileo*—affection and fondness—for Jesus.

In verse 17, Jesus changes it up. "Peter, do you even *like* me—do you have a fondness and affection for me?" Peter was grieved because he was asked a third time—probably because of the reminder that he had denied he knew Jesus three times—but he stayed consistent in his humility. "You know I like you, Lord, but I'm not going to brag about a love that I'm not sure I have."

Peter, it seems, had learned his lesson and the answers he gives reveal that he has been humbled. The trust that he had in himself and his own sufficiency had been shattered during his betrayal of Christ.

2. **A commission warranted**

Peter humbly admitted that he did not have a deep-rooted unconditional love like he should have, but Jesus still commissioned him. Jesus gave Peter a job to do because there was a job that needed to be done! What was the job? What did Jesus want Peter to do?

A. Verse 15—"Feed my lambs." Barnes writes the following:

"The church is often compared to a flock (John 10:1-16). Here the expression "my lambs" undoubtedly refers to the tender and the young in the Christian church; to those who are young in years and in Christian experience."

In other words, Jesus is ensuring Peter understands the importance of spiritually "feeding" those that are young in years and young in the faith. They need to be given spiritual food that is applicable to them and need the "milk" of the Word as opposed to the "meat."

B. Verse 16—“Feed my sheep.” Once again we note something in the Greek that we miss in the English. The word for “feed”—*poimaino*—does NOT mean to provide nutrients; rather, it means to “tend, take care of, guide, and guard.” It covers the “Pastoral” responsibilities of the ministry—not just the preaching/teaching aspect.

C. Verse 17—“Feed my sheep.” Here the Greek word for “feed” is the same one used in verse 15 and means to provide spiritual nourishment from the Word of God.

3. **A Cost Warned of**

Notice verses 18-19. In verse 19, Jesus is telling Peter “by what death he should glorify God.”

How was Peter to die? We read verse 18 and think, “I don’t see death even mentioned; how can Jesus be talking about death?” Clarke writes the following in his commentary: “Wetstein observes that it was a custom at Rome to put the necks of those who were to be crucified into a yoke, and to stretch out their hands and fasten them to the end of it; and having thus led them through the city they were carried out to be crucified.”

Peter would stretch forth his hands—and be carried—to a cross and be crucified—just like Jesus. First century historians tell us that Peter had a special request when he was about to be crucified—he asked to be crucified upside down! Why? He was not worthy to be crucified in the same manner as Jesus! Another commentator points out that Jesus said “*thou* shalt stretch forth thy hands”—you will willingly surrender your life because you chose to serve me. What a cost!

Notice Jesus’ words at the end of verse 19 “Follow me.” Did Peter do that? He most certainly did! To those suffering persecution, Peter writes that they were to rejoice even when going through a heavy trial by focusing on Jesus, “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (I Pet 1:8).

4. **A Comparison Warded Off**

Look at verses 20-22: “Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved [John] following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?”

In essence, Peter is asking “What is going to happen to John? How will he die?” **Why** did Peter want to know what would happen to John? Not told so we can only guess.

--Maybe it was because Peter was a bit apprehensive about how he was going to die and secretly hoped John would suffer the same fate; a kind of “misery loves company” way of thinking

--Maybe it was out of kindness for John and his belief that John should **not** suffer the same as Peter because John had not betrayed Jesus in the manner Peter had

--Regardless of Peter’s motivation, Jesus didn’t tell him what would become of John. Notice verse 22: “If I will that he tarry [stay alive] till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.”

Jesus didn’t totally ignore Peter’s question, however, and His answer is also for **our** benefit. “If John remains alive until I return—or if he doesn’t—that is not your concern. You need to focus on following and obeying me—that is your number one priority!”

Is not that the same priority Jesus wants us to have—to seek, find, and obey **His** will? Although we **are** our brother’s keeper and should be concerned for the physical well-being and spiritual walk of one another, we cannot let what happens to others or God’s plan for others become a distraction or an excuse for us not doing what we are supposed to do!

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:

1. Jesus demonstrated agape love—an unconditional, undeserving love to unworthy sinners—by dying on the cross to pay for your sins and mine. Have you received for yourself the gift of eternal life by trusting Jesus and Jesus alone—or are you trying to earn your way to heaven by what you **do**?
2. Do you love Jesus more than these—these things in life that try to sidetrack us and steal our devotion from Jesus? What would your response be if Jesus asked that question of you?
3. Are you following Jesus? Although Peter had failed Jesus, Jesus still wanted to use him and gave him a job to do. Are you willing to do what God wants you to do? Don't worry about what others do or don't do—you and I need to obey what God wants US to do!