

# Love Is a Verb

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[ 0 : 00 ] John chapter 13, verses 31 through 38, if you would please stand with me as we honor the reading of God's word together.

! He said,

May God add a blessing to the reading of his word. Would you please be seated? that would threaten Jesus' life. Sounds like a good friend, doesn't it? Who wouldn't want a friend like that? You know, guys, how we talk sometimes with our friends, especially in our younger days, and we say to them, I would take a bullet for you. I would die for you. That's what Peter says to Jesus here, but Jesus knew the truth, and he reveals to Peter that in a very short while, his actions will betray his brave and confident speech. As Jesus was unjustly tried and sentenced to death, and as his beaten, bruised, and bloodied body slumped and sagged underneath the weight of the cross he carried to the place of his death, and as the nails pierced his hands and his feet, and as they raised him up on the cross where he hung until he died, Peter, who said that he'd give his life for Jesus, was nowhere to be found. Peter had, in fact, denied Jesus three times.

Just as Jesus said that he would, he went into hiding to save the life he said he'd laid down in order to save the life of Jesus. Peter said he loved Jesus, but his actions, at least in this case, did not support that claim. And then three days later, Jesus rises from the grave. He comes back to life, and before he ascends back into heaven, he would have a confrontation with Peter.

[ 4 : 19 ] The elephant in the room would be addressed, and he would confront Peter with a question repeated three times. Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me? And so as Jesus confronted Peter then, so he confronts us, his church, with this passage today.

And this passage confronts us with the same question, I believe, that Jesus confronted Peter with. Do you love me? Highland Park Baptist Church, Jesus asks us today, Do you love me? Are you revealing your love for me in the way in which I have demonstrated it and commanded you to love one another?

We've been in this gospel for quite some time, and we saw last week that Judas has been dismissed by Jesus at this point to carry out his betrayal that would ultimately lead to our Lord's death. And now in chapters 13 through 17, Jesus focuses his attention on his disciples to prepare them for the events that will take place the next day, when he is taken away, when he is crucified, when he will depart from them. And so here he begins his farewell discourse by first expressing to his disciples the importance that they love one another.

His earthly ministry was coming to an end, but their ministry was truly just about to begin. And so Jesus is preparing them for that future ministry by first expressing to them right here how crucial it is that they love one another with a love like his. And so that's the main idea for this morning's message. And we must see Jesus commands his followers to love each other as he's demonstrated.

And so again, I ask you, church, are we demonstrating a kind of love for one another that testifies to a lost and dying world that we genuinely love one another? If we truly want to make disciples, if we genuinely want to make a gospel impact in our community, then we must love each other with a selfless and a sacrificial kind of love, a love that has been demonstrated to us by our Lord Jesus Christ. Christian love doesn't just say, Christian love does.

[ 7 : 41 ] love love is a verb. Love is a verb. Love, genuine love, Christ-like love is not just spoken, it's lived out in a real impactful way. Don't you want our community to know how much we love Jesus?

Jesus. How grateful we are to be the recipients of his love. And if he said yes, then love must be a verb in our church. It must be with action, it must do. A love that does. And so how does love

become a verb? Well, this passage tells us, and it tells us first by reminding us that the ultimate demonstration of God's love is the cross. The ultimate demonstration of God's love is the cross. Let's look again at verses 31 and 32. When he had gone out, Jesus said, now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and glorify him at once. And so there you see in just two verses the word glory in some form or another appears five times. In the first three times that it appears in our English translations, it's written in the past tense. But in the original Greek, that word is written in the aorist indicative tense. Now, we don't have an aorist indicative tense in our language, so these verses can sound confusing in our vernacular. In the original Greek, when an action was written in the aorist indicative tense, it speaks of a future event that is so certain to happen that it is spoken of in the present as if it already had occurred. And so Jesus is speaking about here a future event that is so certain to happen that he speaks of it right now in the present as if it already had. Well, what was that event?

The events of the next day, the cross that he would die upon. But how could such a humiliating death glorify God and him? Well, first of all, we understand from the Bible that his death was necessary for salvation. The Bible tells us that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. The Bible tells us that the wages of our sin is death and that ultimately all of our sin is committed against our Creator.

And our Creator, God, is a just and holy God. In fact, his justice is a holy kind of justice. And sin incurs a debt with him that someone must pay.

[ 11 : 11 ] You know, when I was a kid, for about one week, I got really interested in tennis. And I don't know what it was. You know, Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi were big in the day. These days, I think I'd rather watch golf on TV than watch tennis, to tell you the truth. No offense to you tennis fans. But anyhow, I got really into it. And I grabbed a racket and a tennis ball. And I went out to our driveway.

And we had two garage doors with windows at the top. And I was there banging that tennis ball up against the garage doors. And it didn't take long for my dad to come out and say, what are you doing?

And I told him, I'm playing tennis. And he said, well, I would rather you not do that because you're going to send a tennis ball through one of these windows. And that will be upsetting to me. And so I said, okay, okay, dad, I'll be careful or whatever. Just get out of here. Let me continue in my mind this whatever championship match that I'm involved with. And he left. And sure enough, I mean, it didn't take three or four more hits. And I sent one, I hit it hard, boom, and I watched. It's like it was in slow motion, just sail right through one of those window panes. And again, it didn't take long for my dad to hear the crashing sound of broken glass in our garage. And I heard him coming out towards me. And guess what I did? Dad, I'm sorry. I know you said no, but I'm a rebellious child.

Please have mercy on me. No, I ran around the side of the house. But my dad knew that I hadn't gotten far. And he found me, and he expressed his displeasure with my disobedience. And there was discipline involved with that. But you know what? Even though my dad was angry, my father loves me. And so he forgave me. However, that window was still broken.

And someone needed to clean it. And I was still young enough that my dad was concerned that I would cut my fingers picking up that glass. So he cleaned it up. And I didn't have any money. I couldn't pay to get that window fixed. So he bought the new window. And he put it in place of the broken one.

[ 13 : 56 ] He cleaned up my mess for me. Isn't that what God does for us in salvation? Your sin is against God. And that sin has incurred a debt which only he can forgive.

And he's chosen to forgive it by paying that debt himself, by giving his one and only Son. As Colossians 2, 13 through 15 says, And you were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh. God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all of our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him. See, the cross glorifies God because it reveals his power to vanquish our foes. The cross glorifies God because it reveals his faithfulness to keep his promises. He said that he would send a redeemer. And he did. The cross glorifies God because it reveals his hatred of sin and the length he was willing to go in order to save us from it by the suffering of his only Son in our place for it. The cross glorifies God in that it is the most powerful and the most visible demonstration of his love for you and me. Romans 5, 8 says,

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 1 John 4, 10 says, And 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. And then, of course, John 3, 16 says, For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. You know, the first verse that a new Awana student learns in our church is John 3, 16.

The first thing that we want that student to know and be confronted with is the great love of God to save sinners by sending his only Son to die for their sins, that by faith in him they will live forever. God has demonstrated his love for us in such an undeniable way. How can anyone look at the cross and doubt that our God is a God who loves?

[16:57] At the cross, the selfless, sacrificial love of God was put on full display in an unsurpassable way. God gave his only Son to die on behalf of sinful people for you and for me.

You know, Jesus loves me. This I know, for the Bible tells me so, is one of the greatest lyrics ever composed by human beings.

And then Jesus added in verse 32, If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and glorify him at once. You see, here he is looking beyond the cross.

He is looking to not just the certain event of the next day, but what awaits him beyond the cross, which is his resurrection.

And then his ascension back to heaven that he left to endure hell on earth when he was forsaken by his Father on the cross. This was the joy that was set before him.

[18:04] In love, God sent his Son. In love, Christ died for you on the cross. Love has no greater demonstration than God would give his only Son who would willingly, selflessly, and sacrificially die to save hopeless and helpless sinners like you and me.

Jesus has demonstrated his love like no other. And in verses 33 through 35, we see that Jesus commands his followers to love one another.

He's given the demonstration of it, and now he issues the command that his followers are to love one another. Look again at verse 33. Little children, yet a little while I am with you.

You will seek me. And just as I said to the Jews, so now I say to you, where I am going, you cannot come. And so here Jesus again is revealing to his disciples that he is leaving.

He'll be alone when he dies. His disciples will be apart from him. But then he would rise again.

[19:11] And then they would be with Jesus again. But then he'd leave them once more as he ascended back to heaven. And so no doubt the disciples at this point found Jesus' statement here hard to understand and difficult to accept.

So Jesus begins by breaking the news to them gently, using an affectionate term, *technia*, little children. Growing up, my mom had a daycare in our home.

And I always knew whenever a new kid was added into the mix, because you could hear their weeping and their wailing and their screams all the way upstairs.

They had been left behind. For many of them, for the first time, by their mom and their dad, who were the greatest source of love and security that they had ever known.

And they'd been left in a strange place with strange people. And they felt abandoned. And imagine it. Being a kid and being left by your mother and father.

[20:31] Wouldn't you feel unloved? Why would they do this? Why can't I go with them? Why would they leave me here?

I hate it here. I don't want to be here. Why would you do such a horrible thing to me? And you know, despite my mom's reassurances that their mom and dad would be back, the actions of those kids indicated that they did not believe her.

And so the news that Jesus was leaving, you must understand, was greatly troubling to his disciples.

They loved him. They depended upon him. Jesus' leaving them was a painful and frightening thought. Certainly not what they would have chosen.

But they'd eventually learn that his leaving was the most loving thing that he could do on their behalf.

[21:38] And Jesus had already mentioned this to them, that this is what he would do. John 10, 11. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.

And he'd been telling them that he came to die. That he came to die for them. That he came to die for all who would believe in him.

And so he had to leave. But that separation would be temporary. And because he was willing to leave for a time, he ensured that there will never be an eternal separation between the Father and those who have faith in his Son.

And then in verse 34, Jesus says, Now this command is not new in the sense that the Old Testament has had nothing to say about our loving God and loving one another.

It commands it. In fact, Jesus was asked which commandment was the greatest. And he gave this reply in Matthew 22, verse 37 through 40. He said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

[ 23 : 01 ] This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. And then he says, On these two commandments depend all of the law and the prophets.

And so there Jesus is saying that the Old Testament boiled down basically to God's command that we love him and that we love others. But this command issued in verse 34 by Jesus is different in the sense that he adds another layer to it.

How does he add that layer? And so Jesus is elevating the standard of love for others based upon his example, the example that he's set.

He's shown, he's demonstrated his love for us, hasn't he? We know how Jesus loves us. Selflessly, sacrificially, dying in our place to save us from our sins, enduring and absorbing the full wrath of God for the sins that we've committed against him.

And so I ask you, how well are you? How well are you demonstrating that kind of love to people in this room right now?

[ 24 : 29 ] Now you could be thinking, Pastor Mike, I'm not Jesus. I can't possibly love like that or be expected to love like that.

That command is impossible for us to follow this side of heaven. To which I would respond that you're right. That Jesus is God and you and I are not.

That he was totally and completely sinless. Not the case with us. We are sinful. But let me ask you another question. Do you believe that the Bible is God's word?

Do you believe that the Bible is true? Do you believe that God's word is without error? So what do the scriptures say in answer to this command that seems impossible to you?

First of all, the Bible says that when a person is saved, they are indwelt and sealed by the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus promised in John 14, 16, and 17, in chapter 16, verse 13.

[ 25 : 49 ] And as is confirmed and affirmed by 1 Corinthians 3, 16, 19 as well. In Romans 8, 9 through 11, Ephesians 1, 13 through 14, and Ephesians 4, 30.

The Bible says in Galatians 4, 22, that when a believer is indwelt by the Spirit at salvation, they begin displaying the fruits of the Spirit in their lives, the first of which is love.

This love, Paul says in Romans 5, 5, has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. This love that comes through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and is poured into you is evidence that you have been truly saved, as we've already read in 1 John 3, 14 through 18.

Because whoever hates his brother and does not love walks in darkness. 1 John 2, verse 10 through 11. And whoever does not love, does not love God's people, does not know God.

1 John 4, 7 through 9. Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God. And whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

[ 27 : 13 ] Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this, the love of God was made manifest among us that God sent His only Son into the world that we might live through Him.

You know, if you, like me, grew up with siblings, you probably, certainly at some point, got in a fight with them. Where either you said to them or they said to you, you know what?

I wish you had never been born. You ever said that before? We often hurt one another so bad in our families that we can, for a time, express that, you know what?

Life would be better, my life would be better, if you just had never been born. The church is a family. And you know what?

In the family of God, we often say things and do things that hurt one another deeply. Church hurt is one of the hardest pains that anyone will have to ever go through.

[ 28 : 24 ] Oftentimes when we've hurt or been hurt, we refuse to either apologize or to grant forgiveness.

In fact, we are prone to do the opposite in the family of God. We're prone to hold grudges against others. We're prone to avoid other people in our church.

Maybe even look down on them. And you know, even breathe a sigh of relief when we come into church and we see that their car isn't in the parking lot and they're not here.

Thinking, whew, don't have to see them today. And when we do that, when we treat one another in that way, are we not basically saying in our heart, I wish you'd never been born again.

I wish God hadn't saved you. I wish that you were not in this church. Asking for forgiveness forgiveness and granting forgiveness are a whole lot harder than we think.

[ 29 : 49 ] Isn't it hard? If a brother sins against you, Jesus doesn't say, well, you have a right to be bitter and you should hold a grudge.

Jesus doesn't say, if a brother sins against you, that you should avoid that brother either. What does he say? He says, go to them and point out their error.

And you know, when you've been hurt by a believer and even when you have the right to be angry, but when that person seeks forgiveness from you, you are commanded to release them from that debt by forgiving them as Christ has forgiven you.

As a matter of fact, few things make a Christian more Christ-like or God-like than when they are willing to forgive someone even when that someone doesn't ask for them to forgive them.

But you do it because you know the great debt of sin that you have in your life that God in His grace has forgiven you of, that He has unburdened you with by placing it on His Son at the cross because He loves you.

[ 31 : 13 ] Listen to what Jesus says to the disciples next about this command to love one another. He says in verse 35, by this, you're loving one another. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

And so here, Jesus gives the world the right to judge His church. He's saying to the world in effect, look, I am giving you permission.

I am giving you the right to look at my church, to examine my church, and to see if those who say they love me are truly loving me in the way that they demonstrate their love to one another.

And I believe that no command is talked more about in the church and by Christians and more rarely obeyed than this simple command that Jesus gives to love one another as He has loved us. God is to imagine how much the world would prosper, how much the gospel would advance if we would merely obey this one command to love one another as Jesus has loved us.

[ 32 : 45 ] And so I ask you, brothers and sisters in Christ, sincerely, is your hatred and disdain for a person in this church, in this room, worth your losing your witness for Christ?

Is it worth it? then Jesus says in verses 36 and 38 or we see through those verses that actions communicate love louder than words.

Jesus has demonstrated the love of God through His cross, through His death. Jesus has commanded that we love one another. And now here we see in verses 36 and 38 that actions communicate love louder than words.

Again in verse 36, look there in your Bible. Simon Peter said to Him, Lord, where are you going? Jesus answered him, where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward.

Peter said to Him, Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you. Jesus answered, will you lay down your life for me?

[ 34 : 02 ] Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow until you have denied me three times.

You know, we know from the gospel accounts that Peter was a big talker, that he loved Jesus, and often his intentions were good, but here his intentions expressed in a safe place amongst close friends were soon changed when confronted by a hostile mob in a darkened garden.

And he did chop, he did chop the soldier's ear off, but Jesus put an end to that. Peter had no right to take the law into his own hands, but soon Peter, just as Jesus said that he would, denied him three times.

and after that third denial, when the rooster crowed, the Bible says that Peter remembered what Jesus had said, and he went away, and he wept bitterly.

he said he loved Jesus. He said he'd die for Jesus. But here his actions betrayed his speech.

And Jesus goes to the cross, and Jesus dies, but three days later he rises again. And then he appears to his disciples and many others often appearing and then vanishing out of sight.

[ 35 : 47 ] And we know that Peter was elated to see the empty tomb and to see his risen Lord, but there was still an unfinished matter between them. And you know another aspect of loving one another that I haven't mentioned yet is that love rebukes sin.

Love seeks restoration in relationships, primarily a wayward brother or sister's relationship to God, that that sinner would be restored.

And so Jesus finally confronts Peter over his denial in John chapter 21 verses 15 through 19. And as I said at the beginning, Jesus confronts Peter here with a question repeated three times, Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?

love me? And each time Jesus asks that question, Peter answers in the affirmative, yes Lord, you know I love you.

In the Greek language there are three words for love. In this passage, two of those forms of the word are used. When Jesus asked Peter, do you love me?

[ 37 : 09 ] Jesus uses the word for love, agape, which refers to a love that is supreme, a love that is unconditional, a love that is faithful, a love that is totally committed.

And Peter responded the first two times to Christ's question using the Greek word for love, phileo, which refers to a brotherly or a friendly kind of love.

It's love, but it's not of the supreme sort. Finally, after the third time Jesus asked Peter, do you love me?

He said, yes, Lord, I agape you. I love you. Peter has been moved by Jesus from a phileo kind of love to an agape love.

Jesus had a mission for him to undertake. And Peter would be instrumental in establishing his church, in spreading and advancing the gospel, in making disciples.

[ 38 : 23 ] But he had to have the right affections first. And with that change of heart, Peter received forgiveness, he was reinstated, and he became a blessing to many as he demonstrated Christ's love in word and in deed.

Peter came to understand that love was a verb displayed in the actions of Christ on the cross, received through salvation in the indwelling of his spirit, and meant to be shared to a dying world that they would know how much Christ has loved us, that they would know the love of Christ too. And so I ask you, this morning, are you more like Peter in the upper room before our Lord's death, or are you more like Peter after our Lord's resurrection when Jesus confronts him and reinstates him?

Is your love for Christ better defined as a phileo kind of love, a friendly kind of love, a brotherly kind of love? Yeah, I like Jesus. We love Jesus.

Yes, we do. We love Jesus. How about you? He's our buddy. He's our friend. Jesus is a good guy. And he is. But he demands a greater form of love.

[ 39 : 52 ] Is your love for him an agape kind of love? Is it totally committed? Do you truly love the people in this room?

Look around. Do you truly love the people in this room? Now, some of you are sitting next to a mother or father or relative. I want you to look beyond them. Do you really love the people in this room?

Because, you know, it's a tragic thing when a church has a poor reputation in its community. Those people don't love one another. That reputation is hard to overcome.

But, as we see with Peter, Jesus gives second chances. And so, Highland Park Baptist Church, Jesus asks us today, do you love me?

And he follows that up by asking, do you love like me? He asks each of us this morning on a personal level, do you love me?

[ 41 : 05 ] Are you truly loving one another? So, may love be a verb here. May this church be one of God's greatest blessing to each and every one of our lives.

May this church be one of God's greatest blessings to our community. May God reach the lost through our witness as we live the love of Jesus and express that love to one another that the world would see and know those people belong to Jesus Christ.

Four questions of application for us to go over in our community groups tonight. And again, if you're not a part of a community group but would like to be, I encourage you to come and find me and we'll get you plugged in. If not, I encourage you again, go over these questions with your Bible sometime today or later this week.

Question number one, what does the cross reveal about the length and depth of God's love for you? Just think about the cross. What does the cross reveal about how great God's love is for you? Question number two, how does seeking and extending forgiveness to one another communicate to the world that we are followers of Christ? What are the consequences if we don't seek and extend forgiveness to one another in this church?

[ 42 : 30 ] Question three, how can our church better demonstrate love for one another? Some real practical ways, some things that you can actually do to demonstrate our love for one another, your love for people in this church.

Are we as loving of a church as Christ commands us to be? And then question number four, Jesus forgave and reinstated Peter.

Who in this church do you need to forgive? Who do you need to show love to? And I'll add to that, who do you need to go to and ask forgiveness of?

What steps will you take to resolve that conflict soon? Matthew 18, verses 15 through 20, the template there for you to follow? If you've heard this message today and you realize that you have not known the love of God or you've seen the love of God for you and you realize through the conviction of the Spirit that you are lost and you need to be saved, that you need to be loved by Jesus, God bless you.

I encourage you to come and let me know now or sometime at some point. And if you would like during our invitation hymn, listen, the altars, this area up front is open.

[ 43 : 50 ] You don't have to come front. You can stay in your pew. But I encourage you to be praying for our church to better resemble the kind of loving community that God has called us to.

And if there is someone that you need to forgive or if there is someone that you need to ask forgiveness of, now is the time I encourage you to pray that God would move you to do that.

Let's pray. Lord God, there is no greater love than that you would send your son Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. Lord, if any of us ever doubts that we are loved, all we have to do is turn open your word and read how willing you were to go to redeem us from our sins by sending your only son to die in our place.

God, we have known a great love in Christ. And we have a clear command to love one another in the way that he has so selflessly and sacrificially loved us.

God, I pray for prayer for our church that we would let go of grudges, that we would seek forgiveness and grant it, that we would apologize when we've offended, Lord, that we would make sure that we understand that we've got a job to do to make disciples and the world is watching and we want them to see how much we love one another and make the determination those people are different, those people love Jesus.

[ 45 : 27 ] God, may you be glorified by all that results from that. We need your help, Lord. Help us, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.