

## The New Commandment Love Defined in 1 Corinthians 13

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Studio Session 23  
11/2003

Now as we've been continuing our discussions on "what does the New Commandment actually mean, as we apply it" we've been looking at the list of descriptions of love in **I Corinthians the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter** and we observed that Paul makes very clear three categories regarding love: "what love is", "what love is not" and "what love is always" and we see that typically today we mix and match the categories. (Inserted – actual verse —**"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails..."** – I Corinthians 13:4-8a) So whereas Paul says, "Love is patient"—and when he is talking about "what love is" he talks about what love is; when he is talking about "what love is not", he talks about what it is not and when he talks about "what it is always" he talks about what it is always and he doesn't mix up the categories. He doesn't talk about "what love is *always*" while he is talking about "what love is".

But *we* mix them up. So whereas Paul would say, "love is patient" we would often find ourselves saying, "love is *always* patient" and that would simply not be true because—on one occasion for example—Jesus drove the moneychangers out of the temple... clearly not a patient act. (Inserted – **Matthew 21:12,13**) So the question is: when are we to be patient and kind and when are we to cause confrontation? At what point should we be tolerant and at what point should we be intolerant? Clearly, Jesus was both. When He drove the moneychangers out of the temple He was very intolerant of that activity in the temple. Now Jesus is perfect in love so even that [act of driving the moneychangers out of the temple] constitutes an act of love but the ones who are the recipients of it were hardly inclined to appreciate this expression of love.

So how do you know when to be what? In a previous broadcast we also talked about the story of the "prodigal son" and we looked at the fact that the father gave the son the money to go off and "waste his substance in riotous living" knowing that that is what the son would do *before* he did it. (Inserted – **Luke 15:11-32**) Now, modern theorists would

say that that is “enabling”. Well if the father in the story is a type of God then clearly He is demonstrating that there are times when you should enable. Well how do we know when to do what to do? On the one hand it seems that God is inordinately tolerant and on other occasions it seems that He is equally intolerant and tough.

Now there are those who favor the school of thought that says that love should always be tough and there are those who favor the school of thought that says that no, love should always be tolerant. What I’m showing to you is that there are times when to be tolerant is wrong and there are times that when to be tough is wrong. If God were always tough with us—and “tough love” being described as letting people pay the consequence of what they do, what their actions call for—what exactly would be the consequences to us, of sin? If God followed through on that point of view where would we end up? Obviously we would not fare very well.

On the other hand it is equally clear that God is not intent on being tolerant of everyone who lives and dies in sin. In fact He is quite *intolerant* of someone who dies in sin; they go to Hell. I wanted simply to make the point that human standards are entirely irrelevant in the consideration of the application of the New Commandment which is to love another more than you love yourself. How do you know what to do? Do you remember we talked about what was meant by the fact that Jesus said, “Love one another as I have loved you.” (Inserted – actual verse—“ **‘A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.’**” – **John 13:34**) And He said that *prior* to the cross. Typically when we think of the answer to what that meant (when Jesus said, “Love one another as I have loved you.”) we immediately go to the cross and we say, “Now there is a situation in which Jesus poured out His life for us.” And we understand the life of Jesus, and His statement—“Love one another as I have loved you.”—in terms of that one event. But I pointed out to you that that event had not yet occurred when Jesus said, “Love one another as I have loved you.” In short, we must understand the meaning of what Jesus said apart from the specific reference to the cross because He had not yet died on the cross when He said that His command was, “Love one another as I have loved you.”

Now it isn’t to set aside the cross—in fact the cross represents perhaps the final act of a life in which He had consistently practiced this concept of loving more than He loved himself. When we came to it what we discovered was what Jesus meant by that was simply this: that Jesus did not do anything of His own; that whatever He saw the Father doing, that is exactly what He did. Let’s look at it from the Gospel of **John** and we’ll cue back into these messages at this point. The Gospel of **John**, the **14<sup>th</sup> chapter**, this is right after He says, “**A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you...**” Now Philip said to Him, “**Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us. Jesus answered: ‘Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the**

**Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.”** (Inserted – **John 14:8-11**)

Now, what He is telling us is that He himself loved the Father enough to allow the Father to have full occupancy of His person... and that's the essence of the thing. When He says, "Love one another as I have loved you," He's not talking about anything He has *done* to present the love of God or to enhance the love of God. He's saying that the words that are spoken are the Father's words; the actions that are undertaken are the Father's actions. What then is His role in the matter? His role in the matter is simply this: that He chose to present himself to God as a vessel in whom God would live and out of whom God would do whatever it was that pleased God that God should do. In this respect then, it was the Father that lived in Him, who spoke—Jesus was the voice, but that the entire process by which He spoke was fully yielded to the Father—therefore what words came out were not the words of Jesus, they were the words of the Father.

Now what happens is: when you've become completely compatible with the Father you will want to speak the Father's words and your joy is to hear the Father speaking out of you. Your contentment is to watch the Father doing something out of you. Now in this way you are fully equipped to know what to say in what situation and at that point—rather than trying to decide ahead of time if the situation requires you to be tough or tolerant, or whether you would have a belief-structure that would cause you to practice "intolerant love" or "tolerant love". "Tough love" is just another way of saying "intolerant". "Intolerant love" or "tolerant love"... and *neither* is the thing that is advocated because "intolerant love" could be just as wrong as "tolerant love" and in fact, we shouldn't call these things "tough" or "tolerant" love. Neither is about love; they both have to do with the convenience of the person who has the upper hand.

The person who is "tough" typically doesn't want to be bothered with dealing with the situation that is confronting him and the person who is "tolerant" is equally disposed not to want to deal with the situation that is confronting them in the life of another. And neither is an appropriate standard for the believer because our standard is that first we are yielded to God. Therefore, on every occasion, what you are to do and what you are to say is determined by what God shows you to do and what God shows you to say. The reason why this cannot be practiced by the majority of church people is because the church culture has thoroughly discouraged people from even the belief that you can hear God. As a result, they are scrambling for an alternative and when the psychologists come along and tell them what to do they are only too happy to offload responsibility onto the psychologists who are no better equipped to handle the situations than if the situations were not handled at all.

I'll give you an example: let's say in the case where there's a young man who gets a

young girl pregnant. The typical response is: okay, now he has done something that is wrong—with which everyone can agree (that is, he has gotten her pregnant apart from them being married)—and someone says, “Okay, he’s done something that is wrong; now he must face the consequences.” And what might those consequences be? Well now he’s involved with the raising of the child and he’s involved with all of the emotional circumstances that accompany this. Is this, in fact, paying the consequence for his sin? Is this an issue of consequence or not? What really is the sin? The sin is involved with the sexual conduct so it is the sin of fornication. Now, does God forgive the sin? The answer is: of course He does. Then what is the consequence that we are talking about? Once he has been forgiven he has been forgiven. The results are that now he has responsibilities.

Why might God require him to take care of this child? The answer is, among other things: he has shown a lack of responsibility and this lack of responsibility indicates that he needs to grow up. But here is the goodness of God: while he has picked up the responsibility of care, God will help him with such things as a job, such things as becoming more mature and so on. The circumstance of the trials that will attend are not bad for him if the circumstances will result in him becoming more mature—in him learning restraint, learning discipline. This is a circumstance in which God is going to work in his life to bring him to a greater place of responsibility and maturity. Similarly, it’s the circumstance in which the Lord will work in the life of the young girl. Any number of circumstances might have attended her decision to become pregnant and God will also forgive her of her sin but she is going to have to also learn through very hard and difficult circumstances the things that are lacking or missing from her life.

So even though the situation is wrong, to talk in terms of “tough love” is ridiculous because, once there is forgiveness, God proceeds to operate within that difficult circumstance—showing both His mercy and compassion on one hand and also His discipline on the other. They are all intertwined elements and it is these intertwined elements that allow God to redeem the circumstance. Therefore, what are we getting to? We’re getting to this: that the way that God uses you personally, out of whom He lives and does His work—that is God lives in you and out of you He lives and He does His work. You need to rely on neither the formula of “tough love” nor the formula of “tolerance” because the Holy Spirit will in fact show you what to do moment by moment.

Some of you hearing this broadcast may be parents faced with children who are involved in very difficult circumstances just now and you don’t quite know what to do and you’ve been given the advice of “tough love” and you’ve been given the advice of “tolerance” and it’s been thoroughly confusing to you. Because, on one hand, there are some things in you as a parent that still continue to be affected by your desire to reach out to that child in his or her problems at the moment. On the other hand you keep hearing the voice of the psychologist in your head saying, “But you’ve got to be tough.” and so you set aside things that may well be God because you don’t want to be irresponsible. Now

let me give you a different way; let me talk to you about how you ought to go about this. *You really are able to hear God.* There is not a preset answer to this dilemma. The answer is what God is showing you and the reason is this: that this child of yours has a destiny to be fulfilled. The decisions that they've made at the present time have complicated things. Now that destiny, however, has not been revoked. These circumstances may be of the greatest value in training and preparing that child to "come around". How you handle your role in this thing may be that which decides how quickly they come around or how long they stay in this situation. That's why you have to have input from the Lord.

In the parable of the father with the prodigal son, the father gave to the son the money that the son requested and he knew while he gave him the money that the son would go and waste it in the party life. Why did the father do it? The answer is this simple: the father knew that the son was a worshipper. Now I haven't taken the time to lay out this story; I'm giving you certain conclusions. The father knew that the son was a worshipper but what commonly happens to people is that before they understand their destiny they will operate in their flesh. While they are operating in their flesh their decisions will be bad decisions. Someone who is truly a worshipper, for example, is also something of a "wild man". The staid, steady, predictable fellow is hardly the one who is going to be a worshipper but the one who lives on the edge has the emotional capability of serving God in a very different way than the one who is steady and predictable. We shouldn't try to make everybody into the steady, predictable type because there is value to those who have a nature that is given to spontaneous responses. Kind of like God spoke of Ishmael as a "wild donkey of a man"... but the Lord hath *need* of the donkey. (Inserted – actual verse—**"The angel of the Lord also said to her: 'You are now with child and you will have a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard of your misery. He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers.'"** – Genesis 16: 11,12)

There are occasions when it's the one who is unrestrained or the one who has these tendencies toward spontaneous behavior... there are times and circumstances in which *that's* the one that God wants to use *particularly*. So there is not a greater value to God of one who is predictable, steadfast and steady than there is one who lives on the edge and is somewhat wild. Anyone—whether you are steady, predictable or reliable on the one hand, or you are living on the edge and somewhat wild—everyone has a destiny and the way that they are is part of what that destiny requires. Now no one is fulfilling his destiny while he is still in the flesh—whether it's the steady, predictable one who calculates how he is going to steal from the corporation and commit these atrocities that are financial in nature or the wild partier who lives in a drug haze. Unredeemed, everybody is equally bad. Everybody is equally without value in terms of their destiny, but *redeemed*... God does not make everyone then a carbon copy of the other.

That is why this notion of “tolerant love” or “tough love” is so useless because it does not allow you to see who the person is even while they are in the flesh. Now when you walk with the Lord the Spirit of God is able to show you who the person is that you have oversight of or that you have a relationship with and the way that the Holy Spirit will direct you is in a manner that is calculated to make the best use of the situations that are at hand. So there is no formula then, and in fact you don’t need a formula, because the Holy Spirit is well able to show you how to draw out—of the present circumstances—the elements that relate to the future. For example, I have two children; one is very stable and very normal; the other has blue hair or pink hair, depending. Now I got a Father’s Day card from one, from my steady, predictable son and he was very thankful for the things that I had done for him or given to him as a father and I was very touched by the sincerity. I got a card from my other child and the blue or pink hair, depending on the color of the month and there were four faces on this card and they were the faces of a man in various states of agony: surprise, shock, consternation and so on. And inside, the card said, “Admit it. You miss the excitement that there used to be in the house when I lived at home.” Now that was perfect for that child.

Each of these children is very different from the other so when I deal with one—when I deal with my predictable son—I do not try to contain him or try to tell him what to do because he has already thought out what he should do. So I ask him questions about what he is supposed to do and he answers me because he has thought it out. When I speak to my child who doesn’t walk a straight line I have to deal with her very differently. There, it is a matter of suggestion and asking for her opinion, which she is only too happy to give me and within those parameters I make suggestions. My point is that the way you deal with each one is very different. One will provide you with challenges that are very unique but neither one is more valuable than the other and neither one is more of a problem, if you like, than the other. They are just different. As a father then, it is my responsibility to determine who it is that God has placed under my care and to understand their nature and their character and to respond to each one very uniquely. In that respect I have not found the Christian psychologists to be of any particular use to me but I have found that walking in the Spirit and hearing God to be greatly important. Now we’ll continue to talk about these attributes of love in **I Corinthians** in the next broadcast. I’m Sam Soleyn, God bless you and I’ll see you again.

### **Scripture References:**

I Corinthians 13:4-8a

Matthew 21:12,13

Luke 15:11-32

John 13:34

John 14:8-11

## Genesis 16:11,12