

GLENKIRK CHURCH



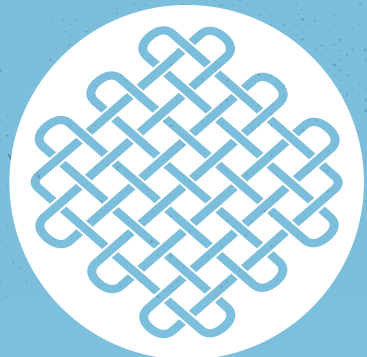
WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

SEPTEMBER 19 - 23, 2022



GLENKIRK ON MISSION



MONDAY

Read **1 John 4:7-21; 2 John 1:3-6**

A popular '90s song asks, "What Is Love?" That same tune follows with dark, pleading lyrics: "Don't hurt me, no more." (Haddaway) The Bible answers this post-Christian, rhetorical appeal and its need comprehensively: "God is love" (1 John 4:8). Pleasure-seeking hedonists—using one of Satan's ploys—flip this biblical truth around in their corrupting philosophy: "Love is god."

This week concludes our 4-week series on Glenkirk's mission statement with emphasis upon its close: "... loving God and His world." But what sort of "love" are we to exhibit, and how? As today's opening characterizes, the biblical view departs meaningfully from a society glibly ascribing love to a favorite food or casual acquaintances, frequently translating "love" in terms of bodily appetites and urges.

"The English word 'love' can be found 311 times in the ... Bible. ... Greek ... has at least four words to describe the various aspects of love. ... *phileō* is ... a brotherly affection ... *agápē* means doing good things for another person. *storgē* refers to loving one's relatives. ... *érōs*, used to describe a sexual or romantic type of love, is not found in [Scripture]." (Biblestudy.org)

There are several things which love is not. Love is not "extreme liking"—in fact, we are called to love others even when disliking them. Love is not

mere emotion, subject to ups and downs. Despite the entertainment industry's consistent message, sex is not love; however, lovingly-expressed sex within a married relationship is a God-given gift. Love is not fearful (1 John 4:18). Love is not manipulative, domineering, rude or resentful (1 Corinthians 13:4-5). Interestingly, there is room for godly jealousy within love (Exodus 20:5; 2 Corinthians 11:2): God, jealous for the well-being of His children, hates sin because it destroys His beloved.

Love is the greatest virtue, a fruit of the Spirit's work within us (Galatians 5:22). When loving Jesus, we joyfully keep His commandments (John 14:15; 2 John 1:6). Love must be offered freely, a setting of both heart and mind continually upon what's best for the other. How are you at loving God and His world? Ask the God who is love for a heart more like His.

QUESTIONS

What are some key differences between biblical love and "love" as popularized in contemporary society? What distinguishes *Phileó*, *Agápē*, *Storgé* and *Érōs*? How is God's "jealousy" loving?

PRAYERS

For Bryant and Anne Wilhelmsen

Pray for the thousands of uprooted people migrating across Europe, seeking shelter in Germany, as they come into contact with Bryant and Anne and other believers who introduce them to the redeeming love of God.

TUESDAY

Read **John 15:8-17; Romans 5:1-11**

“This is my Father’s world: Oh, let me ne’er forget.
That though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet.
This is my Father’s world, the battle is not done:
Jesus who died shall be satisfied, and earth and Heav’n be one.”
(Maltbie Babcock)

When tackling a hectic day or facing problems, it’s easy to overlook that everything belongs to God—that apart from Him, not only would we not exist, but nothing else would either. And so it is with love. “We love because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). The God who embodies love is the Initiator: of Creation and life; of our ability to love; and in salvation, “*while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8).

Here’s a beautiful quote regarding God’s love (source unknown): “Love is when a Man wipes your tears even after you left Him hanging on a cross for your sins.” God the Son is “*the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end*” (Revelation 22:13). The Lord is the essence of love, its Source, and its goal. Jesus Christ thereby commanded His followers, “*Love one another as I have loved you*” (John 15:12), reminding them, “*By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another*” (John 13:35).

“Love is costly. It always involves some kind of self-denial. It often demands suffering.” (John Piper) “Power, no matter how well-intentioned, tends to cause suffering. Love, being vulnerable, absorbs it. In a point of convergence on a hill called Calvary, God renounced the one for the sake of the other.” (Philip Yancey) “Creation [was] not an assertion of power, but ... a withdrawal (by God), so that human life may exist. ... Creation ... involved both love and suffering.” (D.Z. Phillips)

“The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty One who will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness; He will quiet you by His love; He will exult over you” (Zephaniah 3:17). “Amazing love, how can it be? That You, my King, would die for me?” (Billy James Foote)

QUESTIONS

What does “The Lord is the essence of love, its Source, and its goal” mean? What does suffering have to do with love? How has God’s love proven “costly”?

PRAYERS

For Bryant and Anne Wilhelmsen

Pray for German Christians to open their hearts to the refugees fleeing into their country. At times the believers hold back for fear that their familiar, beloved churches will be overwhelmed by people of a foreign culture.

WEDNESDAY

Read [Deuteronomy 6:4-9](#); [Luke 10:25-28](#); [John 10:27-30](#)

Yesterday we considered God's role in fostering love: Love is one of His key attributes, foundational to God's character; He is the Initiator, both having created humankind with the aim of intimate relationship with His children and as the Catalyst for our ability to love; and as we respond to the Spirit's prompting and grow in Christlikeness, we are able to love increasingly as God does.

Some might interpret that our calling is merely as passive conduits for God's love and goodness. That's partly right—we are not the Source, but reflectors and bearers of God's glory. However, our role is active. God chooses to work with and through Christians for our growth and good. We are not responsible for results, but are called to faithfulness—the harvest's yield is the Lord's. But He calls us still to “scatter seed.”

“We are not to love God with only part of ourselves, but are to measure every thought, emotion, feeling, word, and action in light of our desire to please and honor Him. We are to pursue our love for Him in every aspect of daily life, with all that we are. ... We love God with all our heart when we love Him exclusively, Him and Him alone. We love God with all our soul when we find our satisfaction in Him more than any other person or thing. We love God with all our mind when we make

decisions to obey His every command. We love God with all our strength when we persevere in the face of every trial.” (Sheila Alewine)

If we are unable to love God well—to “get the vertical right”—our ability to love others (the “horizontal”) will be flawed and limited. As a devotional a few weeks ago emphasized, Jesus is our Example and means here: the One who embodies both the eternal and physical, God the Son and Son of Man; and “Jacob’s ladder” (Genesis 28:12) through whom heaven and earth connect.

Jesus cleared away abstractions regarding loving God: “*If you love Me, you will keep My commandments*” (John 14:15). More on this in tomorrow’s devo.

QUESTIONS

How can we be surrendered to God’s will while active in our faith?
How are you at loving God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength?

PRAYERS

For Bryant and Anne Wilhelmsen

Praise God for the trusting relationships that Bryant has established with government officials who make major decisions impacting refugees. Pray that his influence benefits countless families who need food, shelter, and a place to recover from trauma.

THURSDAY

Read [Matthew 22:34-40](#); [1 John 4:19-21](#); [John 8:1-11](#)

We concluded yesterday's devo sounding a seemingly legalistic charge: *"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments"* (John 14:15). Was the Lord calling Israel—and us—to return to religious rules-following? This same Jesus promised, *"My yoke is easy, and My burden is light"* (Matthew 11:30). Did the Messiah come simply to replace one burden with another?

"In Matthew 5:17 we read that Jesus did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. ... In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), [however,] Jesus radically reinterpreted the Law. ... When ... asked what is the most important thing in the law, His answer is, 'Love God and your neighbor' (Matthew 22:37-40). In Jesus' eyes, the law has [one objective]: it leads to love. ... Jesus fulfilled the law by living a life of mercy and love. He unconditionally accepted ... outsiders, the least and the despised, showed them appreciation, and restored their dignity. He has presented God to us as a loving Father, not as a punishing and distant tyrant. ... [Christ] revealed God to us as a God who welcomes sinners with open arms, forgives and accepts them ... without undermining the seriousness of sin." (Jesus Reformation)

Jesus' encounter with "the woman caught in adultery" displayed this. The Savior challenged the woman's entrapping, self-righteous accusers,

dispersing them and thereby dismissing their case. Upon assuring her, “Neither do I condemn you,” however, He admonished in closing, “Go now and leave your life of sin” (John 8:11).

“Are we the Pharisees who clearly know how to interpret God’s Word and insist that ‘God’s will’ be done, no matter how brutal and inhumane? Or do we follow Jesus’ example and fulfill the law by loving, showing mercy, being compassionate, radically forgiving, [and including] the oppressed and outsiders?” (Jesus Reformation)

Does your love for “being right” exceed your love for God and others? In fulfilling “*the Law of Christ*” (Matthew 27:37-39), we’re not called to “*sloppy agápē*”—we must still “*speak the truth in love*” (Ephesians 4:15). Concurrently, however, the unmerited favor we enjoy in Christ should fuel grace toward others demonstrated in forgiveness, service, sacrifice and intercessory prayer.

QUESTIONS

Why is Jesus’ “*keep My commandments*” statement (John 14:15) not just revisionist legalism? What is “the law of Christ”? If we love like Jesus, how should that look regarding the outcasts and the needy?

PRAYERS

For Bryant and Anne Wilhelmsen

Pray for Anne’s special ministry to refugee children, which is also a great help to their mothers. Often the children are the first to be eager to hear the story of a God who cares personally for them and watches over them.

FRIDAY

Read **1 Corinthians 13:1-8; Ephesians 5:25-28**

“Glenkirk Church is a worshipping community, inviting everyone to join in the journey of becoming fully devoted followers of Christ, *loving God and His world.*” (Glenkirk’s Mission, Statement, emphasis added) This week we’ve considered “loving God and His world.” Is this the stuff of self-help, the product of a motivational speaker’s stirring presentation? Is the Church simply a “super-spiritual social club” of sorts, striving for goodness and love where possible?

Paul addresses this nicely: *“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that ... you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect”* (Romans 12:2). Jesus reinforced the height of this bar: *“You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect”* (Matthew 5:48). Or, as Leonard Ravenhill summarized, “Jesus did not come into the world to make bad [people] good. He came into the world to make [dead people] live!”

Surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is radical, transcendent of mere “fine-tuning” or “sprucing things up.” The Apostle Paul again helps us grasp this principle: *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, [they are] a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come”* (2 Corinthians 5:17). Or, as the Savior Himself promised, *“Behold, I am making all things new”* (Revelation 21:5)—including each

of us. The Lord knows how much I need this, how far from Christ's lofty standard I am on my own!

Today's featured Scriptures characterize the fruit of transformational love in believers' lives: patience, kindness, contentedness, humility, politeness, cheerfulness, faithfulness, self-sacrificing. Yikes! As a selfishly-inclined "type A," I'm happy to "bat 500" against this list on a "good" day. I appreciate the prophet Isaiah's related lament: "*Woe is me! For I am undone!*" (Isaiah 6:5) and Paul's vulnerable self-assessment: "*Wretched man that I am!*" (Romans 7:24).

Fortunately, it's Jesus' merit that saves me, not my own. I can rest in this. However, such rest isn't inactivity, but increasing submission to the Spirit's sanctifying work in my life. The greater my surrender, the more He enables me to love more like Jesus.

QUESTIONS

What are some practical ways in which you can "love God and His world"? What does "Jesus did not come into the world to make bad people good, but came into the world to make dead people live" mean? How has salvation in Christ changed your life?

PRAYERS

For Bryant and Anne Wilhelmsen

Ask the Lord to raise up spiritual leaders within the various refugee communities, men and women who respond to the Gospel and eagerly desire to grow in their knowledge of the Bible so that they can lead others to faith in Jesus.

Sources

- “What Is Love?” was recorded by Haddaway, lyrics by Dee Dee Halligan and Junior Torello, A La Carte Music, 1993.
- Biblestudy.org’s quote can be found at <https://www.biblestudy.org/beginner/what-is-love.html>.
- Maltbie D. Babcock’s quote is from her hymn, “This Is My Father’s World,” published in 1915.
- John Piper’s quote can be found at <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-meanings-of-love-in-the-bible>.
- Phillip Yancey’s quote is from <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/238936-power-no-matter-how-well-intentioned-tends-to-cause-suffering-love>.
- D.Z. Phillips’ quote is from his book, *The Problem of Evil and the Problem of God* (London: SCM Press, 2004).
- Billy James Foote’s quoted lyrics are from his song, “You Are My King (Amazing Love),” © Copyright 1999, Capitol Christian Music Group.
- Sheila Alewine’s quote can be found at <https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/bible-study/how-can-i-love-god-with-all-my-heart-soul-mind-and-strength.html>.
- Jesus Reformation’s quotes are from <https://www.jesusreformation.org/en/2021/how-jesus-radically-reinterpreted-the-law-of-moses-and-what-that-means-for-us/>.
- Glenkirk Church’s mission statement can be found at <https://www.glenkirkchurch.org>.
- Leonard Ravenhill’s quote is from <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/42080577749153871/>.



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