

## Weekly Devotions: LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER 8

### God Expects Us to Love 'In Spite Of'

Agape has often been defined as unnatural love; it does not come naturally. It is love 'in spite of' rather than love 'because of'. The world loves 'because of', there must be a reason for them to love but God's people are expected to love one another 'in spite of'; in spite of how we feel, in spite of the other person's unworthiness.

Leon Morris in his Reflections on John's gospel said; "Love in the Christian sense is not sentimentality; it is not a gushing emotional indulgence of some loved one. Love is what we see in the cross. It is what Christ showed when He laid down His perfect life for sinners. It is important to bear in mind that it is love *for sinners*. Jesus does not mean the kind of love that we so commonly have in mind when we use the term, a love for someone whom we find supremely attractive. Nor is it the love of friendship, a love drawn out from us by those we find congenial."

Jesus did not just talk about love; He showed us how to love. His death on the cross is the classic example of what agape love is. The cross reminds us that it was God who took the initiative to reach out to sinners with His agape love. When we show agape love to others, we become more and more like Jesus.

### Read Luke 23: 32-49

Death on the cross was reserved for the worst of criminals then. Yet, Jesus, the Son of God, subjected Himself to this slow, humiliating and violent death for our sake. The physical pain was indescribable. He also experienced the pain of betrayal & desertion by His disciples, those whom He had trained and loved. He was falsely accused, whipped and mocked at by His enemies. And the crowd, people whom He had ministered to was crying out for His blood. So great was the pain that He suffered because of His love for sinners, like you and me (Matt 26 & 27).

On the cross Jesus looked down on the people who put Him there and prayed, not for their punishment but for God to forgive them. On the cross, Jesus sets the perfect example how and why we should love one another 'in spite of', not just 'because of'.

#### *Questions to ponder*

1. What does Jesus' prayer for His enemies (34) tell you about His character? What did the people further do to Jesus when He was hanging on the cross (35-39)? How do you think Jesus would feel hearing those words?
2. List 3 lessons from Luke 23: 32-49 on how you should love those who are difficult to love or who have hurt, betrayed or even harmed you?

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