

Weekly Devotions: LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER 16

The Downward Pull of Agape Love

Agape love is more than relating to and caring for those we are comfortable with. It challenges us to cross social and cultural boundaries to help anyone regardless of who he / she is. Agape love should cause us to step out of our comfort zone and to move beyond where we are to where the other person is.

One of the titles given to Jesus before His birth was “Immanuel”, which means “God came to be with us.” The coming of the Son of God is the evidence of His unconditional, boundary-crossing, gracious love for you and me (Matt 1: 23).

The authors of the book *Compassion: A Reflection on the Christian Life* described the love of Christ as having a downward pull; He came down from His heavenly throne to be with unworthy sinners. The authors wrote; “That is what disturbs us. We cannot even think about ourselves in terms other than those of an upward pull, an upward mobility. ...Here we see what compassionate love means. It is not a bending toward the underprivileged from a privileged position; it is not a reaching out from on high to those who are less fortunate below; it is not a gesture of sympathy or pity for those who fail to make it in the upward pull. On the contrary, compassion (or agape love) means going directly to those people and places where suffering is most acute and building a home there.”

Read John 5: 1-15

Throughout His ministry, Jesus set for us the example of what it means to love those whom society rejects or shuns. While others would stay away from social outcasts like the lepers, tax collectors, Jesus took the initiative to reach out to them. He would seek out those in need to heal and to deliver them from their pain. He ministered not only to the multitude; He also made time for the individual in need of His care.

Questions to ponder

1. Who were those at Bethesda pool and why were they there (2-4)? Why did Jesus go there and what did He do (5-9)?
2. Are there people in church, for example, the sick, the elderly, children from broken homes, whose needs may have been neglected and how can you / the church come alongside them and help carry their burden?
3. How can you or your cell / fellowship group extend compassionate love to those outside your comfort zone? What do you need to do to earn their trust?

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