

1 John 2 - Love of this World

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[0 : 00] This is the kind of love, the distinctive of the love we see in the Old Testament ascribed to the Father in Deuteronomy 7-9. Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations.

This is the main feature of God's love in the Old Testament. Psalm 105, for the Lord is good, His steadfast love endures forever, and His faithfulness to all generations.

And then as we see God the Father and then God the Son in the New Testament, we see that it is Christ's love that is also distinguished by or set apart by its loyalty and long-suffering.

John 13, 1, when Jesus knew that His hour had come to depart of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were of the world, He loved them to the end.

And it is this very kind of love that Jesus commands His disciples to take up and exercise toward the brothers. John 13, 24-25, a new commandment I give to you, that you love one another just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

[1 : 26] So not only do we have a command there in that verse, but also we have something like a diagnostic. Jesus says, this is the way you'll be able to sort out the difference between a true and false Christian.

Do they love one another like I love them? Now, that's extremely relevant for 1 John because, as we have seen over our five or so weeks in this book, John's main intention with 1 John is to help us to separate out who is really a Christian and who is not really a Christian.

The difference, as the Puritans would describe it, being the difference between a professor, someone who says the right things, and a possessor, someone who actually has the Lord.

And so John picks up this diagnostic tool from Jesus provided in John 13, and he introduces that concept in especially the second chapter of 1 John.

He says, you guys, if you're real, will love one another like Jesus loves you. And then we see a pivot out of that section, for instance, in verses 7 through 11 of 1 John 2, to something new for us, something we haven't covered yet, beginning in verse 12 of 1 John chapter 2.

[2 : 46] I'm writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his namesake. I'm writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I'm writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one.

I write to you, children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

Essentially, every commentator all throughout church history have agreed that what John is doing here is not addressing people of chronological age, but people of different spiritual ages.

So that's an interpretive key to understand that John here is essentially, he's gathering the whole church of every spiritual age after commanding all, after saying, you must love one another.

It's as if he's saying, and that is true for the youngest Christian, with the least amount of maturity, all the way to the oldest Christian, with the most amount of maturity.

[3 : 54] John is saying, all of you have to love one another. This is the fundamental standard by which your whole life will be judged. You will one day stand before God, and the fundamental question, out of all the possible questions about ethics and morality, about sin and the law and righteousness, the fundamental test, the fundamental question God will ask of each of us is, were you a loving person in the way that Jesus was a loving person?

This is, of course, what Jesus says clearly when he says that all of the law can be summarized by these simple questions. Are you loving God with all your being, and are you loving your neighbor as yourself?

But then we also get to the great chapter on love in 1 Corinthians 13, and Paul says there's a lot of other things that we might be tempted to use as markers of maturity.

He says some people would be tempted to use the charismatic gifts or spiritual experience as the marker of maturity. But in 1 Corinthians 13, he says, if I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I'm a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

In other words, spiritual experience, charismatic gifting is not the marker of Christian maturity. Love is. Other people would choose to use discernment and doctrine as the key marker of spiritual maturity.

[5 : 26] Paul says, if I have all the prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

Others would be tempted to use sacrifice and generosity as the marker of Christian love. But Paul says, if I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

So just so you understand, the target you're aiming for isn't complicated. What you're supposed to do with your life at a meta scale is not complicated. You are supposed to become a person whose love for the brothers and sisters, for the blood-bought lambs of the church, mirrors the love of Jesus.

That's your target. That's your goal. And that's the question upon which you will be judged by the God of the universe. That is what true maturity is, and lacking it is a sign at the very least.

Least would be lacking love, would be a sign of great immaturity, and might be more indicative of being someone who is professing certain doctrines, but not possessing the Holy Spirit and new life in God.

[6 : 44] So the big do of this passage is do become a loving person. We said last week we can't leave the definition of love up to the world.

We can't do that. They will always pervert what love means. And so we had to lean into the Scriptures and say, what specifically is John talking about when he references being loving?

What does he mean? And what he means is what Jesus means, and what God means in the Old Testament. That is to be a loyal, committed, and long-suffering person toward those that God has placed in your life, namely your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Okay, so that's the do. Now, one of the things that you'll need to understand about my study style and my sermon prep style is that I do not accept very quickly the notion that these masterful disciples of Christ, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, make sudden left turns out of nowhere. So even when I'm reading a passage and it feels like a whole new category has been introduced, I'm extremely hesitant to say, oh, now we're going over here.

[7 : 57] That's just not to me how the Lord works. That's not how good writing works. I don't think that's usually the case. It may occasionally be the case, or I may not simply be able to explain what's going on.

But typically, when I get to a moment in a passage that has this sharp turn feel to it, I slow down. And I think the continuity in the context is not immediately obvious to me.

It's not immediately obvious, so let me slow down and do extra work to try to understand why we're moving from this topic to that topic. Because what you'll see in verse 15 is what feels like a shift.

It says, Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world.

And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. I did a lot of thinking about why might this be the logical or relevant follow-up to a command to love?

[9 : 14] Why now a command not to love? And here's how I wound up sorting that out. I believe that what John is doing here is he is naming the one thing that is always going to wind up being incompatible with your loving your brothers and sisters in Christ.

And that is a love for the world. I believe he's bringing up the one thing that is incompatible consistently to loving your brothers and sisters in Christ. Now I want to prove that.

I'll get into what love of the world means, but I want to show you how I felt comfortable thinking that that's probably what John is doing. Let me give you a couple other examples from the Bible. We have this really interesting thing that happens in the majority of Paul's writings where at the end of his letters, he kind of mentions all the people who are traveling with him and partnering with him. And he says, hey, you know, Jim from Ephesus says hi, and so on and so forth. And, you know, most of the letters end this way. At the end of Colossians, he says, Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you.

[10:21] At the end, in Philemon, he says, Mark, Aristarchus, and Demas, and Luke greet you. But now we find this moment at the end of 2 Timothy. This is the most suffering we've ever seen Paul endure in terms of he is thinking this is it.

This is the end. He says, I am already being poured out like a drink offering. And instead of the typical so-and-so who is with me says hi, he says this in 2 Timothy 4.11, Luke alone is with me. Well, that's unusual. That's not usually how Paul rides. Why is Luke alone? Well, you look at the verse before it, 2 Timothy 4.10, Do your best, Timothy, to come to me soon for Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica.

So one of the things I'm suggesting is, is that your love for the world will eventually force you in great moments of trial and testing where you must choose between comfort and loyalty.

Your love for the world will get you to a moment where you, like Demas, were able consistently to travel with your fellow brothers and sisters over the years doing ministry together.

[11:39] But if there is a secret love of safety, comfort, convenience, control, and so forth, if there is a love for the world, eventually you may wind up in a situation where you have to choose between your love for the world and this safety, this world, and this life, and your loyalty to your brothers or sisters.

And that's not only a moment of great trial perhaps related to your safety, it could also be a moment of great trial related to your reputation. Hebrews 10 shows the opposite happening where those saints actually stuck with their friends in a particular moment.

They loved not the world more than they loved their brothers and sisters. But I believe what John is doing is he's saying, I want you to love like Jesus loves. But if you love the world, there will be a moment when your love for the world will cause you to be disloyal and flaky toward your brothers and sisters.

Let me give you another example from the book of James. You know, if you're reading the book of James as a pastor, you immediately get kind of ickiness feelings because this is a church that needs to be told things that I would hate to have to consistently tell my church.

They need to be told to take care of widows and orphans. To me, I think that seems rather obvious. They need to be told not to show partiality toward the rich. They need to be told to stop neglecting brothers in need.

[13:11] They need to be told that their cursing their brothers is absolutely inappropriate, as is boasting over their brothers. They need to be told that bitter jealousy and selfish ambition are problems.

And then we see in chapter 4, no surprise, Paul says, there are fights and quarrels among you. But then in verse 4 of chapter 4, we reach the crescendo of James' diagnosis.

Why are all of these love-related problems happening in this particular church? Verse 4, you adulterous people, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?

Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. So all of this relational grossness that's happening in this church is owing to the fact that these people are worldly people.

And all of the divisions that are emerging come out of a kind of preference for various things happening in this particular world. So that's what I think John is doing.

[14:16] He's saying we all have to love like Jesus. And here's the one thing that would likely keep us from being as faithful as Jesus was and as kind as Jesus is and as forbearing as Jesus is and so forth.

And that is a love for the world. And so thus in verse 14, he says, do not love the world. Okay. That I think explains the basic structure of the text that we'll look at today.

Now let's get in a little deeper and ask some questions of the text. And the first question that would seem important is, okay, I'm not supposed to do this. What is this? What does it mean to love the

world?

It says, do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world.

Now, worldliness is a word like love that can get hijacked and used for all sorts of purposes. When I was a kid, that word was used to explain why we shouldn't dance, play cards, or drink alcohol.

[15:27] Why girls should wear culottes and not pants. And all sorts of things like that, right? So worldliness can just be grabbed like love can and misapplied in a way that is torturous to one's own conscience, binding the conscience outside of the clear teaching of God's Word.

And so we want to be careful when we think about worldliness to use biblical definitions.

Worldliness can be used to make you someone who is essentially a Gnostic, a monk who has no regard for the beauty of this world, and so on and so forth.

So we want to think carefully about what does worldliness mean? And I think that John gives us a description in this passage. Look at where he says, the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life is not from the Father, but is from the world.

It seems to me that the pride of life is a key feature of this particular passage. John, the apostle, does not use the word flesh the way that Paul does.

When Paul uses the word flesh, he means body, but mostly corrupted spiritual things inside of us, a corrupted spiritual force inside of us, indwelling sin.

[16:46] But the word flesh can also just sometimes mean the body. And it seems as though John is using it more in that respect. It seems that when John uses this term, he typically just uses it more to represent the body.

So let me try to explain what I think worldliness is according to John. It is the natural desires that you would have as a functioning human being for good things in this life that have a shelf life.

They're temporal. The next meal you eat, the kind of bed you sleep on, the kind of music you hear when you gather for Sunday worship, the kinds of programmings that happen in a local church.

These would be things that you would have reasonable preferences for just as a person. They may be desires that come from bodily things like appetite, so forth.

They may come from, you know, aesthetic things, things that are beautiful and so on. But your body is telling you just through your senses stuff out here is good.

[17:52] And that's not wrong. There's tons of stuff out here that's good. Now, I'll talk about Jesus being not a monk, not an aesthetic in a moment.

But I think what John's saying is you've got these senses and they're picking up on, this is good stuff. Like ribs are good. You know, afternoon naps are good. Like getting married is good and so forth.

But there's this third factor, the pride of life, which seems to be essentially lying to you about the importance of the things you desire, about the value of the things you desire, and about the importance of the things you desire.

And so now, it's not just like your eyes say, boy, it'd be nice to have like a really nice looking kind of sleek sports car. I'm in my midlife crisis car shopping stage right now.

Just prepare yourself when I roll up in a Lambo next week. You know, the eyes are like, you know, this would be really cool. And that's totally fine. That's totally fine.

[18:59] The pride of life comes in and says, this will make you more respected. This will make you more happy. This is important. This is really important. Essentially, what John seems to be talking about in terms of what it means to love the world is essentially how, let's see if this works for you.

You are on a date, okay? Picture you in dating age, and you're with this girl and you, or this guy, whatever, and you've fallen, you know, just, you've just fallen head over heels. And so you're driving along and you say to your date, I want you to know I love you.

And there's a little awkward silence and then your date says, thank you, I like you too. Right? Do you know that feeling? Okay. I think actually the biblical data about the world is simply, like it, don't love it.

I think the biblical data about all of the goodness of the world is, loose hand, it's good, I like you, I'm just not ready to pick out curtains. You know what I mean?

Like, I like you, I'm not, I don't love you, and I'm not committed to you. And why would that become important? Well, because if you're committed to the pursuit of these worldly desires, you can't be committed to the pursuit of your brother or sister's good.

[20 : 23] And so what it seems like John is doing, he's saying, is if you start developing a loyalty to, and a misunderstanding regarding the importance of the things of this world, you'll eventually hit a moment, like Demas did, where a line is crossed, he is going to be loyal to the things of this world.

Or, more likely, you'll be like the people in James. And you will start interacting with everybody in your life based on your preferences being ultimate.

I cannot, I cannot explain to you how essential it is for you to learn that all of the things the world is training you to regard for yourself.

Someone, I can't remember who this was, I think it was maybe Francis Schaeffer in the 80s said, we are raising a group of people who have opinions about what kind of car they have, what kind of clothes they wear, what kind of computer and so forth, and they won't be able to think.

Your whole life has been raised in an environment where capital rules, money rules. And so you're constantly being told that your preferences are very important and we just so happen to have the product to meet your particular preferences.

[21 : 42] And I cannot tell you how disastrous that will be in your effort to love people well. The reality is, is a preference first Christian is a people last Christian.

A preference first Christian is a people last Christian. And what John, I think, is saying is, is you can like the world, but you've got somebody you're committed to. You've got somebody you're going to love.

You're going to love your Lord and you're going to love your brothers and sisters. I think this is kind of what's happening in the garden with Eve. Genesis 3, 6. So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, eyes, or desire of the body, was delight to the eyes, these would just be appropriate analysis of the tree itself.

Nothing wrong there. But then this other spiritual, almost spiritual, or attitude enters in that starts making those inputs, this looks good, into something it's not.

Into something worthy betraying your God for. Into something worthy for ruining the world for. You know? And it was the desire to make one wise.

[22 : 56] It was the pride aspect of the inputs that shifted from someone who was a fruit liker to basically a fruit lover at the expense of her husband and her God.

So what John seems to be saying is like, if you love the world in the way that we mean love, which is loyalty, you can't be loyal to your people.

You'll see this in your relationships. You'll see this in your marriage. You'll see this in your home.

You'll see this as you date. You'll see this in your church. You will see the constant temptation to put preferences above people.

It will filter into how you choose who you spend time with and who you choose not to spend time with. It will filter into who you regard as important to talk to and who you don't regard as important to talk to.

It will filter into all of your decisions related to fellowship. If you are a preference over people person, you will see it in your life if you're humble enough just to say, yep, that's what I'm doing.

[24 : 00] We all do it. And that kind of approach to life is worldliness. All of those desires, John says, are passing away.

There are a few things that last forever. As many of you know, Angela and I, we had an informal family charter in our early 20s. There are two things that last forever, people and God's word. We will live our life for those two things. Everything else is passing away. So the call here against worldliness is not to be a monk in the desert with no beauty, no comfort, no joy.

The call is actually just to understand that that stuff will at various times compete with things that are more important. And you need to know when those competitions are occurring and always choose the eternal, the immortal, the ultimate.

One commentator from the early 1900s wrote it this way. Man has communion with two worlds, the temporal and the spiritual. Right and lawful, however, as the first communion may be, there come frequent crisis in which its interests are found to be in rivalry to those of the higher fellowship.

[25 : 19] Let me synthesize that for you. People have a relationship with two worlds, the temporal and the eternal, and they're both fine. They're both good to have. There will be moments, though,

when your loyalty to one is incompatible with your loyalty to the other.

If you choose the spiritual over the temporal in those times, you've passed the test. But if you've choose the temporal over the spiritual, you are being worldly. Okay?

That's what I think John is saying. And you will be pressed into situations, as I've said, where this will come into play time and time again. Worldliness essentially distorts the very simple truth.

Yeah, that looks cool. It'd be nice to have, but at what cost? And a godly person will say, yeah, that's cool.

I would like to have an evening without the kids on top of me. I would like to have this. I'd like to have that. I'd like to, I'd like to, you know, have my preferences respected.

[26 : 23] And then it says, but those things are not forever. They are passing. So what is forever? And I want to make sure I love that stuff more.

Now, John actually not only tells us not to do this, but he gives us some insights into deep spiritual realities that are at work in someone that has become worldly in the sense that we're describing. It took me a while to uncrack, to crack this as well. At verse 15, he says, do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the Father is not in him.

I believe that essentially this is either exactly the same as grieving the Holy Spirit or adjacent to the concept of grieving the Holy Spirit. I get questions from time to time, what does it mean to grieve the Holy Spirit?

I will just tell you that grieving the Holy Spirit is the vertical consequence of horizontal lovelessness. Grieving the Holy Spirit is the vertical consequence of you and your relationship with God for being bad at loving others.

[27 : 34] The term grieve the Holy Spirit appears, of course, in Ephesians 5. I don't want to take a ton of time to unpack this for you, but I just want to point out where the phrase appears.

I'll just read the passage really quickly. Therefore, put away falsehood. Let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry and do not sin. Do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil.

Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as good for building up as it fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear it.

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed on the day for redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you. Well, without unpacking every possible meaning for grieve the Holy Spirit, I simply point out, it appears in the middle of constant prescriptions related to how you love other people.

[28 : 39] And so here's all I would like to say. I'm trying to figure out what does John mean when he says, if you love the world, the love of the Father is not in you. I would just say this. If you are not being Christ-like in your love toward those that God has placed in your life, you are grieving the Holy Spirit and your practical enjoyment and fellowship with God is broken.

It's not right. It's something's not right. So in other words, if you are experiencing spiritual dryness, well, let me suggest, sometimes it could just be as God did to Israel and the prophets.

He looks at you and says, you are not, you are not loving people in the way that you are supposed to love people. And it grieves me.

And there is a relational consequence for your selfishness. There is a spiritual consequence for your selfishness. Your enjoyment of God will be diminished if you choose not to endure with and care for the people God has placed in your life.

So what I'm telling you is is that one pathway to spiritual vitality is just to start obeying the simplest, most important commands that God gives. If you want a spiritual revival in your life, just say, okay, for the next X number of months, I'm going to go out of my way to carefully analyze and be honest with myself about whether I love people the way that Jesus is calling me to or whether over time I've become a preference first kind of person.

[30 : 13] So I think that's what John's getting at. I think he's saying there is actual damage done to your spiritual relationship with God when you choose to be selfish.

What about this other phrase where he says, sorry, let me back that up with a quick illustration.

There's this ice cream shop up by, you know, off of Flom in Old Lenexa and I drive past it every day

and I always kind of like watching people, you know, going in to get an ice cream cone is still a treat and so I watch people go in.

I'm very much, you know, you know, eat by watching kind of person with my current diet. So anyway, you know, it occurred to me, like imagine just being someone who just loves ice cream and like you're at work all day and you're just thinking, man, before I go home and with the family and the kids, I'm going to have a secret ice cream and I'm just going to like stop in there, I'm going to get a secret ice cream cone and like, by the way, I don't think there's a problem with that.

Like, don't lie about it, but you know, if you want to get a secret ice cream cone, go get a secret ice cream cone but imagine this, imagine like you've been thinking about this ice cream cone all day and some of this spiritual, this is more important than it really is kind of vibe start attaching to that desire.

So you're walking in and there's an older woman in front of you, she drops down right then and goes into full cardiac arrest and you step over her and go in to get your ice cream cone because after all, you've wanted an ice cream cone all day.

[31 : 45] Well, can you imagine how disgusting of a human being you would be if you did that? Friends, listen, I think God sees us do stuff like that a lot.

I think God sees us trade immortal human souls that last forever and are made in the image of God with stuff that doesn't matter past Tuesday.

And so, if you want to understand why your relationship, your enjoyment with God would be damaged, well, because he saw you step over the poor lady to go get an ice cream cone.

Like, he sees this stuff, it offends him and we need to repent of it and we need to say, Lord, that is not who you made me to be. That is not who I'm called to follow.

I'm called to follow Jesus. Jesus would never do that. Okay. The second thing he says in verse 16 and 17, look at this. For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh and desires of the eyes and pride of life is not from the Father but is from the world and the world is passing away with its desires but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

[33 : 00] Well, I think this is a really simple way of saying you become like the thing you love and if you love God, you will be a stable, loyal, steadfast person because that's who God is.

But if you love this world, it's flaky. It's passing away and if you love this world, you will become flaky. You will not be able to abide. You will not be able to be loyal.

You will not be able to be long-suffering. You'll just, you'll be as temporal and flaky and unhelpful as the world is itself. So, as we pivot into communion, at the end of the day, it seems like this whole chapter, by the way, how cool is it we get to the Antichrist next week?

That'll be, that'll be a challenge for me. I haven't done any work on it. But, but we've gotten almost to the end of the chapter and we've understood some basic things. John's aim is simply to use the diagnostic tool that Jesus provides in John 13.

Who's real, who's not? Who loves and who doesn't? Who loves according to Jesus and who doesn't? He says, everybody here, no matter what spiritual age, you're all required to do this.

[34 : 08] This is the thing you'll be measured by. And then he says, and this great impediment to this kind of love is a loyalty and commitment to the things of this world in which you will, either in catastrophic moments like Demas or just everyday moments like the people in the Church of James, you will start trading people for your preferences.

He says, you can't do that. That's not going to keep you where you need to go. It's very grieving to God to do that and also it makes you progressively more and more flaky and one day you'll be like, why don't I have any deep, meaningful relationships?

Well, it's because you kept putting your preferences before people. That's what happened. Okay. Now, this is all a call just to love like Jesus and I want to push back a little bit more on this wrong concept of worldliness.

We are not called to have no affection or feelings for this world. We are not called to ignore all the obvious beauty, all the obvious goodness of this world. Jesus saw the beauty and charm of this visible world and celebrated.

He used the beauty of this world to furnish his illustrations. He participated in festivals. He contrasted himself with those who were very aesthetic by becoming someone who was described as a wine bibber, as a guy who partied too hard.

[35 : 34] Christ's body had desires. He had a body and Christ's eyes had desires but being without sin he was always able to see the limits of those good things and never once ever trade his love for

God or his love for us for the limited good things.

In fact, he knew that wine was good but he also knew what it wasn't good for. He knew that parties were good. He also knew what they weren't good for.

Because he was not tempted in the same, because he was not broken in the same way, he was able to see through the hollow claim the world makes which turns our desires into ultimacies and he was able to choose us and the father over a home, a wife, a comfortable life, a normal schedule, faithful friends, safety.

He liked all those things because he was a man. He liked all those things but he didn't love them. What he chose to love was the father and all those the father had called to himself.

He was more loyal to you than to his own preferences. And what it means to grow in maturity is to become that person out in the world. That's what maturity is.

[36 : 59] So as we prepare for the table, we have everything to celebrate about Jesus and also, I don't want this to be, if you felt challenged by this, praise God, God, this is representing grace.

This is representing if anyone sins and he confesses his sins, God is faithful and just to forgive him and the blood of Jesus will cleanse you from all unrighteousness. Also though, the reality is if you and I were sitting still together and you're a Christian, you might be able to say, Chris, man, I am really not doing this well.

I'd be able to say, no, I mean, yeah, maybe, maybe you aren't. But I'd also be able to point out places where you are. And what I want you to see is that God's grace in this area is already at work in you.

It may be seed-like, it may be fully bloom. Every one of you, I'm confident, if you are in Christ, has already put people above some preferences. So when you come to the table today, celebrate that this is a table of grace, but this is also a table of great power and that Jesus has already been working in you to do these things and that if you would just say, Lord, this is what I want to do with my life.

I want to be a loving person. Every other thing is a secondary thing that can be negotiated. I want you to be a loving person. Lord Jesus is happy and eager to fulfill that prayer.

[38 : 22] So let me pray for us and you come up and get your elements and sit back down and we'll partake together. Father God, we praise your holy name for the absolute clarity we have on what we're supposed to be.

We're supposed to be loving people. We even know what love looks like because you spent your whole Old Testament showing us and then your whole New Testament showing us. So we know what we're supposed to be.

We know what that looks like and now, Lord, we see that there is this one constant challenge. It's the challenge that Paul speaks to in Philippians 2 where he says, you know, you can't look out for your own interests only but also for the interests of others.

You've got to put others ahead of you and so on and so forth. God, we have desires for this world that if elevated too highly will cause us to stop loving the people that you've called us to love.

So Father, through your Holy Spirit, do the surgery on our hearts necessary to make all this as it should be. And we are so grateful, Lord, that we now get to come to this table which represents the sacrifice that you offered for us because you were more committed to us than you were to your own comfort.

[39 : 35] Praise your Holy Name, dear Jesus. In your name we pray. Amen.