

## Love...Putting Your Heart Into It

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 Thursday, 30 August 2007  
 Last Updated Sunday, 23 September 2007

"Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me" (Ruth 1:16-17).

Can I really love someone who isn't my own flesh and blood? Many have to answer this question whether contemplating a close or spiritual friendship, marriage, prospective in-laws or perhaps even the adoption of someone into a family unit coming to your location for college studies or someone who has suffered the loss of their parents.

A question of central concern for the purpose of this writing is a question a servant of the church at any level of service must answer, "How can I actively love those I am serving?"

This question should be contemplated, prayed about and meditated upon. Service should never begin as a function, a territory to cover, designated pages to be completed in a book. Service is not from one certain time until another. Independent, preoccupied, proud, busy, not enough time, complacent (this is the way it was done in Egypt, this is the way we have always done it, this is the way my service was done before me) should not be descriptors of the love one has for service.

Serving the church should always be more than showing up when others do not, more than the service before, and more than the number of years spent in service to the Church. Rather, service should be a "spring of life" to those you serve, reflecting your love for God. "God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God and God abides in them" (1 John 4:16).

Service should begin with giving your love first to God freely, happily, and joyfully. Love to God should be imitated as He gives His limitless and boundless love to us, "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life" (John 3:16).

As one's love for God abundantly increases, one is then led to the path of loving and serving others. "When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' The Lord Jesus Christ said to him, 'Feed My lambs'" (John 21:15).

Service should always ask of itself, "Is my service what it should be?" Effective service begins as a common thread between those that you serve and yourself. The growing strength of this thread will be comprised of memories of the past, life experiences, and the anticipation of the future. Its gained strength is increased by conquering obstacles, facing fears and challenges together. Striving is the key to success not perfection. Perfection belongs to God alone.

But the striving is definitely essential. It combines service with caring. Striving is visiting the sick at home and in the hospital. It is sitting with someone who has lost a loved one. It is reading the Holy Bible to the elderly whom have poor vision. Striving is providing transportation to church services to those without transportation. It is calling to inquire if they need anything while away at college. It is the giving of the message, "I care." It is living the lessons the servant themselves taught and were taught.

Stop and ask yourself is your service to God full of this love or is it as barren and dry as the desert? Do I feel that I display caring to those whom I serve as I wished my servant to care about me?

Do I actually need to care about my servant or need those whom I serve to care about me especially outside the church building or environment? Many believe their time is their time but it has been quoted an infinite number of times, "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up...Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a three fold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). Have you examined this Holy Scripture from another's side of the Scripture rather than the meaning it may have for you alone?

Can it be said of the servant providing a service, "I look up to my servant, my servant is a guiding star, taught me the hymn on my lips, is a candle burning brightly, provides a listening ear or is concerned about my spiritual welfare?" Can it be said uprightly that those a servant serves, prayers have a spiritual nature very much like the servant's, deacons very much like their priest, priests very much like their bishops?"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another" (John 13:34).

In summary, many make up the household of faith but there is only one home that has stood for two thousand years. Although you may grow up, the love of the church and its service will always claim you as its own. Just as the sun is the

servant of the earth, its heat allows the earth to be productive and grow many good things. A servant should see the same in their service. In turn like the trees and flowers, abundant fruits and seeds are formed. This spirit of service in turn leads us to the Eternal Spirit that is truly fruitful bearing the fullness of beauty and love.

Let us all pray that where we are, there is love of service to God. Love exhibited by a fruitful sweetness that can only be tasted through affection, kindness, sensitivity, support, and can best be harvested when no one else is looking--a service of giving of ourselves.

Let us all give thanks that time, life, history, and the world cannot break the teachings and care of love and its right hand of associated service to God. May we all put our hearts into His Love and His Loving service.

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