

Bridgeway Community Church
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Next Gen Faith
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Next Gen Faith: LOVE

Unleashing a Movement of Love

“We are living in a world that’s hungry for change.”

“COVID totally disrupted our sense of stability, didn’t it? I think most of us, we still haven’t really settled into that “new normal” that we were told would be coming soon.”

“In these past 18 months, many of us have been moved by this disruption to clarify our values, to clarify our ambitions, to clarify our lifestyles. For some of us that’s moved us to move states, or to move jobs, maybe to move churches, maybe to move into or out of a relationship. The ground is shifting.”

Question: What shifts have your life undergone in this past year?

Question: When the dust settles 3, 13, 30 years from now: What will our new normal look like? What will the change be that comes out of all of this?

Question: What is the movement that I want to come out of all of these moves? What is the change, what is the movement that I long to see unleashed from all of these moves occurring in our life and in our world?

Question: What shifts need to occur in your life for the movement that you long to see to be unleashed?

“The Lord Jesus desires to see a movement too...Jesus longs to see a movement of love unleashed in your life...in the church...in our world.”

This Movement of Love is marked by 3 shifts:

1. A shift in **mindset**
2. A shift in **motive**
3. A shift in **mode**

1. A Shift in Mindset from “ME” to “WE”

1 Corinthians 12:12-14 NIV

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts **form** one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

“So Paul says, in the church, what God is doing is he is bringing together all of these diverse, individual members around the person of Jesus. These are people whose lives would have never intersected in society if they hadn’t first become interconnected in Christ.”

“We see this from the very beginning of the Jesus movement, when Jesus brings together the most random and messy group of people to be his disciples...bringing together a tax collector like Matthew...a social justice warrior...a zealot like Simon...”

And what did he come to them preaching? “*Repent!* For the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

Matthew 4:17 NIV

From that time on Jesus began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”

Repent, the word *metanoia* in Greek, literally means “to change your mindset.” In other words, Jesus is calling us to change the implicit, often unconscious lens through which we view our life.

Question: Who is really Lord of your life? Whose kingdom are you really seeking?

“Jesus calls us to shift our mindset, and to see our lives as deeply interconnected one with another; to see that our stories have been skillfully interwoven into the bigger and the better story of reconciliation and redemption that God is telling.”

“But the opposite of a mindset of interconnectedness is the mindset of individualism... my happiness and my health are found in my freedom to pursue unlimited options without any commitments that constrain me or tie me down.”

And what can happen is, if we aren't careful, the mindset of individualism gets brought with us into the church. Then everything gets viewed through the lens of my own return on investment -- of ME rather than WE.

That's what happened to the Corinthians.

Paul critiques this mindset in the *church* body by comparing it to the *human* body.

1 Corinthians 12:15, 21 NIV

Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body...The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"

Question: Do you have the mindset of "You don't need me?"

"I think that we're tempted to treat the church like we treat a subscription service. If I cancel my subscription to Netflix tomorrow, Netflix doesn't care...they are fine without me."

But the church isn't a subscription service. It's a body, a movement, an interconnected community.

Question: Do you have a mindset of "I don't need you?"

"I've got my Bible, I've got my favorite TikTok pastor, I've got my favorite worship playlist, I've got my friends and my family...I don't really need the church community to grow mature and mighty in Christ. I don't need you."

"Paul wants to tell us that when we say "you don't need me," we're depriving others of the gifts that the Holy Spirit wants to give them through us. And on the other hand, Paul wants to say when we say to others, when we say to the church "I don't need you," we are depriving ourselves. We're forfeiting the gifts that God wants to bestow on us through them."

1 Corinthians 12:24-26 NIV

God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

Share in another's celebration...and another's suffering

"It feels hard to surrender our kingdom and our will so that his kingdom can come and his will can be done on earth as it is in heaven through the church."

Matthew 6:10 NIV

[Jesus teaching the disciples how to pray] your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

1. A Shift in Motive from "Self-Centered" to "Christ-Centered"

"In many ways...this shift is probably the most crucial and is also the most crucifying, it is the most painful. But ultimately, it's the most freeing."

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 NIV

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

"Like us today, there was so much confusion in the Corinthian church and in Corinthian culture on what it actually means to be "a loving person." A case in point, one dude in the church was sleeping with his STEP-MOM!...I don't think it can get more confusing than that!"

So Paul's like, "I need to define what real love is for you guys!"

Paul shows us what love is NOT first before showing us what love IS.

1 Corinthians 13:3 NIV

If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

In other words: "If I devote my life to justice and if I pour myself out for the most vulnerable; if I even sacrifice my own life for the sake of the faith -- **but do not have love, I gain nothing.**"

“How many of us know that we can come to every church activity and we can participate in every service and burn ourselves out faithfully volunteering in every ministry... and in our heart of hearts, it's still all about us.”

Deep down, we want to *feel* like good Christians more than we actually want Christ.

“We can devote our money and our lives to the kingdom and still not love King Jesus.”

“We can say that we love God, while then going and acting unkind and uncaring towards the very people Jesus told us to love and to serve!”

Paul is confronting self-center love in the church.

Now that Paul has defined for us what love is NOT, what is real love?

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 NIV

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails.

“To be in the presence of a perfect love like this is almost overwhelming. It's like standing before a blazing sun. It's so good, it's so perfect, it's so transforming, it's so holy. I mean seriously, a love that ALWAYS protects, that ALWAYS trusts, that ALWAYS hopes, that ALWAYS perseveres, that NEVER fails... Paul, I can't love like that! This isn't human!”

“And I imagine that Paul says to us, “I know, I know. But what if love became a human. What if love took on flesh and dwelt among us. What if love paid the ultimate price to remove every obstacle to itself. My friends, love has a name and his name is Jesus. And if you trust him, if you let him, he will make you this loving here and perfected in eternity. He will make you a part of his movement of love.”

You know, I talk to a lot of people who struggle with the cross. They *struggle* with the idea of substitutionary sacrifice. What kind of God needs to sacrifice his life in exchange for mine? Isn't God love?

But here's the truth: All love, all real, transformative love, is CROSS-shaped.

One writer puts it this way: “You have never loved a broken person, you have never loved a guilty person, you have never loved a hurting person except through substitutionary sacrifice.¹”

Some of you are experiencing this right now:

- You can't walk with someone in their darkest hour, without that same darkness coming on you and disrupting your own life
- You can't stand up for the oppressed without becoming vulnerable to oppression yourself
- You can't forgive someone who has hurt you and betrayed you deeply without it costing you something

“This is the kind of costly love that motivated God to pay the ultimate price. To substitute himself as the ultimate sacrifice for your sin and for mine.”

“Self-centered love at its core is too limited to start a movement, because it's limited to the people that *I* find worthy, the people that *I'm* personally willing to sacrifice for. And even then, it's hard! Even with the people I love the most, it's still a sacrifice, it's still hard!”

“I can't match the level of love and the purity of motive that Jesus desires.”

“But Christ-centered love, it has no limits, because it is motivated by the infinite beauty and majesty and worthiness of JESUS! It's limitless because HE'S at the center of our lives, moving and loving and living through us! THAT's the Movement that Jesus longs to unleash in your life! That's the movement that Jesus died for!”

He saved and cleansed us from our sin, not just so that we could go to heaven, but so we could be *pure* vessels!

Question: What in your life needs to shift? What needs to be moved so that Christ's love, his life can move more freely through you?

Maybe what needs to move is a name you've internalized? Fat. Stupid. Ugly. Lazy. Weak. Unworthy. It blocks us from receiving God's love. It blocks us from the name that God wants to give us.

If you let him, he will take that name from you and give you a new name.

Maybe what needs to shift or move is a habit that isn't helpful and isn't holy but you can't stop it.

¹ Tim Keller, Jesus the King

Maybe what needs to shift or move is a relationship or a circle of friends that you need to move out of, because it's holding you back from following Jesus.

“I just want to say that if you're being abused, the most loving thing for you, for your family, even for your abuser is for you to get help and that might look like temporarily removing yourself from that abusive situation.”

Paul now turns in his letter to the practical application he wants to give the Corinthians.

He says, when you make all these shifts in your mindset and your motive, your life is released into a new MODE. A new mode of being that transforms your work, that transforms your worship, and that transforms your relationships.

1 Corinthians 14:1-4 NIV

Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy. ² For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit. ³ But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort. ⁴ Anyone who speaks in a tongue edifies themselves, but the one who prophesies edifies the church.

Did you catch that in verse 1? Paul says “follow the way of love.” When we shift our mindset from “me” to “we,” when we shift our motive from self-centered to Christ-centered, we are released into a new MODE of being where love is no longer an action or a feeling, but it's a way of life, it is a MODE we're engaged in wherever we are.

“Our attitude and our affections don't just change, but our AMBITIONS change and that's one of the most powerful changes of all.”

In the Corinthian church, Paul specifically calls them to shift from showing up to church as consumers, to showing up as conduits.

One problem the Corinthian church had was that when they gathered, each person was taking the mode of a consumer. They were focused on their own edification, their own encouragement, their own “worship experience,” their own up-building. These things aren't bad. But notice the reason Paul gives for pursuing the gift of prophecy in verses 3&4:

1 Corinthians 14:3-4 NIV

The one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort. ⁴ Anyone who speaks in a tongue edifies themselves, but the one who prophesies edifies the church.

“Paul says to the Corinthians, be people who SHOW UP to BUILD UP.

Rather than showing up places with the ambition to build up your own self, your own business, your own ministry, your own platform, let your burning ambition be to build up others.

Shift into the mode of a CONDUIT: Somebody who presence bridges the divide between heaven and earth...bridges the gap between God’s will in heaven and it’s fulfillment in the earth.

What would happen if everyday you were to

Show up for your job

Show up for your family

Show up for your neighbors

Show up at your school

And *shift* into the mode of a CONDUIT? Of a bridge-builder between heaven and earth.

Can you imagine if every person who comes to church, every person who logs on the livestream, takes the MODE of conduit. Not just the people on stage. Not just the preacher or volunteers. But if every person asked Holy Spirit:

- Is there anyone you want me to see and to greet today?
- Is there a word of encouragement from Scripture that you want me to share with someone after the service?
- Is there anyone you want me to pray for & maybe they’ll never know?
- Is there anyone you want me to build a relationship with, or to bless financially?

Bridgeway, for 30 years I have seen you be this bridge, this conduit, between heaven and earth. I saw it displayed powerfully during the 30 Hour Revival last weekend. People showing up as conduits, fully engaged, praying for one another, contending for God’s presence and power to move and build up our church.

The Lord did move, and he moved us. So let’s keep making the shifts we need to make. And let’s pray that all these moves will turn into a MOVEMENT. One that transforms our community, culture, and world with the saving love of Christ.