

Love one another - Part 2

Intro

So last week we looked at Psa 18 and how David regarded his relationship with God
He said that God's ways are **perfect and flawless**
That **He shields those who take refuge in Him**
And David states, "**For who is God besides the Lord?**"

And we said that as Christians we have chosen to lay down our lives
We love God with **all of our heart and all of our souls and all of our minds**
Because God so loved the world that He gave up His one and only Son

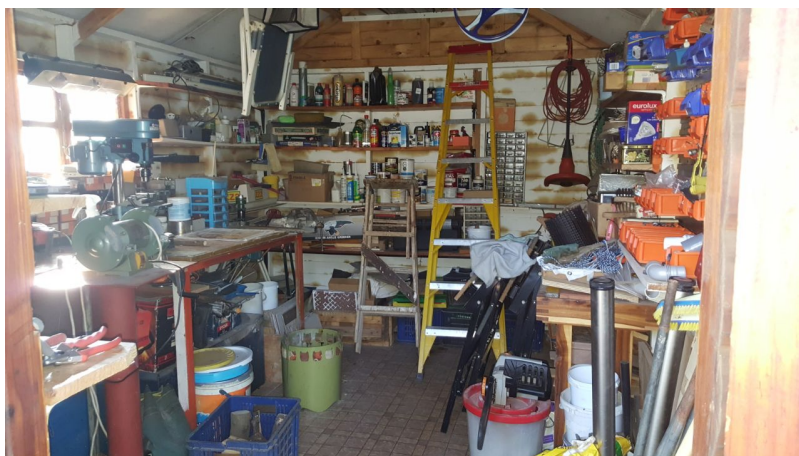
And therefore as Christians, **we contemplate the Lord's Glory,**
we are being **transformed into His image**
And that those who are **in Christ have clothed themselves with Christ**

These words roll off the tongue as I just repeat what the Scriptures say
It is quite breathtaking.
When last have you recognized the enormity of what has been done for you?
Or what could be done for you ... if you so choose it.

The best (though poor) analogy I could come up with is that God has given the Christian a
tool shed,
a place to go to where all the tools of the Christian life are available.
Again though, we choose to go to this place.

Last week we looked at the inside of a tool shed and for those who were not here, this is
what my dad's one looks like in Johannesburg

{Slide: Shed}



Then I brought along another picture .

{Slide: Party}



This one was taken at my 50th birthday party on the balcony of our house in Jhb
Joan had organised a drumming session and we were all dressed up in 'biker style'
Because I still drove a big motorbike during those days.

And you may be asking, what's the point here?
You'll see a little later.

All about others

Last week we looked at the first half of our core Scripture of the series.

{Slide: Joh 13v34}

³⁴"A new command I give you: **Love one another.**
As I have loved you, **so you must love one another.**

Last week looked at how God has loved us
And we used the tool shed as an analogy of a perfect resource given to us by God
Filled with the perfect tools that we need as we grow and mature as Christians

This week we are going to look at the other half of the verse.
So important that Jesus mentioned it twice
"Love one another. As I have loved you, **so you MUST love one another.**"

It makes perfect sense logically, doesn't it.
A perfect God shows us His perfect love
He then says we need to go and do the same.
But then He adds a little extra word to the sentence, the word MUST.
Remember it's a command, so the word MUST makes sense.
What does "*must*" mean?

If I go to the airport and the official says I must show my passport

What are the chances that I'm going to get through the barrier without showing it?

Zero.

Why?

Because there are no options built into the word MUST.

When your dad told you that you MUST clean your room?

What were the options?

None, zero.

Why?

Because there are no options built into the word MUST.

It's an absolute word, no gray area,

From God's love to our absolute loving of one another.

As a Christian, this is not a choice, this is what we signed up for.

This is what we are to spend our lives perfecting, maturing, getting our hearts behind, training and practicing.

Why?

Because there are no options built into the word MUST.

Imagine there were options?

Actually there are.

We can choose not to obey ...

But that would be a little weird

Because we choose to follow Jesus and therefore we choose to obey Him.

It's like choosing to accept the rules of the customs department at the airport and then wanting to walk through without showing our passport.

Jesus put it this way when asked what the greatest commandment was.

We looked at the first half last week.

{Slide: Mat 22v37}

³⁷Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'"³⁸This is the first and greatest commandment.

³⁹And the second is like it: '**Love your neighbor as yourself.**'

⁴⁰**All** the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

As a Christian, after loving God,

our next command is to love our neighbour, one another, as ourselves

These are the first and second commandments given to us by God.

Jesus highlights the **importance**

The **weight** of this point with V40

⁴⁰**All** the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

All

Everything that God is teaching us, is concerned with loving God - WHY?

SO THAT

we can love one another.

Do you get the implications of this?

Let's state this in reverse.

If your relationships with people are continually strained

THEN

You are not loving God with all of your heart and soul and mind.

Now we finally have some context and some clarity about the Christian life.

It's not all about me and my salvation and waiting for Jesus.

It's about what God **expects** from me while I'm here on earth.

And even the word 'expects' is too light.

God **commands** me what I **must** do.

And if it's about God and others then it's time we got to work isn't it.

Build a balustrade

Let's get visual again

Last week we spoke about God giving us a spiritual tool shed with all the tools

We started with a picture of the inside of my dad's shed in Jhb, a variety of tools.

Let's build something with those tools.

Here is the problem

{Slide: Balustrade start}



What's the problem?

We have a balcony but we have no balustrade, no protection from falling, hence Joan is holding the dog.

Solution is to design the 19m balustrade, get the material and keep going backwards and forwards between the tool shed and the balcony as the various bits come together.

Here is a picture of some of the slave labour that we employed.

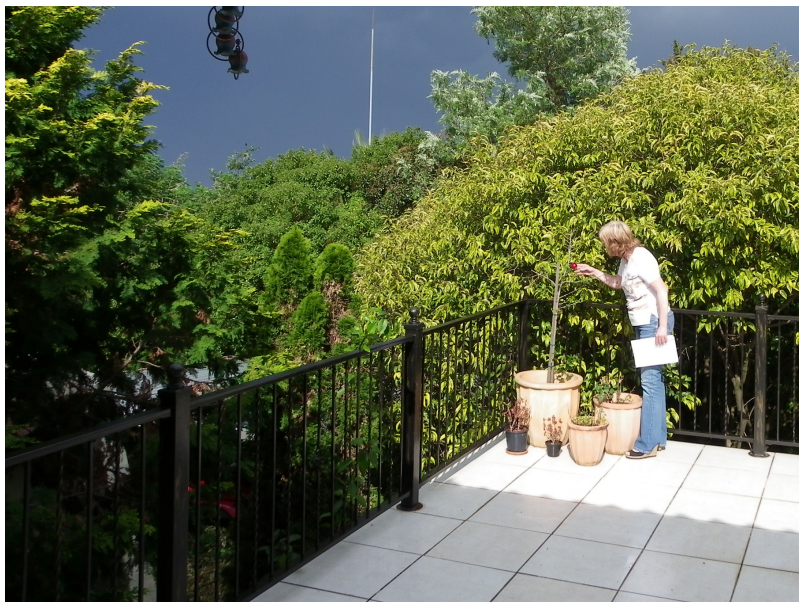
{Slide: Balustrade building}



I hacked and cut and drilled and sawed.

This is Joan cleaning the ends of the 150 vertical bars and remember each bar has two ends. And ten days later, we had the final result.

{Slide: Balustrade complete}



All because I'm too cheap to have a professional build it. But that is beside the point.

Define the target

Now it's time for the tires to hit the road.

We are going to use our spiritual tool shed in the same way.

Our target - We MUST, "love one another" as Christ has loved us.

We do that through a deepening and ongoing relationship with God
As we obey His Word.

The apostle John put it this way.

{Slide: 1 John - Love One Another}

1 John 3:11 - *For this is the message you heard from the beginning:*

*We **should love one another**.*

1 John 3:23 - *And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ,
and **to love one another** as he commanded us.*

1 John 4:7 - *Dear friends, let us **love one another**, for love comes from God.
Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.*

1 John 4:11 - *Dear friends, since God so loved us,
we also **ought to love one another**.*

1 John 4:12 - *No one has ever seen God; but if we **love one another**,
God lives in us
and his love is made complete in us.*

From the beginning - God has been telling us

He has commanded this

Loving is a sign that you have been born of God

God so loved us

Loving one another means God lives in us and His love is made complete

You get the feel that God is really trying to tell us something.

But our stubborn spirits make us hard of hearing

Let's take it to the next level.

We know we need to love on another.

What does that look like?

Let's put some descriptive words on the table.

What does our destination look like?

Where are we headed?

What should we be aiming at.

What is love and how should we relate to one another?

What should the balustrade look like? I need a plan.

So that, I can move from the plan to the actual building process.

Let's create a word picture of love in our minds

Here is a small selection of Scriptures (and there are many more)
that teach us various aspects of loving one another.

{Slide: Love One Another}

Rom 12v10 - Be **devoted** to one another in love.
Honor one another above yourselves
Rom 12v16 - Live in **harmony** with one another
Rom 15v7 - **Accept** one another ...
1 Cor 1v10 - **agree with** one another in what you say
Gal 5v13 - **serve** one another humbly in love
Eph 4v2 - Be **completely humble and gentle; be patient,**
bearing with one another in love.
Eph 4v32 - Be **kind and compassionate** to one another,
forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you
Eph 5v21 - **Submit** to one another out of reverence for Christ.

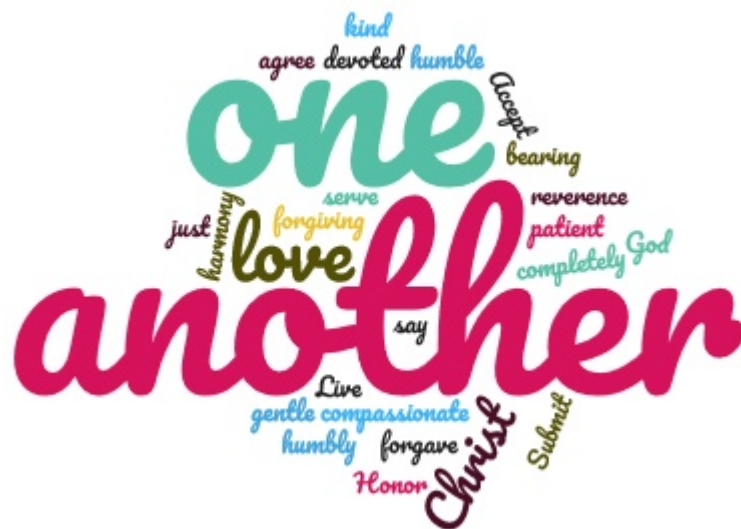
Isn't that an amazing collection of relationship words.

I almost get tears thinking about what a friendship like that would even look like.

Or better, what would that feel like?

If we took these Scriptures and created a word cloud it would look something like this:

{Slide: Word cloud}



What do you see?

A community called, 'One Another' - surrounded by all the action words.

Looks very much like the Christian life in a picture.

This is a small sample of how to love one another.

A glimpse of the end point.

The destination of our Christian walk as it were.

The reason our minds have to be **transformed**.

This is why we have to **lose our life to save it**.

This only happens when we **take refuge in Him**

This is what being **transformed into His image** looks like, in ever increasing Glory

And what people see when we are **clothed in Christ**

This is a disciple of Jesus.

Because this is a picture of Jesus.

Devoted to His Father and us
Honoring His Father and us
In **harmony with** His Father and the Holy Spirit
Accepting His position
Agreeing with His Father
Serving us
Completely humble and gentle and patient
Bearing with us
Kind and compassionate to us
Forgiving us
Submitting to His Father

Breathtaking.

Who wants to have a friend like this?

All those who are children, who wants to have parents like this?

I want to have friends like this ...

I'm trying to teach my wife to be like this ...

But that is not the point.

This is the friend I need to become ...

Because it had nothing to do with anyone else.

Because the day I made Jesus Lord, is the day I signed up for this Christian growth program

{Slide: Eph 5v1}

Follow God's example,
therefore, as dearly loved children
*²and **walk in the way of love,***
just as Christ loved us
and gave himself up for us
as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

God gives me the target.

Now how do I get there?

Build the character

As we lose our old life we have to build a new one.

This new life **MUST** have this Christian character

To build this new character we need to use the tools that we have been given

Let's take the first Scripture that we showed a bit earlier:

{Slide: Rom 12v10}

*Be **devoted** to one another in love.
Honor one another above yourselves*

Before I became a Christian I was devoted to myself
and to a lesser extent my wife and children
and to a much lesser extent, my friends
And to the least extent, strangers.

Now my Bible commands me to do something very much against what I thought
What I understood
My opinion
What comes naturally to me
What I grew up with.
What I saw all around me

.
But I said goodbye to that life when I was baptised, when I said, "Jesus is Lord".

Now the Bible is my teacher.
It said, "*Be devoted*" and to "*honor*" others - above myself
Not as an opinion
But as a directive.
We discussed earlier the meaning of the word MUST.
No passing customs unless ... I get my heart around the word MUST LOVE ONE ANOTHER
Follow God's example the Bible says.

So I have the plans of the character that I MUST build
So I go to the tool shed to see how I'm going to get this built.
And I pick up a tool and it says:

{Slide: Phi 2v1-2}

*Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ,
if any comfort from his love,
if any common sharing in the Spirit,
if any tenderness and compassion,
²**then**
make my joy complete by being like-minded,
having the same love,
being one in spirit and of one mind.*

I think what beautiful words.
I do feel encouraged from being united with Jesus
As a disciple that is the best encouragement in the world
I do get comfort from his love
I want to be in tune with the Spirit, to feel a common sharing
I do feel His tenderness and compassion for choosing me, as unworthy as I am
Then,
complete the joy of Christ by having the same mind

The same love
Being one in spirit and mind

What a beautiful description of the Christian mindset.
This is loving God with all of our heart and mind and soul
I can sit in the reading corner and feel all this love
and meditate on the beauty of the words
and me ... and God ... can be one

But the Scripture does not end there:

{Slide: Phi 2v3-5}

³*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.
Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,
⁴not looking to your own interests
but each of you to the interests of the others.*
⁵*In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:*

Now it starts getting personal
It's making me look in-wards
Because I do tend to look after No 1 first
Now the personal call to me is to be humble
To value the interests of others above mine
Then he brings in relationships, and the way we consider those relationships
Is with the same mindset as Jesus

That is now another level that I had not considered.
It's time to get out of the reading corner.
My internal connection with Jesus must now become external
I MUST love the people around me.
I'm starting to feel stretched and challenged.

But the Scripture does not end there:

{Slide: Phi 2v6-7}

⁶*Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
⁷rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.*

Jesus Himself, in the flesh, Son of God did not feel the need to use any of His power in the pursuit of being what we need to be here on earth.
Because that would not have taught us anything.
Instead, he made Himself nothing.
Just like **there is nothing we bring to the Christian life**
Because nothing we have is needed.

And Jesus became a servant, in human likeness.
And calls us to come alongside Him.
Because then, with this ... **tool ... of servant hood ...**
I can take a step in the right direction to love one another.

Now I'm overwhelmed.
I realise, I don't know how to use this tool.
I need help.
And I look around the shed and I see others there,
And they look like they know their way around, tool veterans
And so I go to them and ask them for help
In fact I say to them, please mentor me, help me, guide me, disciple me.
Because there is no way I can walk this Christian life on my own.
It's impossible.
I'm biased, I can only see myself through my eyes.
I need help
Then I remember one of the first Scriptures I ever came across.
It is now starting to make sense.

{Slide: 2 Tim 3v16-17}

¹⁶*All Scripture is God-breathed
and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,
¹⁷so that the servant of God
may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

The tools in this tool shed are **useful**.
For anyone who chooses to be **a servant of God**
And that there is a process that has to be gone through
before I can **be thoroughly equipped to do every good work**
And this process involves **teaching, rebuking, correcting and training**
Because every tool in this shed had been personally crafted
Breathed on
By God Himself.
Did you notice the word servant again, a servant of God

Once I was a wall flower, always feeling awkward when I spoke to people.
I made few friends and only those I was naturally comfortable with
But then I met God.
And He said, love **me**
And then He said love **others** ...
And through teaching, correcting, training and yes I have needed rebuke, I'm getting better.

But **I have to keep returning** to the tool shed.
God's tool shed
Because the job is far from complete.

My balustrade is built.
But I have the rest of the house to build and maintain.
And I can't do that without continually returning to the shed.

And as that process continues
And without realizing it, I start looking at people differently.

Warmly

I start feeling **compassion** when someone goes through a hard time.
My **money** becomes less important and I start giving it away to help people.
My **time** is spent teaching and coaching and helping marriages.

Encouraging people

My time with my peeps becomes everything.
When we **meet** I arrive early and I leave late.
And we **eat** together
And **drink coffee** together.
And **share the Word** together
And I **make time** for them when they ask
And this Christ culture takes over as human culture becomes less
And I **go to funerals** when they lose someone.
And to **memorials** when they mourn

And I keep going back to that tool shed
Because that is where I learned how God loves me
And where I keep learning how to love one another.

Let's close off with a last Scripture
This series was based on Joh 13v34 which read, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another".

{Slide: Joh 13v35}

**By this everyone will know that you are my disciples,
if you love one another."**

Amen