

January 28, 2014

The Opposite Life

Romans 12:10 (NASB), ***“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor...”***

Several days ago I read an article about the work of marriage. Marriage, or at least a good marriage, takes a lot of work because we humans are by nature completely selfish beings. There is a reason that the Bible does not command us to *“love thyself;”* that is assumed! *“Falling in love”* isn't enough because the emotions that we feel come and go. To have a successful and vibrant marriage means that we have to be ***“devoted to one another.”***

So it is as well in the body of Christ. As a Christ follower I am a part of the body of Christ both here locally in the Yampa Valley and worldwide as well. In order for the body of Christ to function in a healthy and vibrant manner the members of the body must be ***“devoted to one another in brotherly love...”***

In John 13:34-35 Jesus gives us the command to love: ***“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*** As Christ followers we are to be devoted to other Christians with the same sort of love that hopefully we have for our families. This is a love that is based not on worldly things like attraction or desirability but rather it is based on the love of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 4:9 says, ***“Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.”*** The Christian is to be marked by love; love for each other and love for others as well. 1 John 3:10 says, ***“By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious; anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.”***

How are we to ***“be devoted to one another in brotherly love?”*** By putting others first; the word ***“preference”*** that is used here is translated to mean *“go before, consider better.”* In other words we are to put others *first* and what we prefer *last*.

This is possibly one of the hardest things for most of us to overcome as we start our new lives in Christ. In our culture we are so ingrained in the habit of always looking out for ourselves and for our own self-interests. Instead as Christ followers we are to do the direct opposite of what is often so natural for all of us to do.

Philippians 2:3 says, ***“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.”*** We are to look at others and their needs and their wants as more important than our own. Paul continues this thought in Philippians 2:4, ***“do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”*** Again, this is the opposite of almost everything we have been trained to think.

There is an episode of the show “Seinfeld” in which George Costanza decides that his life is such a mess that he is going to do everything the *opposite* of how he normally does things. This is really what we are called to do as Christ followers but the difference is that we have the guidance

and power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to do this. We cannot do this on our own because of our innate sinful nature.

The challenge then for us is to model the love that Christ had for us towards others. Christ selflessly went to the cross to die for our sins. He gave the ultimate sacrifice so that we would be able to have our sins forgiven and then to have fellowship with the heavenly Father. We are to do no less as we interact with others both in and outside the church.