

**JESUS IN YOU AND LOVING**  
**Patterning After the Healthy Christ**  
**Part 5**  
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Today we continue the series, “Patterning life after the healthy Christ.” This is in the midst of that series the third message on Christ in us and Loving. We have expressed that loving ness in terms of being outgoing and communicating. Being expressive and responsive. Today loving in terms of caring or emphasizing or sympathizing. There are people – sons and daughters – in this room that have yet to hear from their parents “I love you.” Or maybe one parent or another a physical expression of love in the form of a hug or an embrace.

How sad that we should let our family tradition or our cultural tradition grow up to bind us so that we cannot be free and expressive and communicating the love that is really in our hearts for someone. It’s there but many times we feel simply uncomfortable in speaking it or acting it out. 1 Corinthians 14:1 Paul says, “Make love your aim.” There’s a marvelous way in the original language of the New Testament that that phrase is given. The root word is really “persecute”. Persecute the love I what it literally says. It can mean more than just to hunt someone down. It can also mean to hasten. To run. To press after, to run after, to pursue, to seek for, to aspire to. It’s all of that in association with love. We should want to express love so badly and want ourselves to be loving that it is a supreme goal. It is more important than speaking in tongues. It is more important than having intellectual knowledge. It’s more important than knowing all things and having prophecy. It’s more important than simply giving what you have to someone else. It’s pursuing love. The highest ideal, that expression which is in the heart of God itself. God is love.

One of the things that I’ve been trying to get at if the healthy Christ is living in us, then we can begin to expect our life is moving in the pattern of Jesus. We could begin to communicate and express and care.

As we look at some affirmations of love as Christians we can at least make two affirmations about love. One of them is this: I ma loved. Someone has said that almost every emotional problem can be summed up in one particular behavior. It’s the person walking around saying, For God’s sake love me!

And God has loved us. It’s one thing to know that intellectually. John3:16 “God so loved the world.” But it’s quite another thing t realize it in our emotion and in our experience. Sometimes we just simply have to saturate ourselves in the word of God and the experience of God to know how deeply we are loved by him.

Paul tells us in Romans 5:6-8 “You see at the right time while we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man. Though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners Christ died for us.” If he died for us when we were sinners and loved us then, how much more can he say he loves us when we’ve opened our lives to him.

Romans 5 God’s love is so great for us that he doesn’t just save the people that he’d feel comfortable with. But he saves the people who feel caught off from his love and excluded and worthless and left out. He really loves. He identifies with the one farthest out as well and as

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equally strong as he might identify with the person who feels closest to him. He risked his life to save us while we were yet sinners and not even friends of his.

That suggests to us that he is love. Before we look at any other concept of God, any other understanding of God, it's vital to know this – God loves us, I am loved. And when I know that I am loved then I can begin to reach out and love.

The second affirmation: I am loved. As a Christian I think we can say this consciously of ourselves. We say of God, "God is love." If we can say it of God and if the personality of Jesus dwells within us then maybe we can begin to say as well "I am love." Perhaps a helpful experience and experiment for you to do would be to take 1 Corinthians 13 and where you find the descriptions that are given of love in place of the word "love" write your own name. So that 1 Corinthians 13 begins to describe your personality. Maybe when you first read it with your name in it you'll say, "That doesn't describe me." Begin working on it therefore and let it be a prophecy of where your life is going to be. What God is calling your life to be. For if God is love and he wants us to love and this is how love behaves, then this is how you and I will behave when we are loved.

Jesus has come into life to make those kind of affirmations possible in our life. He is seeking to bring us out of our physical isolation and emotional isolation and verbal isolation and touching isolation. Today especially as we look at Jesus in us and caring we want to see how Jesus expressed his love and how we are to express our love for others in terms of empathy and forgiveness and compassion and sensitivity for the needs and feelings of others. And concern for the less fortunate and awareness of one another's needs for encouragement and understanding and kindness toward children and animals and the elderly and all people.

So we put a dipstick into our emotional life and ask this question once more when we look at love and sympathy and empathy and caring: Am I a caring person? There's some questions that can help us get a score on whether or not we see ourselves as a caring or empathetic kind of person.

A question to ask is this: am I by nature a forgiving person? Or are there people that I know of that I have absolutely refused to forgive? It's striking what the Lord says to Peter when he asks the Lord how many times he should forgive. Seventy times seven – 490 times. Or a complete love. Forgiveness. Am I by nature forgiving?

A second question is this: am I sensitive to the feelings and needs to any member of the family who is ill?

I have almost a paranoia about illness believing the person wants to be alone and they'd rather not have anybody both them. So I'm likely to withdraw and not be sensitive to a sick person's need. I think this is an area where a lot of us can use a lot of work to be sensitive to people when they're hurting and they're in need. Jesus demonstrates sensitivity to those who are hurting and ill.

A third question is this: Am I quick to know when someone needs encouragement or a kind word? Or do I pretty much keep to myself and I'm not quick to sense where another person is?

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Fourth, am I the kind of person whom others turn to in times of stress and trouble? Am I sought out by family or friends or other persons as a person that can be perceived as caring? When you're in stress or trouble you seek out someone who has a shoulder you can cry on. Or a listening ear or a tender heart? Do others, I think, perceive me in that way?

Certainly the Lord was perceived in this way. Peter one time said, "Lord, to whom should we go?" There is no one else that Peter could see that he would want to turn to in a time of stress and trouble, other than Jesus.

Fifth, am I easily moved to pity? One of the most frequent emotions described of Jesus in the gospels is he had pity or compassion. He felt for people.

Sixth, can I put myself empathetically in another person's place and feel what they're going through and the struggle or pain for the life experience they're having.

Seventh, do I believe everyone is entitled to a second chance? I'm not talking about a doctrine of salvation after death? But I'm saying when a person has failed do I give them enough room that they can come back. Their one failure and I don't write them off the books and says, That person failed and they'll never make it so I'm not going to fool around with them any more.

A marvelous quality in the person Barnabus who walked with the Lord is he saw in the character of Mark, someone who had made a bad mistake but who could be redeemed. And he gave him time and he allowed him to come back.

Eighth, do I think it necessary to apologize after hurting someone else's feelings? Or do I simply walk on and it really doesn't bother me and I can cut people up without worrying a great deal about it all?

If your answers were all Yes to these eight questions the indication is that you are a person marked by a desire to help others in need, you're sought out in times of stress and trouble. The possibility also exists that you may be easily imposed upon or taken advantage of because you are so kind and tender. It may be that you'll need to develop some other traits like objectivity and self-discipline – some qualities we'll look at later.

If your answers are no to all of these questions or a significant majority to the questions the indication is that you have a lack of empathetic interest in other people. You're somewhat self centered. You have a tendency to be strict, to be thoughtlessly inconsiderate. To recognize only very slowly the need of family and friends.

If you're like me, answering some yes and some no, there's room for the person of Jesus to grow in us, to help us become a more caring or empathetic person. This raises the question then, How can I become a more caring person.

I would especially address this to those of us who have more no's in these answers. How can I become more caring?

I visited with a hospital chaplain this past week. I perceived as I talked to him that this man had a tremendous compassion for people. That he was an extraordinarily caring person. I asked him,

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“You seem like a perfect model to me of what it means to be caring. What would you say, if you were to talk to somebody who said, ‘I’d like to be a more caring person.’ What counsel, what advise would you give them?” His first response was this, “I would try to ask them what their motivation was in becoming a caring person. I have people come to the hospital from time to time that volunteer their services to me as a chaplain and they’ll say things like, ‘I just love to visit.’ I’m very suspicious of a person who says that. The emphasis is upon self-fulfillment. It’s *I* love to visit. I feel far more comfortable if a person will come in and say, ‘I love to visit people.’ Or ‘I love to visit the sick.’”

We do these things under the guise of mercy or compassion when in actuality they can be simply additional expressions of selfishness, rather than a real motivation to minister to people they simply become a way we satisfy our own ego needs of being a good person that does sympathetic and kind acts. We must look at our motivation.

It’s ok to have some pursuits that are individually fulfilling but the motivation in terms of caring is not just to be fulfilled personally but to fulfill the other – someone else. Can we do something because our motives are right and there’s a genuine desire to serve people and do the work of God. Just being conscious of that I pray that my own motives will be right.

If our motives are wrong the kingdom of God and all kinds of things fall out of place. People start getting hurt and Satan has a door of entry and we really can’t do the work of the king or the kingdom.

We ask ourselves about motives. Why is it important for me to be number one? Why is it important for my kids to excel in school? Is it important for them or is it just important for me? Why is it important that I treat my spouse well? Or my parents nicely. Scriptures call us to have an unfeigned love and a pure heart. If we’re going to be a caring person we might start with motive. Not just what brings me self-fulfillment but what can really fulfill another?

I think the Lord did that. When you look at his motivation it was so pure toward us whom he loves.

The second thing in becoming a caring person I think is committing your will. Caring is not simply a matter of emotion. It’s a matter of will. It’s a matter that we decide. There are some things that maybe we’ll never feel like doing in terms of caring for another person and our will must get in control and dominate our feeling level.

Caring means taking the time to do what you don’t like to do. But what you must do because it’s an act of caring.

“Will” is on the determinative, intellectual, decision making level. It says even when I don’t feel like it I will. Becoming a more caring person involves not waiting for some occasion to move us so that we can do our Christmas like deed once a year and get it over with. But it’s bending our will to seek out those who may need our assurance and love.

A third thing in becoming a more caring person is to follow through. It’s more than simply the initial contact which often is simply surface. But to commit ourselves to really caring on a consistent basis on a longer-term basis with people. There are moments in life where we really

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fail to follow through in love and caring. There comes a time when we can no longer care and follow through. So while it is day, let's live for the day.

Look at how the Lord follows through with Simon Peter. He says, "Simon, I have prayed for you that your faith fail not." He doesn't let Simon off the hook when Simon fails him. He seeks him out and appears to him after his resurrection. The Lord is following through on a consistent basis to let that disciple know he loves him.

I've been guilty at times, as you have perhaps of saying to a person, "I'm praying for you," and then only do it with lip service and walk away and forget to follow that up. Or forget to send a note or give an encouraging call. The Lord is saying to us, one of the ways we become a caring person is following through.

I think another way we become a caring person is identifying with another individual through empathy.

To feel sympathy for a person is to indicate sorrow for them. It's almost to stand in a superior position and say, "I know you're hurting." To be empathetic is to take one's stand alongside the person and be in their place.

I remember a sermon I heard when I was in high school. He preached from a text in Ezekiel "I sat where they sat and I was astonished." He talked about how the prophet came down on the level of the people. He sat where they sat and was astonished. If we will take our place where someone else is we'll be astounded at the kinds of things they face. That's real empathy.

It's a marvelous quality not only in showing mercy but it's a marvelous quality in extending forgiveness. The father of the prodigal really knows without having experienced it himself, where the son has been at. He does more than simply have pity upon him. He deeply loves him and he cares for him and receives him and makes that son again feel received and accepted as a son.

When I watch the Lord Jesus as a caring person I see all these things in his life. I watch his motivation. His motivation is right. He didn't really get anything out of coming to earth other than a group of people that call him Lord. He was already the eternal Son of God before he came. In fact when Jesus prays in John 17 before his death he simply prays that he will have the glory with the Father which he had before the foundation of the world. He doesn't ask for anything more. He just asks for what he had before he came. His act of giving was totally sacrificial. There was nothing out of it for him except a company of people who would love him. No more crowns on his head simply because he has become our redeemer. He is already from the beginning of time the eternal one. The uncreated Son of God.

His motives are right in loving us. He doesn't love us to manipulate us. But he loves us because he loves us.

He loves us with an act of his will. He loves us with tremendous follow through. He pursues us and keeps after us to make us know the intensity of his love. He loves us empathetically, deeply he cares.

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It's wonderful to know that we who have a God who cares can ourselves be people who express that caring. You may be a person who is on the way but not arrived in the expression of all these qualities. But looking at the life of the Lord, looking at ways I can become more caring has made me alert to the fact that Jesus wants to dwell in me in this way as well. Jesus in me and caring.

Our Lord, there are so many about us in our immediate family and among our friends and in your body and in the world for whom we can show care. So much Lord of our caring as Christians may arise from a sense of guilt because we're supposed to do this as believers and we're guilty before God if we don't. But Lord when you came to save us it wasn't out of a sense of guilt or neglect. It was because you loved us – God so loved the world that he gave. Lord I pray that your motivation and your life will be reproduced in each one of us. That you'll teach us how to be more caring people. How to be more caring with members of our family. How to be more caring in your body. How to be more caring toward the world. Let these words dwell in us richly that we might grow and increase in your love and in your stature. Through Jesus our Lord. Amen.