

LOVE

Theme: Love 14

Discipleship groups purpose: Each member being transformed into the image of the Son.

Key Truth: Love bears all things.

Key Scripture: *1 Corinthians 13:7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

Read: As we heard from Sam on Sunday, love has the ability to bear or cover all kinds of fleshly behaviour and thinking, for the purpose of another's transformation. Jesus who is love is constantly covering our shortcomings and bearing our shortcomings for the purpose of our transformation. When we live from the flesh and push against the goad, thinking we are living in Christ and in Christ's way, His love for us covers this ignorance and unbelief.

1 Timothy 1:12-17 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen.

This is a great example of God's love bearing Paul's ignorance and unbelief, for the purpose of his own transformation at the time God had chosen. Saul was a persecutor of Jesus Christ and His people, and yet God was covering Saul's ignorance and unbelief. Many followers suffered at the hands of Saul, and yet this didn't stop God bearing all things for Saul.

Others can be bearing all things for us and we may not even be aware of it. If there is one thing I have come to learn and know, it is that I and we do not yet know Him or His ways the way we need to, and yet we can be completely oblivious to this reality. When confronted with the reality of Truth we can act in ignorance and unbelief, rejecting and resisting God like Paul did and be completely unaware and in fact deny this state of heart.

This would be a fatal mistake on our part as this position of pride is keeping us out of the life we were predestined to know. Be aware, people will be bearing with us for the purpose of our own spiritual maturity as we grow and come into the full reality of God, giving us freedom to make mistakes and come to know God and His way for who and what they really are.

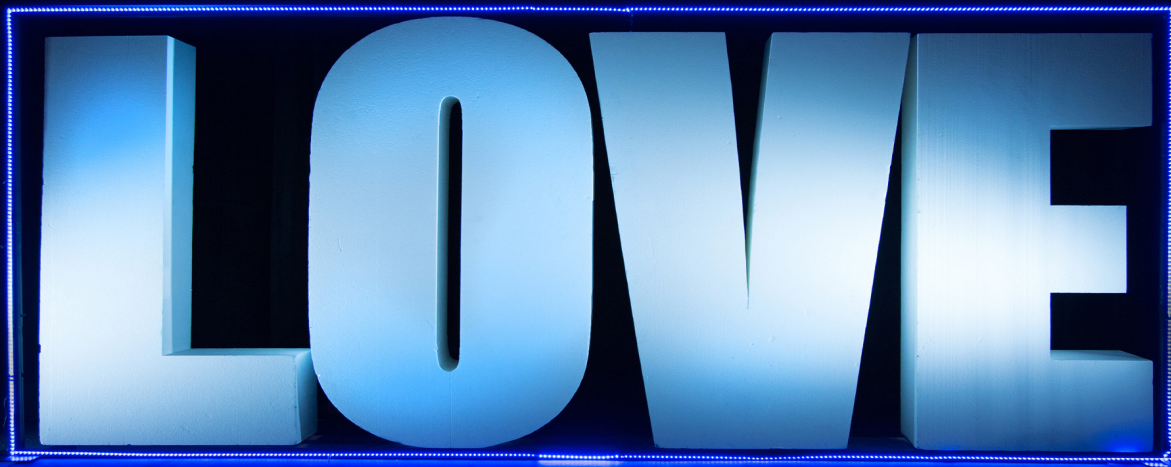
This aspect of love must be in place in God's people if we are all to become the church He declares we are to be.

1 Peter 4:8 Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.

If one is not fervently in love with the Father, with the incorruptible love of the Father operating within them (Ephesians 6:24), then one will not be able to bear or cover the sins of other followers or non followers. One will more than likely get offended by the sins of another and take in this offence, causing hurt, bitterness and unforgiveness towards the one who causes the offence. When we are operating from this incorruptible love we are fully capable and able to cover the sins of others and love them into wholeness and life.

Acts 7:59-60 They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep.

Just like Stephen we are all called to be able to bear all things and cover the sinful behaviour of others, offering them love and forgiveness in return.



Questions:

1. Why is love able to bear all things?
2. How does this love being perfected within us change us?
3. Can you describe a time in your own life when you have covered or bore the sin or sins of another?
4. Are you aware of a time in your life when someone has or is covering you?
5. Why is it so critical the church is able to cover one another as we all grow into Christ?
6. What are the consequences to us as individuals and the church for not being able to cover others sins?

Action point: After going over this resource, what is one thing you need to consider doing differently in your relationship with Christ?