

Living in the overflow of God's love

Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth.

Here's a story of a father who had to discipline his son one day because of his bad behavior. The boy's response to the discipline was one of rebellion. The boy stood confidently and tall and said-- if that's how it's going to be-- I'm running away from home. So he went into his bedroom and got his sleeping bag, his piggy bank and his teddy-bear and as he started out the door, his dad said, son-- What are you going to do when you get hungry? The son said, I'm going to come home and get something to eat! What are you going to do when you run out of money? Well... I'm going to home and get some more. And what are you going to do when your clothes get dirty and smelly? Well, I going to come home and let mom wash them for me. So the son walks out the door and down the sidewalk. The mother says to the father, well aren't you going to stop him, he's running away from home! The dad says, he's not running away from home, he's just going off to college.

We continue to look at what love is and is not as we look at what it means to live in the overflow of God's love. And one of the main principles standing out for us is that real love demands a willingness to give-up getting our own way. Having the willingness to give-up having our own way is a tough lesson. But there are more tough lessons about what real love does. Sometimes real love refuses to let someone else have their own way. Those of us who have children know what I mean. Because we love our children, we don't always let them have their own way. And sometimes our children are not mature enough to always see the wisdom behind why they can't have their own way, or get what they want or do what they want. Therefore, many times our children do not always interpret our actions as being loving, but we know better. You see, sometimes love refuses to let someone else have their way. Sometimes love- says no. **Rom 12:9-10 [NLT]- Don't just pretend that you love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Stand on the side of the good. 10Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.**

It's easy to confuse love with compromising your own conviction of what is right.

One woman calls another and says – I know I can trust you... we're friends... right? If my husband calls, you tell him we were at a movie last night. I need your help in this. I can't let him find out I was really doing last night. You'll do this for me, wont you? We're friends, right? Tighter than sisters, right?

In the verse that follows lies a test for love:

1 Cor. 13:6- Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth.

If this friend assures her that she'll cover for her, has she passed the test? No! Love doesn't ask someone to do what is wrong. Nor does love help or cover for someone to do wrong.

Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth.

It's difficult to separate the fake from the factual or to identify the counterfeit from the real deal. How do you know if what you feel is real love?

A young couple is on a date together. His expressions and affections go beyond what is appropriate. She's uncomfortable and resists. So what does he do... he uses the oldest line in the book... "but I love you and only want to be with you. If you loved me... Do you see those red flags everywhere? It's the phony love detector! Don't ignore it. This guy doesn't love her.

A schoolmate says to you that he isn't prepared for the test and asks you to copy your paper-- "we're friends, right?"

Or the co-worker on a business trip who pads the expense account and says-- "hey, everyone does it, we're buddies, aren't we!"

Love never asks someone to do what they believe is wrong. Love doesn't tear down the convictions of others. Instead, **love builds up!** (1 Cor. 8:1)

John says — **1 John 2:10** whoever loves his brother (brothers or sisters) lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.

Look at what Paul says about causing someone to stumble: **12**When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. **1 Cor. 8:12**

Back to the test... How do you know if your love for someone is true? I'm glad you asked! Consider this: Do you influence this person to do what is right? Do you applaud what is right? Look again at **1 Cor. 13:6**- Love "rejoices with the truth."

Warning: Church history proves that there are some who need no encouragement to become more judgmental. For some "Christians", this comes easy enough!

A 75 year-old woman in Florida was shopping one day. As she left the store she walked in the parking lot to get into her car. As she approached her car, she sees it backing out with four men inside. This woman puts her bags down, and draws a gun from her purse. She runs to the car, and yells get out of the car, I have a gun and I'm not afraid to use it! These guys got out of that car and ran like mad to get away from that car and the woman. She put her bags in the car and was so shaken by what had just happened she couldn't get the key in the ignition. Then she finally figures out why she gets the key in, because her car was 5 spaces down. So she goes to the police station and tells her story. The policeman cracks up as he points to the four men who are reporting their story about a car jacking. When asked to describe the criminal, they said about 5ft. tall woman, white hair, glasses and approximately 75.

Look, it's easy for us to jump to conclusions and make hasty assumptions and judge people improperly. Judgmentalism is sin! Admonishing one another is done in love and positively! Love is eager to forgive sin, not ignore it.

Paul reminds us that love: "rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn." **Rom 12:15**

Love does not celebrate the misfortune of others. Love doesn't gloat...Never! Look at the Message- **1 Cor. 13:6** [Love] "Doesn't revel when others grovel, [love] Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth"

Not only does love not compromise what is right, love does not have a pharisaical kind of love. For many of us-- if not all of us who have deep convictions to be religious people-- have a tendency to become pharisaical. What a Pharisee will do in his/her arrogance is to determine his/her

righteousness on the basis of someone else's unrighteousness. **I feel good about myself because I'm not as bad as so-and-so.** This is delighting in evil!

Another way we can delight in evil is gossip. **"Hey! Did you hear about...?"**

Love is real when you can weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice. Love is real when you feel for others what Catherine Lawes felt for the inmates at Sing Sing Prison.

In 1921 Lewis Lawes became the warden at Sing Sing Prison. No prison was tougher than Sing Sing during that time. But when warden Lawes retired some 20 years later, that prison had become a humanitarian institution. Those who studied the system said credit for the change belonged to Lawes. But when he was asked about the transformation, here's what he said: "I owe it all to my wonderful wife, Catherine, who is buried outside the prison walls."

Catherine Lawes was a young mother with three small children when her husband became the warden. Everybody warned her from the beginning that she should never set foot inside the prison walls, but that didn't stop Catherine! When the first prison basketball game was held, she went...walking into the gym with her three beautiful kids and she sat in the stands with the inmates and.

Her attitude was: "My husband and I are going to take care of these men and I believe they will take care of me! I don't have to worry!"

She insisted on getting acquainted with them and their records. She discovered one convicted murderer was blind so she paid him a visit. Holding his hand in hers she said, "Do you read Braille?"

"What's Braille?" He asked. Then she taught him how to read. Years later he would weep in love for her.

Later, Catherine found a deaf-mute in prison. She went to school to learn how to use sign language. Many said that Catherine Lawes was the body of Jesus that came alive again in Sing Sing from 1921 to 1937.

Then, she was killed in a car accident. The next morning Lewis Lawes didn't come to work, so the acting warden took his place. It seemed almost instantly that the prison knew something was wrong.

The following day, her body was resting in a casket in her home, three-quarters of a mile from the prison. As the acting warden took his early morning walk, he was shocked to see a large crowd of the toughest, hardest-looking criminals gathered like a herd of animals at the main gate. He came closer and noted tears of grief and sadness. He knew how much they loved Catherine. He turned and faced the men, "All right, men, you can go. Just be sure and check in tonight!" Then

he opened the gate and the parade of criminals walked, without a guard, the three-quarters of a mile to stand in line to pay their final respects to Catherine Lawes. And every one of them checked back in.

Every one!

By Tim Kimmel

The love that Paul speaks about in 1 Cor. 13 changes people.

Didn't God's love change you? Weren't you like the prisoner who was blind? Here you are, blind as a bat. You couldn't see beyond your death. You couldn't see any purpose in life beyond the here and now, and then he showed up and showed you. Also, you couldn't hear a thing. Your ears functioned ok, but your heart simply didn't understand. You'd never heard of such love and kindness before. But then God came and spoke in your language and then set you free.

1 Cor. 13:6 is the test of love that God passes. God wants the best for you. And every action of heaven has one simple aim... that you know God!

You remember when Paul stood up in the Areopagus and spoke to the Athenians...

Act 17:24-27- 24"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. 25And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. 26From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. 27**God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.**

Does God rejoice when you rejoice? You better believe it! **The LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love. Psa 147:11**

This past week Helen and I attended the annual meeting for the Nashua Children's Home where the late Mark Rowland worked. Each year during this meeting, the Mark S. Rowland award is given to the employee of the year. It is an honor to receive this distinguished award. And it was an honor for Helen and I to once again see someone receive this award.

If you recall Mark was a youth minister in Manchester NH and then moved to Abilene, Texas to earn a Masters in Marriage and Family Therapy. He then moved back to NH and worked for Nashua Children's Home. In 1999 Mark was gunned down by a man who Mark was attempting to help. Mark's purpose in going to this man's home was to meet with the family, and their young son and help them work through some of their family problems. Mark was an advocate for the family. And one Mark's most outstanding characteristics were his love for children. When Mark arrived at the door of this family on August 20, 1999 he read the note on the door expressing that they were not able to meet with him. However, before Mark left, he had a book "the story of Jonah" that he left at the door for the young boy. Inside the cover of the book Mark wrote these words: "Danny, never loose the love of reading books." Then moments later he was gunned down and murdered in front the house he just left.

Does God weep when you weep? Yes! And I have proof! We were not alone when Mark was murdered. We wept, and wept bitterly. And God wept along with us.

Hear Paul's words: 2 Cor. 1:3-4: 3Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

We can know what real love is: **1 John 4:10 [NIV]** This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

1 John 4:10 [MSG] This is the kind of love we are talking about--not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they've done to our relationship with God.

God passes the test!

So when it comes to love:

Be careful- Don't force what is wrong to be right

Be prayerful- even if it's to late. Even if you're saying, I'm married to someone I don't even love, or I'm married to someone who doesn't love me. Remember this – love is a fruit of the Spirit. Ask God to help you love as he loves. **Rom. 5:5** And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Ask everyone you know to pray for you. Ask at church services, ask other Christians, ask your family and friends, get on every prayer list you can. Ask God who raised the dead to resurrect your love.

Be grateful- Be grateful for those who love you. Be grateful for those who have encouraged you to do what is right and applauded you when did. Mostly, be grateful for your Father in heaven-- because he passes the test of love with ease!