



August 2011

Dear Friend of Light of the Word,

*“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13)*

The greatest possible love that you could ever show in your life is when you put other people before your own self-interests. Whether it’s your spouse, your children, your work relationships, or your friends, the greatest kind of love you can have is one that puts others’ needs before your own.

The only way we can do this is by having the love of God rule in our hearts and in our lives. Otherwise, any display of love that we have for others will always be motivated by our own desires, our own ambitions, and our own needs.

Because God has loved you and forgiven you, you are able to love others in the way that Christ loved you.

When you know and understand God’s love for you, it carries you through life even when others don’t show you the love you desire. Think of Joseph in the Old Testament. His brothers hated him. They sold him into slavery and that started what seemed to be many years of turmoil for Joseph. But God loved Joseph and this young man understood that fact and thrived in his difficult circumstances. Joseph was not filled with bitterness toward those who treated him wrongly. Instead, Joseph relied on God’s love and the Lord molded him and shaped him into a mighty leader. Eventually, Joseph left the prison to be second in command over Egypt! And when Joseph’s brothers came to Egypt to get food in the midst of the famine, Joseph not only helped them but embraced them saying, “What you meant for evil, God meant for good.”

Jesus, knowing that Judas would betray Him, still invited him to the Last Supper. Jesus, knowing full well that Judas would deliver him into the hands of the enemy, still washed his feet. And when Judas led the soldiers into the Garden of Gethsemane to arrest Jesus, the Lord let Judas kiss His cheek. How could the Lord do this? If it were you or me, we certainly would not invite our enemy to our home for dinner, much less wash their feet and serve them! But Jesus LOVES us with a perfect love. The Bible tells us that “God loved us while we were yet sinners.” I often say that God loves us in spite of us! He doesn’t love us because we are lovely or because we first loved him—quite the opposite. God loves us while we are still sinners—unlovely, unloving, and separated from Him. But when we come to know that God loves us, then we begin to love Him and seek Him.

The only way we can love others is by slowing down and allowing God’s love to permeate our lives.

Going through a difficult time in life right now? Do you feel like you are in a pit, and are wondering why God has allowed this in your life?

Don’t allow Satan to tempt you to doubt God’s love. Joseph held on to God’s love in the midst of his prison experience. He KNEW that God loved him and he trusted the Lord, even though he didn’t understand his circumstances. Joseph didn’t allow bitterness to take root. He focused on God’s love and continued on doing what was right even in the midst of bad circumstances. Because Joseph understood God’s love, he knew that all the difficult circumstances in his life would turn out right.

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In the same way, when we understand God's love for us, we too can continue on in life even when we are betrayed. Even when we are mistreated. Even when we are in a "pit." Regardless of our circumstances or the actions of others towards us, we can love even our enemies with the same love that Christ gives us.

Knowing God loves us gives us the power to love others.

1 John 4:7-11 says:

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

C.S. Lewis once said, "When I love God more than I love my earthly dearest, then I shall love my earthly dearest more than I do now."

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve", with a flourish extending to the right.

Pastor Steve