



Stewardship—What's Love Got To Do With It?

What is love and what does it have to do with stewardship? Love, like truth, is impossible to define but we know it when we experience it. It is a way of life and is therefore to be nourished and passed on to future generations because an act of love, or lack of it, can determine our eternal destination. In the Gospel of John (12:13), Jesus tells his apostles: "This is my commandment: love one another as I love you." And then in the very next verse He hits them with this bombshell: "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."

Most of us will not have the opportunity for such heroics. Perhaps first responders who rush in when tragedy strikes while the rest of us scatter to safety may, God forbid, give up their lives to spare the lives of people they don't even know, let alone their friends. But Jesus did just that. He suffered death for the welfare of His friends and enemies alike. So, when Jesus said: "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31), it was not a wishful suggestion. He meant it in its strictest sense. It was the "eleventh commandment."

Our neighbor may live next door, down the street, in another state or another country. People who can't afford proper nutrition or even basic healthcare are our neighbors. Children held in cages because of the misdeeds of adults are our neighbors. People who are not like us are not a result of wrong choices, they are our neighbors. And the list goes on. Even people in prison are our neighbors.

So, how do we express our love for these neighbors? Most of us do not have a lot of extra cash lying around. But sometimes, it's not money that's needed. Just the recognition that we can establish with a kind word, a thoughtful gesture, an inquiry about someone's day can mean so much. Have you ever been in the checkout at the grocery store when an elderly person holds up the line by chatting with the clerk? That person is our lonely neighbor in need of some love.

Social media is awash with people seeking validation. They post pictures and comments about food, about celebrities, about their jobs. We may see this as trivial nonsense unless, of course, our lives are empty and without purpose. Where are those neighbors who will fill the void?

In the months to come the Stewardship Committee will be examining some of the characteristics of love and how we can incorporate these qualities into our lives and the lives of others. Philosophers and poets have struggled to tell us what love is, but the fact that they have not found a definitive meaning suggests that there is still a lot to consider. Before our next installment on love and during the start of this new year please take time to express your appreciation of your family and friends. They are also your neighbors.

Written by Ray Huss, member of our Stewardship Committee