

LOVE



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“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” John 15:13. “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.” Romans 5:7, 8.

I was told of an incident that happened at a maximum-security level in one of California’s State Prisons. The gym was being used as overflow housing for approximately 200 men. During count, an officer was walking up and down the aisles counting the men. At one bunk, while involved in his count, an inmate cold-cocked the officer, hitting him in the face and head. The officer went down and lay unconscious on the concrete floor. The other inmates jumped down and began to kick and beat the officer.

Two inmates intervened and dragged the officer off to the safety of the officer’s station. They shut the door and hit the alarm. By

doing this they put their own lives in danger. They were now marked as “cop lovers”. Their lives were worth nothing. They were as good as dead.

When help arrived the two good Samaritans were escorted to safety while the facts were investigated. After the report was made to the Governor’s office, the Governor pardoned them and freed them from prison.

This eighth step, love, is the life giving principle of the Agape love. This love teaches us to humble ourselves as Jesus humbled Himself in order to bring us all the glory of heaven. He “made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He **humbled** Himself and became **obedient** to death – even death on a cross.” Philippians 2:7, 8.

Those of you who are parents understand that your duty is to set the example of living for your children. At times you have to kneel down and humble yourselves to tie a shoe or romp and play on the floor with the little ones. At times you have to speak at the level of their understanding so they will grasp what you are trying to tell them. At times you have to discipline them. In all of this you are being living examples of the love they are to exemplify when they become parents.

You may have to give up a job or career you love and want in order to give of yourself. Children need you in their lives when they are growing up. You need to be there for them. Isn’t their future more important than your selfish desires and ego? How many gang-bangers are out on the street instead of at home with family they claim to love? Live simply, as Jesus did when He left the mansions of heaven for this ghetto of a world. Are you willing to do the same for your children? It is not how much money or things you give them, it is how much of yourself you are willing to give them. That is all they want.

The same is true with Jesus. “You call Me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord’, and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one

another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." John 13:13 – 15.

All this can only happen when we die to self and put to death our ambitions and desires, submitting to Jesus Christ and His teachings and commands. I learned that men who are locked away in prison can relate to this principle. They begin to divest themselves from all the world has to offer. What good is it? Why dream about it? Why desire it? You can't have it! They develop prisonitis. Their whole world revolves around the prison. Their thinking becomes changed. Some for the good, some for the bad. But for many, they lose touch with "reality".

Yet too many Christians desire, lust after and spend their lives building a worldly empire that will be burned up. "If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." "What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world yet forfeits his soul?" Matthew 16:24, 26. "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you prepared for yourself?" Luke 12:20.

"And now, O Israel, what does the Lord our God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?" Deuteronomy 10:12 – 13. "See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it." Deuteronomy 12:32.

Men on parole learn not to set their hearts on earthly things. At any moment the authorities can take it all away from them. The only place we can safely put our desires and hopes is in Jesus and the world He is preparing for us. Make that commitment right now! Change your life.